

Summary of February 2021 Board of Regents Meeting

The Board of Regents conducted their monthly meeting on Monday, February 8th via video conference. In commemoration of Black History Month, Regent Wade Norwood, Co-Chair for the Regents Committee on Professional Practice, began the session with some reflective thoughts on the lack of racial diversity among medical doctors in New York State. Regent Norwood shared that, as policy makers, Board of Regents members have an opportunity to shape P-20 education policy towards the goal of improving the diversity of practicing physicians to equitably represent all races and social classes.

Following Regent Norwood's remarks, the Board, together with a panel of medical experts from across the state, discussed ideas for a plan of action toward improving the current racial disparity. The presentation/discussion highlighted several current exemplary pipeline programs, outlined potential steps for a plan to provide equitable healthcare for all, and provided ideas for how best to encourage more young people of color to pursue careers in medicine.

The link below summarizes the Board of Regents commitment to this initiative and profiles the panelists who participated in the discussion.

<http://www.nysed.gov/news/2021/board-regents-discuss-action-plan-racial-disparities-medicine-recognize-black-history>

Board of Regents members were updated on the status of the 2021-2022 Executive Budget proposal. NYSED Chief Financial Officer, Phyllis Morse, provided a breakdown of the current anticipated education funding streams at both the federal and state level.

Before presenting a breakdown of the budget Ms. Morse shared that the NYS Division of Budget (DOB) has informed NYSED that they can begin paying out the 20% withholdings that were previously directed to be withheld by DOB for 2019-20 and 2020-21. NYSED has started the process to begin making the withheld payments.

Some key points of interest included in the current proposed Executive Budget include:

- A proposed overall reduction of \$1.7 billion in state aid for school districts. The consolidation of eleven existing state aid categories into a new state aid category called “Services Aid.” This new category would include areas such as Transportation, BOCES, Textbook Software, Library Materials, Academic Enhancement, Supplemental Public Excess Costs, Charter School Transitional Aids, Special Services and High Tax. Proposed overall funding for these categories in 2021-22 and in future years would be reduced by \$693 million which will leave school districts with ongoing unreimbursed expenses.
- A proposed \$1.35 billion reduction to STAR exemption reimbursements to districts.
- Allowing Transportation Aid reimbursement for costs associated with delivery of school meals, wi-fi access and/or instructional materials incurred during the 2020 school closures. The proposal does not, however, cover the stand-by transportation costs or meal and materials delivery costs incurred during the current 2020-21 school year.
- Elimination of \$18.7 million in annual funding for school district prior claims and elimination of \$300 million in claims that have been previously filed.
- An increase in school district shared expense for the maintenance costs of students who are placed in residential placements by Committees on Special Education.
- Elimination of funding for the Teachers of Tomorrow Program
- Reducing the number of current vacancies NYSED may fill by 42 full time positions.

After the presentation, several Board members expressed very serious concerns that the proposed Executive Budget does not come anywhere close to meeting the needs of school districts that are already struggling. Regent Luis Reyes proposed that, to better inform both the public, a concise 2–3-page information document be developed which clearly describes the impact the cuts will have on specific programs. Regent Reyes feels the document would serve as a foundation for further discussions with legislators as stakeholders advocate for restoration of funds. Commissioner Rosa mentioned that many non-state aid related budget proposals have also been rejected in the current proposed Executive Budget. The Commissioner stressed the need to continue to make the public aware of the drastic effects the proposed budget will have on schools.

Below you will find a link to the document used in the presentation which provides more detailed information on the Executive Budget proposal.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/SA%20-%20NYSED%20Review%20of%20the%202021-2022%20Executive%20Budget.pdf>

Deputy Commissioner Kim Wilkins provided Board members with an update on the public comments that have been received regarding the proposed 2021 assessment and accountability waiver requests. The waiver applications, which will be submitted to the US Department of Education, seek to allow the cancellation of all required 3-8 assessments and Regents Exams associated with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for 2020-21. The second waiver application would exempt districts from assigning a Level 1 – 4 accountability score to subgroups based on certain indicators.

The Deputy Commissioner reported that NYSED received over 450 public comments and over 39,000 survey responses expressing overwhelming support for submitting the waiver applications.

The Board reviewed a summary of the most recent graduation rate data for the 2019-20 school year. After reviewing the key steps that NYSED implemented last spring in response to the pandemic, Commissioner Rosa talked about some of the potential effects that the cancellation of last year's Regents Exams had on the overall graduation rate. While the 2019-20 graduating class showed a slight improvement in both the overall graduation rate and with closing the achievement gap, Commissioner Rosa acknowledged that exempting students from exams was a determining factor with the outcomes.

The link below includes the slides that were used during the presentation and includes several slides which provide a disaggregated breakdown of the data.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P-12%20-%20Graduation%20Rates%20for%20the%202016%20Cohort%20Presentation.pdf>

The Board was presented with a summary of the information that was received from the Digital Access Survey that was administered across the state last Fall. Assistant Commissioner Marybeth Casey and Technology Policy Coordinator Shannon Logan were extremely pleased that NYSED received submissions from over 5000 schools (99.1% response rate) and expressed sincere thanks to all the educators across the state who participated.

Some key points of interest gathered from the data include:

1. Approximately 8% (215,948) of reported students do not have sufficient access to a device in their place of residence to engage in remote instruction.
2. Approximately 60% of the students without a device live in NYC.
3. Schools are providing approximately 69% of the devices students are using.
4. 6.3% of students across the state have insufficient internet access to fully participate in remote learning. The majority of these students are in NYC, the Big 4 school districts, and rural areas.

The link below provides a detailed summary of all the data that was presented.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P-12%20-%20Fall%202020%20Digital%20Equity%20Survey%20Results.pdf>

Board of Regents members were updated on NYSED's newly implemented Parent Dashboard. Rose LeRoy, NYSED's Director of Educational Data and Research, demonstrated the most recent upgrades and enhancements which include an improved FAQ link, more user-friendly icons, multiple language other than English options, and more detailed explanations of accountability data and compliance indicators.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P-12%20-%20NYSED%20Parent%20Data%20Dashboard.pdf>

In April 2019, the Board of Regents adopted regulatory amendments that created new student teaching requirements and mandates that teacher preparation programs revise their student teaching programs and partnership agreements with school districts. Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education, William Murphy presented an amendment proposal that extends the deadline for implementing the required changes from the Fall of 2022 to the Fall of 2023. The amendment was approved.

In March, 2018 the Board of Regents approved the provisions for a new teaching certificate in the area of Computer Science along with a corresponding tenure area. There are multiple pathways available to obtain the certificate, which includes the option for teachers currently teaching Computer Science to apply for a Statement of Continued Eligibility (SOCE). Deputy Commissioner Murphy presented an amendment that proposes to extend the deadline for teachers to apply for a Computer Science SOCE by one year to September 2023. This amendment was also approved.

The link below provides a more detailed description of the amendments.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/HE%20-%20COVID-19%20Emergency%20Regulations%20Part%20VIII.pdf>