

The

# Journal



OF THE EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION



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## A Blizzard of Troubles



# President's Message

## Mid Year Report To The Membership

As we near the mid-year mark, I hope you are having a good year. I and the entire ESSAA Executive Board wish you and your families the very best for 2011.

ESSAA has been heavily involved in many discussions around the state and we have a very busy year ahead of us. At the ESSAA November Executive Board Meeting, our invited guest, Deputy Commissioner of Education, Dr. John King, shared his thoughts on the present NYS Regents Reform Agenda. His comments provided the stimulus for a very thoughtful discussion and exchange of ideas. We hope to have follow-up discussions with Dr. King regarding this agenda and how ESSAA can be actively involved in the state leadership platform.

As public school administrators we continue to experience very difficult times. Now, more than ever, we must work together and continue to make, sound, well informed decisions. ESSAA is very well structured to work through these difficult times. First and foremost, we have the finest attorneys available to assist you through any labor situation that may arise. It is important that you contact them and take advantage of their expertise. Our state association is sub-divided into regions, each having a Regional President (who also serves as an ESSAA Vice-President) who can assist you in many ways such as connecting you with a person in a similar position or with a forum to discuss any local pressures that are being discussed in your district. ESSAA also retains a full time lobbyist (Robert Ungar Esq.) who spends his days in Albany while the legislature is in session advocating for our interests. Concurrently, we continue to reach out to all other professional organizations such as NYSUT, SAANYS, CSA, NYFSA, etc; as well as to NYSED to ensure our public education system remains strong.

As many of you have read through our email blasts, there are several topics that need your attention. The new APPR Legislation presents several issues. Until new regulations are issued, we urge you to review the summary our attorneys prepared and talk to your ESSAA attorney prior to signing any Memorandum of Understanding with your school district. While we have several ESSAA members on the Task Force on Teacher and Principal Effectiveness developing an Evaluation Plan, our official representative is Michael McDermott, ESSAA Vice President, RASA President and Principal of Scarsdale Middle School. Michael is collaborating with representatives from other professional organizations who also serve on this Task Force.

We have also been sending out summaries of the monthly New York State Board of Regents meetings. ESSAA has our NYSED Liaison, David Wagner, at the monthly meetings and he develops these reports for our membership. I encourage all of our members to respond with feedback whenever there is a need or request to do so.

I am sure you are aware of the endless attacks that all public employees have been subjected to during the past and present year. Now is the time for us all to work together. I am concerned that there are many well-intentioned and educated people who have been misled and are ready to jump to unsubstantiated conclusions regarding our public schools as well as possible solutions. It is important that we all do our due diligence and make thoughtful decisions that are truly in everyone's best interest. We are going through difficult times and we must continue to put our best foot forward.

I would also like to reiterate our Executive Vice President, Tony Laurino's recent message. It is extremely important to support our ESSAA PAC Fund. We do not support individual candidates or parties but we do support those who are friends to public education. As I mentioned earlier, we do have a lobbyist who maintains a presence in Albany. With all of the pressure to lower taxes, our efforts will be mainly aimed at maintaining our current legislative benefits as opposed to seeking new legislation. Voluntary ESSAA PAC contributions are critical to this process.

In closing, we have a very strong professional organization that enables all of us to find help and support whenever it is needed. Thus, it is foolish for us not to take advantage of these resources. If you have a question, please contact your attorney, your regional president or an ESSAA colleague and always feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*William M. Evans*

William Evans  
ESSAA President



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## A Blizzard of Troubles: What To Do?

By Bob Liftig



School administrators have to wonder how to respond to the increasing attacks on them, on their school systems, and on public employment in general. Traditional notions of tenure, seniority, benefits, and evaluation systems are daily being marked for demolition both by the media and the body politic. If angry voters and opportunistic politicians do even half of what they say they want to do to us, our profession will never

look the same.

We find ourselves in a dilemma – individually, and as a group: if we retreat to our corners, go to ground, hide under the radar, or crawl into our storm cellars, and wait for this misery to pass, by the time it's over, there may be nothing left; but if we come out swinging, resist every change, fight to the death for every perk, program, and promise that's ever been made to us, we could be flattened under the stampede to lower taxes, avoid insolvency, and save what's left of the American economy.

This is the place where most editorials would propose some sort of middle ground, but this editorial won't, because the situation in which we find ourselves is unprecedented – at least to anyone I know who still has a memory. Presumably, all of us are also citizens, local residents, and registered voters, and we too feel the pinch of the times; so perhaps it's time for us to try to understand why the unemployed, the

angry, and the disaffected in our country – which seems to be a significant portion of our population – are willing to accept the stories the media is feeding them about how well administrators are doing, how unfair it is, and about why all those politicians are putting us (it's hard to avoid the phrase- sorry) in the crosshairs.

There are only three perspectives I can offer as I pass my 40<sup>th</sup> year in Education:

- 1) Trees that bend, survive; trees that don't, die.
- 2) Education is one of the last segments of the economy to feel the political effects of recession, but also one of the last to recover from them.
- 3) Despite all the efforts to nationalize our educational system, local school districts and taxpayers still want control over the programs, personnel, and facilities that educate their children.

Many of the pundits in the media say that 2010 was a year of stagnation; 2011 will be one of dramatic policy and funding changes, and 2012 will be the year of the biggest budget squeezes (and maybe the End of The World – if you believe the Mayans).

