

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Monday, April 4th, 2022, via videoconference with Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Asst. Commissioner for Public Affairs, Emily DeSantis; Asst. Commissioner for the Office of School Governance, Policy and Religious and Independent Schools, Christina Coughlin; Executive Director of Education Innovation and Strategic Initiatives, David Frank; Deputy Commissioner for Higher Education, William Murphy; Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education, Laura Glass; Asst. Commissioner for the Office of Student Support Services, Kathleen DeCataldo; and Asst. Commissioner for the Office of Curriculum and Instruction and Early Learning, Marybeth Casey.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; ESSAA Vice President, Tony Baxter; ESSAA Vice President, John Rickert; ESSAA Vice President, Rick Kimble; ESSAA Vice President, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione; ESSAA Director of Information Resources, Celia Strino; ESSAA member John Zampaglione; ESSAA member, Mike Moran and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Specific topics discussed during the meeting include:

Pending NYSED Regulatory Changes

1. Asst. Commissioner for the Office of Student Support Services, Kathleen DeCataldo, informed us that NYSED will be making a recommendation at the upcoming April Board of Regents meeting to permanently adopt the option for districts to offer remote instruction on days that result in a school closure due to weather or non-weather-related emergencies.
2. Asst. Commissioner for the Office of Curriculum and Instruction, Marybeth Casey, outlined a proposal that is being developed which will require Emergency Response Plans to include detailed plans for how remote instruction will be implemented in the event of an extended emergency school closure. The Assistant Commissioner stated that this initiative will enable New York schools to be better prepared in the event of another long-term closure.

The plans will need to include clear expectations for how students who receive special education services or cannot participate in instruction due to lack of available technology will be served. It is anticipated that this regulation will go into effect for the 2023-2024 school year.

3. Asst. Commissioner Casey also stated that NYSED is working on the development of new regulations focused on the delivery of Home and Hospital Instruction for students when they are unable to physically attend school. It is anticipated that the new guidance will

establish more clarity and consistency with instructional requirements and create more consistent expectations for both school districts and parents.

Substantial Equivalency Proposal

Commissioner Rosa reminded us that NYSED is still accepting feedback on the newly proposed Substantial Equivalency regulations. Anyone with suggestions or comments is encouraged to contact the Asst. Commissioner for the Office of School Governance, Policy and Religious and Independent Schools, Christina Coughlin, at christina.coughlin@nysed.gov.

Below you will find a link to a summary of the newly proposed Substantial Equivalency Regulations that were presented at the March 2022 Board of Regents meeting.

<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/P-12%20-%20Draft%20Substantial%20Equivalence%20Regulation.pdf>

Proposed Special Education Certification Changes

Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education, Laura Glass, informed us that, in response to the current shortage of special education teachers, NYSED is working on a proposal to amend certification requirements to expand the range of students SPED teachers can work with. The plan would eliminate the current Grade 1-6 and Grade 7-12 SPED certification designations and replace them with a single **Special Education All Grade certificate** covering PreK through Grade 12. The current Birth-Grade 2 certificate would remain in effect.

NYSED is also proposing that the current requirement for special education teachers who seek certification to teach a special class be amended. Currently, candidates must complete 18 semester hours in the core content area and pass a content specialty test. NYSED is recommending that the requirement be reduced to **either** completion of 12 semester hours in the core content area **or** successfully passing the content specialty test in the specific subject area.

Mr. Zampaglione commented that this change would greatly ease hiring and scheduling issues for Grade 6-8 middle level buildings that currently need both 1-6 and 7-12 certified special education teachers on staff.

Ms. Strino expressed concerns with the different instructional skills and strategies special education teachers utilize at the various grade levels. She recommended that some type of designation be included in the certification title which emphasizes specific credentials a teacher may have to work with students at a specific grade level.

No timeline for the adoption or implementation of the proposed changes was discussed at the meeting.

3-8 Testing Feedback

Dr. Shireen Fasciglione, an elementary school principal in the Niskayuna Central Schools, shared some perspective on her student's experiences with the 3-8 ELA tests which are currently being administered. Dr. Fasciglione noted that she and her staff have worked very hard with engaging families to assist them with understanding the importance and value of the having students participate in the testing, and how the data can be used to improve instruction and achievement.

She expressed that Part 2 of this year's exam has been particularly challenging for students in her building, especially those in third grade. She observed that approximately 1/3 of her third graders needed significantly more than two hours to complete this section, and many experienced emotional distress while attempting to finish. Dr. Fasciglione also shared that principals in other buildings had similar experiences.

Commissioner Rosa responded that she appreciates comments on all the assessments and encouraged ESSAA members to continue providing feedback. She assured us that NYSED staff will continue to monitor other evaluative information they receive from across the state.

Student Mental Health Concerns

Ms. Strino expressed concerns regarding the need for guidance and support in addressing the growing level of student mental health issues schools are dealing with. She added that schools are not staffed to provide the needed level of support and feels there is a need for assistance from public agencies.

Commissioner Rosa responded that NYSED recognizes the concern and acknowledged that the issue has been a priority for the legislature in the development of the NYS Budget.

Asst. Commissioner DeCataldo added that a variety of potential resource options are currently being discussed by the legislature. She is optimistic that NYSED will be able to partner with the NYS Office of Mental Health to create much needed interagency partnerships to better support schools in the near future.

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.

