



**Council of Administrators
and Supervisors**

Supporting Educational Leadership

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Summary of Tuesday, April 28, 2020 Stakeholder Meeting

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Tuesday, April 28, 2020 via videoconference with Interim Commissioner of Education, Shannon Tahoe; Deputy Commissioner for P12 Instructional Support, Kim Wilkins; Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs, Emily DeSantis; Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Accountability, Jason Harmon; Deputy Commissioner John D'Agati; and Chief Financial Officer, Phyllis Morris.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; ESSAA Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; ESSAA Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; ESSAA Vice President, Shireen Fasiglione; ESSAA Vice President, Greg Avellino; ESSAA Vice President, Tony Baxter; ESSAA member Kristin Randhare; ESSAA member John Zampaglione; ESSAA member Russell Buckley, and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Specific Topics discussed during the meeting included:

Continuity of Learning Updates

Deputy Commissioner Wilkins reviewed the requirement that districts update Continuity of Learning Plans. Due to the unanticipated length of the of the mandatory school closures, districts are being asked to provide a more comprehensive version of the plans that were originally developed. Updated plans are due for submission by Monday, May 4th.

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/coronavirus/nysed-covid-19-third-guidance-updated-4-27-20.pdf>

Deputy Commissioner Wilkins also shared that NYSED continues to update their Instructional Resources Page with virtual instruction best practices and teacher resources such as virtual fieldtrips, and read-a-louds. Interim

Commissioner Tahoe stated she is encouraged that the site has had over 39,000 hits thus far. She and her team are so impressed with the quality of work being done and encourage teachers to share their stories and experiences with colleagues using the link on the Resources Page.

Graduation Requirements

Interim Commissioner Tahoe reminded us of the Guidance Memo that was sent out recently outlining the changes to graduation requirements for this year. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane expressed appreciation to the Interim Commissioner and her staff on the thoroughness and clarity of the guidance memo which will greatly assist districts with consistent implementation.

<http://www.nysed.gov/coronavirus/news/nysed-issues-guidance-graduation-and-course-requirement-changes>

Reopening Schools

Chancellor Betty Rosa recently announced that NYSED will convene a statewide task force of stakeholders to develop a plan for the reopening of schools. When asked about the status of any specific plans or timelines, Interim Commissioner Tahoe responded that they are awaiting the Governor's upcoming decision on whether to extend the current mandates that are in place which require schools to be closed through May 15. Governor Cuomo has repeatedly stated that he will make an announcement by May 1. *Note: Since this meeting the decision has been made for schools to remain closed for the remainder of this school year.*

Interim Commissioner Tahoe added that it is likely that districts will be asked to develop modified plans for implementing social distancing recommendations and Department of Health guidelines, even if students do not return to buildings until September.

Accountability

Assistant Commissioner Harmon provided an update on several issues associated with school accountability. As mentioned at last month's meeting, both the U.S. Department of Education and NYSED have significantly relaxed many accountability requirements for this year.

The Assistant Commissioner shared that for the most part, the current accountability status of schools is frozen at this time and will continue through the 2020-21 school year. He emphasized that support for CSI schools has continued during the school closures through the use of virtual technology. Unused funds dedicated to School Improvement Plans can also be carried into 2020 -21.

The timeline for submitting improvement plans relating to the 95% Participation Rate school testing mandate has been extended to July.

Interim Commissioner Tahoe also shared that school accountability status relating to IDEA regulations will also remain in place for the coming year.

Finally, Assistant Commissioner Harmon said they are still waiting for a decision from the Governor's Office regarding teacher and principal APPR evaluations before moving forward.

<http://www.nysed.gov/coronavirus/news/regents-act-emergency-regulations-ease-burdens-educators-students-and-professionals>

Status of School Funding

Chief Financial Officer, Phyllis Morris updated us on the most recent information that is available on how the pandemic is affecting both present and future school funding. She shared that, despite the assistance provided by the federal CARES Act, the Division of Budget is projecting a 13-billion-dollar budget gap.

Interim Commissioner Tahoe stated she has been advocating for additional financial assistance at both the state and federal levels, which included a recent conversation with Secretary of Education Betsy Devos. The Interim Commissioner urged us to contact federal and state representatives in support of increased financial assistance.

Supporting ELL Students

Interim Commissioner Tahoe informed us that NYSED will soon be releasing new guidance on how to better support English Language Learners during the remaining time schools are closed. The Interim

Commissioner and Mrs. Conklin-Spillane both shared their concerns with the special struggles our ELL students are experiencing during the crisis. Issues of poverty and immigration status accentuate an already significant gap in access and equity. Interim Commissioner Tahoe mentioned she is currently working to implement measures which would greatly increase technology access for ELL students by the start of the new school year in September.

Social Media Resources

Assistant Commissioner DeSantis reviewed some of the NYSED social media resources that are available such as **NY Learns Remotely**, **What I'm Staying Home For**, and **Educators are Heroes**. Mrs. Conklin Spillane expressed gratitude for NYSED's efforts to continually promote the message that "while buildings are physically closed, schools are still open and teaching and learning is taking place."

Status of Search for New Commissioner

Mr. Starvaggi asked for an update on the search for a new Commissioner. Interim Commissioner Tahoe responded that the deadline for applications recently closed. The Interim Commissioner said they are optimistic that an appointment might occur as early as July, but could be as late as September.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane commended the Interim Commissioner for her collaborative leadership during her recent tenure and noted that she would be an excellent candidate for the permanent position. While the Interim Commissioner appreciated her comments, she stated she is an "attorney at heart" and is looking forward to returning to her previous position as legal counsel for NYSED.

Graduation Requirements Initiative

While work on the Graduation Measure Initiative has been suspended due to the COVID-19 crisis, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane stressed the importance of applying all that we are learning through this experience to the future of the project. She feels the educational lessons learned are providing an excellent research opportunity to better inform the work of the Blue Ribbon

Committee when the project resumes. The Interim Commissioner agreed that there were many ‘pilots’ underway in 2020 that we can learn from.

August Exams

Interim Commissioner Tahoe stated that the decision regarding the cancellation of August Regents Exams should be announced at the May Board of Regents Meeting on Monday, May 4th. *Note: since the meeting, NYSED has announced the cancellation of these exams.*

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/coronavirus/nysed-covid-19-cancellation-august-2020-regents-exams.pdf>

Update on New Teacher Certification Process

Mr. Voorneveld asked for an update on the certification process for new teacher candidates. Deputy Commissioner D’Agati expressed that he does not anticipate that Pearson, who administrates the certification exam, will be opening any of their testing centers in the near future. He went on to say that while discussions about other options for administering the test have been taking place, nothing has been decided at this time.

ESSAA Members:

If you have any feedback on the foregoing issues or would like to suggest a topic to be addressed with the Commissioner at an upcoming meeting, please e-mail us at info@essaa.org. New topics will be submitted to our Stakeholder Committee for consideration.