

## Summary of September, 2019 Stakeholder Meeting

The Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA) held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 via phone conference with Interim Commissioner of Education, Beth Berlin; Deputy Commissioner of P-12 Instructional Support, Kim Wilkins; Executive Director of the Office of Teacher/Principal Quality and Professional Development, Alex Trikalinos; and Assistant Commissioner, Emily DeSantis. ESSAA was represented by Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; ESSAA Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; ESSAA Vice President, Greg Avellino; ESSAA Vice President, Andrea Hamilton; ESSAA member, Kristin Randare; ESSAA member Gabriel Buono; ESSAA member, Maria Paese; and NYSED/Regents Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Topics discussed at the meeting included:

### APPR Update

Interim Commissioner Berlin began the meeting by informing us that she will be presenting a revised set of APPR regulations to the Board of Regents for approval at their October meeting. The Interim Commissioner stated that in developing the guidelines, they have worked to provide districts the option of continuing with their current APPR plans along with the means to revise their plans, if needed.

Alex Trikalinos has been overseeing the APPR revision process at NYSED, ESSAA has been well-represented in this process by our representatives on this project. He provided us with an overview summary of the key components of the revised requirements which are generally consistent with what had been presented previously at Board of Regents meetings last spring. One change that has been added recently will enable districts to apply for a variance to allow the use of different approaches in conducting teacher observations. More detailed information will be provided at the October BOR meeting.

Below is a link to a summary document from the May 2019 Board of Regents meeting that outlines the specifics of the new APPR policy.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P12-HE%20Annual%20Professional%20Performance%20Review%20%28APPR%29%20Update.pdf>

### 3-8 Assessments/Computer Based Testing

At the end of this school year, NYSED's existing contract with Questar Assessment Inc. to administer the 3-8 testing program will expire. Interim Commissioner Berlin informed us that the department is currently preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) inviting vendors to bid on a new 3-8 testing contract which would begin with the 2020-21 school year. The Interim Commissioner emphasized that they have revised the RFP to ensure that lessons learned in recent years are addressed, especially in the area of Computer Based Testing (CBT).

With regard to CBT for this school year, Interim Commissioner Berlin stated that NYSED is continuing to work closely with Questar to encourage more CBT participation in schools across the state. The Interim Commissioner went on to say that Questar has brought in more support for their technology infrastructure which should eliminate the problems schools experienced last year.

Ms. Randare asked the Interim Commissioner about recent correspondence she received from NYSED suggesting that schools stagger the number of students tested each day so the computer system does not become overloaded. Ms. Randare stressed that this would be difficult for principals to coordinate, would extend the number of days needed to administer the tests, and would discourage schools from participating in CBT.

Interim Commissioner Berlin acknowledged the issue but does not feel schools should be discouraged from participating. She indicated that Questar has increased their infrastructure capabilities and should be able to handle multiple grade levels taking the assessments at the same time within a building. The Interim Commissioner also mentioned that the NYSED Assessment Office is willing to assist principals by reviewing their building's CBT schedules well in advance of the testing, to ensure that the number of students being tested is compatible with the technology infrastructure.

#### Guidance and Support Regarding Cyber Attacks

To date, nine New York State school districts and one BOCES have experienced a cyber attack of their computer databases. Mr. Starvaggi asked Interim Commissioner Berlin if she had any guidance or information that may assist districts avoid future issues. Ms. Randare shared that her district (Monroe-Woodbury) had recently experienced a cyber attack and described some of the many ways it has disrupted the start of the school year. She suggested that any guidance NYSED could provide based on what they are learning from the attacks would be helpful, particularly to smaller districts which may not have highly trained IT staff specifically dedicated to data maintenance and support.

Interim Commissioner Berlin responded that NYSED is in the process of preparing guidance documents that include protocols to follow in the event of a ransomware attack. She went on to say that this is a serious area of concern within the department and they will continue to support districts with any guidance and information that becomes available.

#### Guidance/Support with Implementing Mandatory Vaccination Requirements

At our last stakeholder meeting, then Commissioner Elia updated our group on the new health mandate concerning vaccinations. Now in effect for the 2019-20 school year, the law expands the range of students who are required to have vaccinations. Mr. Starvaggi asked for an update of what NYSED is hearing from schools regarding implementation specifically as it relates to unvaccinated students entering buildings for outside activities or events.

The Interim Commissioner responded that the new law does not address this specific issue and that districts should have a locally developed policy in place to address non-student attendance at outside events.

#### Update on Plan to Revise Graduation Requirements

At the September Board of Regents meeting, Deputy Commissioner Kim Wilkins shared a revised timeline for developing the proposed revisions to high school graduation requirements. Beginning in November, regional workshops will begin meeting across the state to gather stakeholder feedback. Similar to the format used in developing the Every Student Succeeds Act plan, a Blue Ribbon Commission will be organized to review feedback, examine research, and facilitate the process of making final recommendations. The goal is to have a proposal ready to present to the Board of Regents in the spring of 2021.

Mr. Scampini asked the Interim Commissioner if she feels this will be an effective process for this particular project. He mentioned that the ESSA Plan was more about developing policies to

ensure compliance with federal regulations. The work of effectively examining and revising graduation requirements will be more subjective and require extensive evaluation of very diverse opinions and perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders.

Interim Commissioner Berlin felt this was a valid point to consider as they move forward. She did mention that one difference between the Graduation Requirement Blue Ribbon Committee and the ESSA group will be the direct involvement of the Board of Regents in the process. Regents members will be taking an active role in attending public stakeholder meetings in their judicial districts and will be involved in discussions with the Blue Ribbon Committee throughout the development of the plan.

#### Additional Update Requests –

Mr. Starvaggi asked for an update on the status of the following items:

1. Launch of the new NYSED INTEGRITY Website

The Office of Test Security and Educator Integrity launched their new Educator INTEGRITY website in July. The site can be accessed at: <http://www.nysed.gov/educator-integrity>

2. Proposed legislation which would require school libraries be staffed by certified librarians

The Interim Commissioner was not aware of the pending legislation when it was brought up at the meeting. Mr. Starvaggi sent the Interim Commissioner a copy of the proposal via e-mail and we will follow-up on this topic at our next meeting.

3. Status of the Principal Preparation Project

The Interim Commissioner did not have any updated information to share. She said she would look into it and get back to us.