The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** participated in a Stakeholder Meeting with NYSED staff on Wednesday, September 16, 2026 via videoconference. Participants representing NYSED included Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank; NY Inspires Project Director, Shannon Logan; and Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy, Ceylane Meyers-Ruff.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; Director for Professional Learning, Eva Jones; Vice President, Jessimae Ossorio; Vice President, Russell Buckley; Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini; and ESSAA Delegate, Jennifer Martino.

NY Inspires/Portrait of a Graduate

The meeting took place one day after the completion of the September Board of Regents session. At that meeting, the Board formally approved the decoupling of Regents Exams from current NYS graduation requirements and approved a motion to move to a single diploma system.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane opened the meeting by asking if NYSED had received and reviewed the NYS Inspires feedback surveys that ESSAA members recently completed and submitted. Assistant Commissioner Frank acknowledged that the completed surveys had been received, and expressed appreciation to our members for submitting them.

Commissioner Rosa introduced Shannon Logan, the newly appointed NYSED Project Director for NY Inspires and Ceylane Myers-Ruff, the newly appointed Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy. Together they provided a summary of the steps that were taken at Monday's Board of Regents meeting. Some of the key points they reviewed included:

1. The decoupling of the current 4+1 Regents Exam /NYS Diploma requirements.
2. The Board is moving away from the current tiered diploma format to a single diploma that will be awarded to all graduates.
3. The changes will go into effect for the graduating class of 2028. Current seniors graduating in 2027 will be subject to the current graduation requirements.
4. The one diploma system will still allow students to distinguish themselves for completing advanced course work through Advanced Designations and Seals of Endorsement attached to their diplomas.
5. Regents exams are NOT being discontinued. They will continue to be used for their intended purpose of assessing learning standards, but districts must also develop multiple measures and competency based assessments to determine how students demonstrate mastery beyond the snapshot of a single state exam. In this way, the

Regents exams at the high school level will mirror the purpose of the current 3-8 assessments.

6. A new set of regulations relating to NY Inspires will be presented to the Board of Regents in February 2027 and will go into effect on July 1, 2027.

Mrs. Conklin Spillane asked about school accountability guardrails and if we are moving backwards toward simply measuring minimum competencies. She also expressed concern with how we are going to ensure students receive an acceptable level of instructional rigor in areas such as literacy and asked when educators will get the tools they need to move forward with implementation. The Commissioner responded that a memorandum outlining these concerns will be sent out to the field in the near future. Commissioner Rosa also stated that "educators need to take off the training wheels" and begin taking steps with implementing the Portrait of a Graduate components into classrooms, despite the fact that guidelines have not yet been made available.

ESSAA will continue to advocate for increased clarity on the changes and keep you informed of any resources or guidelines that become available.

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.