

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** participated in a Stakeholder Meeting on Thursday, April 30, 2026 via videoconference. Participants representing NYSED included Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Deputy Commissioner for Educational Policy, Jeffrey Matteson; and Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; Vice President, John Rickert; Vice President, Lisa O'Neill; Vice President, Jessimae Ossorio; Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini; and ESSAA Delegates, Jennifer Martino, Kathy Barboulis and Luke Sotherden.

Topics discussed during the meeting included:

- 1. PLAN Pilot Update**
- 2. Increased Middle Level Literacy Support for Students**
- 3. Portrait of a Graduate/NY Inspires Update**
- 4. Post-stakeholder Meeting Discussion Among ESSAA Representatives About How Best to Move Forward.**

PLAN Pilot Update - Commissioner Rosa and Deputy Commissioner Matteson began the discussion by reviewing a recent meeting they had conducted with participants from schools that participated in the **Performance-Based Learning and Assessment Networks (PLAN) Pilot**. NYSED is assessing feedback from participants to evaluate how to best utilize performance assessments in the future as an evaluative tool with the implementation of the **Portrait of a Graduate**. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane cautioned that a thorough review and discussion of results is necessary. She emphasized that there is still a lack of clarity on whether project and performance-based approaches serve as an effective means to determine whether students have met appropriate graduation requirements.

Increased Middle Level Literacy Support for Students - Commissioner Rosa and Deputy Commissioner Matteson presented information on current work NYSED is exploring which would expand focused literacy support for students through eighth grade. The Deputy Commissioner cited research indicating that many of the significant gains that elementary level students make from the intensive reading support they receive at the primary grades are lost by grade 8. NYSED is looking at ways to extend the use of primary level diagnostic tools, interventions, and progress monitoring strategies to better support continued literacy growth and development for struggling readers in the middle level grades. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane commended the idealistic goals for this work also but also expressed concerns with the pragmatic realities and complexities associated with effectively implementing this type of initiative.

Portrait of a Graduate/NY Inspires - Deputy Commissioner Matteson expressed that one of the key areas of focus with the implementation of NY Inspires is to prioritize standards that ensure that Portrait of a Graduate concepts are embedded in all classroom instruction. The Deputy Commissioner went on to say that the point of emphasis for what is viewed as high quality instruction must shift to focus more on applied learning.

Mr. Rickert and Mrs. Conklin-Spillane both emphasized the need to inform and support educational leaders with more specifics for implementing these huge changes. They both expressed that more guidance is needed regarding the timeline of the transition plan, what resources will be available to educational leaders, and how professional development will be provided.

Post-stakeholder Meeting Discussion – After the conclusion of the meeting, a separate discussion took place between the ESSAA representatives who attended. Several participants expressed the need for clarity from NYSED on the implementation of NY Inspires, especially in the areas of rollout logistics, timelines, specific school expectations, how educational leaders will be supported, professional development plans, and how all these changes will be funded.

Additionally, if the proposed NY Inspires implementation timeline is followed, current seventh graders in NYS will be the first graduating class under the new “One Diploma” system. It was also expressed that there is a need for educators to have some perspective on what the transcript requirements to achieve a NYS diploma will be.

These specific concerns will be presented to NYSED for discussion at the upcoming May Stakeholder Meeting in an effort to gain more clarity.

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.