

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** participated in a Stakeholder Meeting on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 via videoconference. Participants representing NYSED included Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Deputy Commissioner for Educational Policy, Jeffrey Matteson; Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank; and Government Relations Director, Jennifer Trowbridge.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; Director for Professional Learning, Eva Jones; Vice President, John Rickert; Vice President, Lisa O'Neill; Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini; and ESSAA Delegate, Jennifer Martino.

Topics discussed during the meeting included:

- 1. Reminder From NYSED About FAFSA Completion Regulations.**
- 2. Enhancing Advocacy to Better Support Policies and Budget Items Relating to Public Education During the State Budget Process.**
- 3. Portrait of a Graduate/NY Inspires Update.**

FAFSA Completion and Submission

Assistant Commissioner Frank began the meeting expressing concerns that certain areas of the state currently have a very low level of submission rate of **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms**. The Assistant Commissioner emphasized the need for districts to ensure they are in compliance with the requirements, which were adopted by the Board of Regents in July 2024, that relate to notifying and assisting students with the FAFSA submission process.

Need for Increased Advocacy Relating to Legislative Budget and Policy Priorities During the NYS Budget Process

Commissioner Rosa expressed disappointment with some of the finalized NYS Budget allocations dedicated to the **NY Inspires** implementation. The Commissioner went on to express that, in the future, both NYSED and stakeholder groups need to be more actively involved and organized with advocacy efforts during the budget process. She feels this will ensure that legislators are more aware of the importance of fully funding Graduation Measures initiatives in the next budget cycle.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane responded that she feels part of the reason for the inconsistency with support thus far lies with the fact that **NY Inspires** remains a “Big Idea” that lacks a real plan for implementation. She went on to express that, while the public embraces the vision and ideas

associated with the Portrait of a Graduate, we will not see increased levels of support until realistic implementation steps are in place that establish credibility with educators and community members on the benefits of the initiative.

Portrait of a Graduate/NY Inspires

Commissioner Rosa shared that NYSED staff members have been visiting schools across the state and they are observing great progress with implementing Portrait of a Graduate principles into classrooms. She cited a recent best practices presentation at the May Board of Regents meeting by several administrators from different parts of the state and also noted that there would be another presentation at the upcoming June Board of Regents meeting, Mr. Scampini noted that the May Regents presentation focused primarily on Career and Technical Education (CTE) type programs and he hopes the June presentation will demonstrate examples of best practices in core content areas such as English, Math, Science and Social Studies. ESSAA representative, Eva Jones, added that educational leaders continue to be very interested in implementing **NY Inspires** best practices into classrooms, but are looking for realistic guidance on how best to move forward.

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.