

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held their monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Tuesday, April 29, 2025, via videoconference. Participants representing NYSED included Commissioner, Betty Rosa; Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy, Jeffrey Matteson; Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Instructional Supports, Angelique Johnson-Dingle; Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank; and Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Operational Supports, Jason Harmon.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA Executive Board Members: President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; Vice President, Lisa O'Neill; Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini; and ESSAA Delegate, Luke Sotherden.

**Topics discussed during the meeting included:**

- 1. Potential impact of 3-8 testing disruptions on student results.**
- 2. Status of Seals of Biliteracy and Civic Readiness.**
- 3. Guidance on recent federal executive orders and funding cuts.**
- 4. Status of a possible 55-25 Retirement Incentive proposal.**

**Potential Impact of Disruptions With 3-8 Testing on Student Results**

Ms. O'Neill opened the meeting expressing concerns that the recent problems with the NYS 3-8 testing could have a negative impact on student test results. She asked if any provisions are being considered for students who experienced the testing disruptions.

Deputy Commissioner Harmon responded that, while NYSED is currently collecting input from the field regarding the impact of the problems, they have not yet had conversations about any special considerations for students. The Deputy Commissioner also expressed that NYSED wants to have a clear picture of how the disruptions may have affected student performance before they make any decisions. He encouraged schools to submit specific details, describing what their students experienced, to assist NYSED with evaluating the potential impact of the problems on student scores.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane stated that ESSAA will reach out to our membership and encourage ESSAA members to provide input on what they experienced and how it affected students.

## **Status of Seal of Biliteracy and Seal of Civic Readiness**

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane shared that ESSAA members have expressed concern regarding inequities associated with the requirements for students to earn the **Seal of Biliteracy** and the **Seal of Civic Readiness**. She also asked how the two graduation distinctions fit into NYSED's vision for the future, and if districts will be expected to integrate them into regular course requirements as part of the Graduation Measures recommendations.

Deputy Commissioner Angelique Johnson-Dingle responded that NYSED does not currently have updated data on the number of Seals being awarded annually. She added that NYSED welcomes both suggestions on ways to better clarify the requirements and how to best align the process with the upcoming Graduation Measures recommendations.

## **Guidance on Recent Federal Executive Orders and Funding Cuts**

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane commended Commissioner Rosa and the NYSED staff for their strong support of student rights during this uncertain time of ongoing executive orders and threatened funding cuts. Citing the many difficult situations schools are dealing with, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked the Commissioner for guidance regarding the steps schools should be taking to ensure they are both in compliance with legal requirements, and ensuring staff and student rights are respected.

Commissioner Rosa expressed appreciation for ESSAA's support. She also acknowledged the ongoing assistance they have received from Attorney General, Letitia James, and a strong coalition of states from around the country who are working together. With regards to how schools can best address questions regarding unique situations that arise, the Commissioner encouraged schools to first reach out to their school attorney as a first step. Commissioner Rosa went on to say that if a school feels there is a need for additional advice after talking with the school attorney, they should contact the **NYSED Office of Legal Counsel and Legal Affairs Deputy Commissioner, Daniel Morton-Bentley**. She emphasized that NYSED understands the complexities of the types of situations schools are experiencing, and stressed that the Office of Legal Affairs will make every effort to assist with resolving the issue.

## **Status of a 55 – 25 Retirement Incentive Proposal**

Mr. Starvaggi inquired about the status of a possible 55-25 statewide retirement incentive that is rumored to have been discussed by the legislature in recent months. Commissioner Rosa responded that she is not aware of an incentive that is pending approval at this time.

Mr. Starvaggi then made reference to an incentive approved in 2010 that applied to NYSUT members, but did not apply to administrators. He strongly emphasized that, since NYSUT members and school administrators are members of the same retirement system, administrators should be included in any incentive plans that may be proposed in the future. Commissioner Rosa responded that she agrees with Mr. Starvaggi, and expressed she would support that both groups be included in any future retirement incentives that are offered.

***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](mailto:info@essaa.org). New topics will be submitted to our Stakeholder Committee for consideration.***