

Summary of October 2022 Stakeholders Meeting

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Monday, October 17, 2022, via videoconference with Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Senior Deputy Commissioner of Education Policy, James Baldwin; Deputy Commissioner for P-12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle; Deputy Commissioner for P-12 Operational Support, Jason Harmon; and Executive Director of Education Innovation and Strategic Initiatives, David Frank.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; ESSAA Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; ESSAA Vice President, Tony Baxter; ESSAA Vice President, John Rickert; ESSAA Vice President, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione; ESSAA Vice President, Greg Avellino, ESSAA Director of Professional Learning, Eva Jones, ESSAA Director of Information Resources, Celia Strino; ESSAA member, John Zampaglione, ESSAA member Bernadette Smith, and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Specific topics discussed during the meeting include:

Supporting Mental Health/Wellness through Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

NYSED representatives were asked about the status of current efforts to address the ongoing mental health crisis in schools. Deputy Commissioner Baldwin responded that 50 million dollars in Pandemic Relief funding has been allocated this year to support mental health initiatives through grant monies. The Deputy Commissioner went to say that the Request For Proposals (RFP) for grant applications should be released in the near future.

Both Commissioner Rosa and Deputy Commissioner Baldwin expressed concerns with the fact that the grants currently require a funding match

which could present challenges for districts that are financially challenged. Commissioner Rosa went on to comment that NYSED has recognized other inequities with

how the current RFP is written, and will be working with legislators in the coming months to make changes to eliminate potential barriers for next year's second round of funding.

Addressing the Lack of Qualified teacher Candidates

A major concern for administrators across the state continues to be the shortage of certified teaching and educational leader candidates that are available to fill vacancies. Commissioner Rosa responded that NYSED continues to implement flexibilities and remove barriers for potential teachers and educational leaders in an effort to ease both the financial burden and coursework requirements associated with earning certification.

Executive Director for Education Innovation and Strategic Initiatives, David Frank, talked about the use of Title II Part A money to fund a pilot program aimed at attracting and supporting potential school leaders. While the amount of money available is not significant, Mr. Frank feels that some "early wins" with the initial efforts could lead to a significant increase in the amount of funding support in the future.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane emphasized the crucial need for enhancing efforts toward the recruitment and support of educational leaders in a much broader scope. Citing examples of many states that have already made significant progress with implementing the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSELs), Mrs. Conklin-Spillane emphasized that New York is falling behind with this much needed effort, and should be collaborating with other states on this initiative.

Deputy Commissioner Baldwin expressed that NYSED would welcome more conversations relating to both more effective recruitment and support of educational leaders, and implementing the PSELs. He

expressed interest in meeting with us in the near future to further the discussion. A meeting has been tentatively scheduled for mid-November.

School Safety

Dr. Fasciglione expressed that school safety continues to be a major concern for educators across the state and emphasized the need for proactive steps to better support mental health, especially for our youngest students in the early grades.

Commissioner Rosa responded by emphasizing the need for schools to support families as well as individual students, improve educator awareness of various approaches for recognizing and addressing mental health issues, and explore interagency and community-based partnerships. She went on to stress that DEI is not a program, but a belief system, that includes a framework to support the necessary core values that schools should embrace in addressing issues of school safety.

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.