What's happening in education these days is a microcosm, a metaphor, and a testing ground for what is also happening across the nation. We should leave room for cautious optimism, but we must also leave room to be thankful for what we have gained and perhaps even some alternative proposals. ♡



## Late Breaking: ESSAA Retirement Effort Blocked By Appeals Court

A unanimous Appellate Division today upheld last year's Early Retirement Incentive legislation. The court found it was constitutional to premise the early retirement benefit on being represented by NYSUT, and rejected ESSAA's challenge to the law.

ESSAA President Bill Evans commented, "We are disappointed by the decision. ESSAA will litigate whenever we think the rights of administrators are being violated. We thought we were right, but were concerned whether in the current political climate the courts would be willing to extend benefits to additional public employees. They weren't. The decision was just released today and the ESSAA legal team will be reviewing it shortly and reporting back to our Executive Board."

ESSAA will keep you apprised of any further developments. ♡

# ESSAA Officer Appeals To President Obama

The following letter was mailed to Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Sen. Chuck Schumer, and Rep. Nita Lowey by Michael T. McDermott, Principal of Scarsdale Middle School, President of RASA, and ESSAA's representative on the Regents Task Force responsible for implementing provisions of Race To The Top.

November 15, 2010

Mr. Barack Obama  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

*Dear Mr. President:*

*When you were elected president I was elated. As an educator I was hopeful that we could at last leave NCLB behind. Unfortunately I have reached the point of disillusionment as your education policies have unfolded under Arne Duncan. I am now haunted by the lyrics of The Who: "Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss." Actually, it's gone from bad to worse--something I could never have envisioned.*

*While well-intentioned, the Race to the Top, at least as it is playing out in New York State, is now looming as a long downhill slide into regressive practices and policies. When our District sent out the State assessment results to parents, with cutoff scores raised unexpectedly by the State Education Department, we unnecessarily raised the anxiety level of parents as they saw their child's scores go from "Proficient" one year to "Meets Basic Standards" the next. As I've described it to parents, it's like having students successfully do the high jump or pole vault and then turn around and say, "Sorry, we raised the bar. You really didn't clear it."*

*I look back with nostalgic pride to the Scarsdale parent boycott of State assessments in 2000. While we were forced into submission at that time by then Commissioner Mills, the result was a courageous commitment by our Board of Education, supported by the Scarsdale community, not to teach to the test and to let our scores fall where they may in the interests of quality education. We continue to follow that philosophy but it will now be much more difficult under the new assessment and evaluation system being fashioned by Commissioner Steiner as part of the Race to the Top. In our view, our standards will be compromised by a system that evaluates principals and teachers as if they were taking a 100 point classroom test. I predict a significant increase in administrator and teacher retirements once the full implications of this policy are played out.*

*To give you a different perspective on effective education, I invite you to Scarsdale Middle School. Yes, we are an affluent, resource-rich community and school system. But what you will witness is*

*how effectively those local resources are utilized and the engaging curriculum that results from treating teachers like professionals rather than objects of 100 point rating scales. I can show you countless examples of innovative practice, and a unified focus on critical and creative thinking that produces student work of the highest quality. You would hear the passion and commitment of our teachers to their profession and craft.*

*To illustrate my point, I can tell you about a very small investment in a teacher-initiated visit to Little Rock several years ago to witness the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the desegregation of Little Rock High School, the result of which was a visit to Scarsdale by Terrence Roberts, one of the Little Rock Nine. His visit so inspired one of my teachers that she organized her eighth grade students to make a video of the memoir they were reading in class, *Warriors Don't Cry*, also by one of the Little Rock Nine, Melba Pattillo Beals. (See "Students Imagine Little Rock, on Film" *The New York Times*, March 9, 2008). The result of that video was recognition of the school's work by the Westchester Human Rights Commission, followed by an invitation to the teacher by Facing History and Ourselves to meet with Terrence Roberts as part of a celebration at Newark High School. The teacher was then asked by the Human Rights Commission to work with county government on a disabilities rights campaign. In sum, a significant educational return on a small investment of local funds, not the trickle-down leavings from Federal monies that goes first to politicians and bureaucrats.*

*Mr. President: If you come to visit us on April 28th you would not find us prepping for the State assessments. Rather you would be a participant in our annual Human Rights Day, a day on which we suspend normal class activities so that all staff and students can be engaged in teaching and learning about human rights issues, whether local, national or international. The power and synergy of the day is palpable.*

*In a village in South Africa there is a water pump built by Play Pumps International and dedicated to Scarsdale Middle School. It is there because our staff engaged students in discussions about the need for potable water in Africa. They inspired our students to the extent that they raised the money to build the pump that now supplies the village with clean drinking water. This is what education can and should be about and I invite you to come and witness it.*

*Thank you for your time.*

*Sincerely,*

*Michael T. McDermott  
Principal*

cc: Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand  
Hon. Nita Lowey  
Hon. Chuck Schumer

## CAS President Tony Laurino Outlines Bleak Prospects



**Anthony C. Laurino**  
CAS President

*Dear Colleagues,*

*Bob Ungar, our lobbyist, and I spent a few days in Albany and attended the Governor's State of the State message. This is the first opportunity I had to listen to the Governor for any length of time. He is a charismatic man full of energy and enthusiasm. I may be paranoid, but listening to Cuomo I felt that most of New York's problems stemmed from the taxes needed to fund education. This was clear when the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly, Shelly Silver, and the Senator Majority Leader, Dean Skelos, all called for a tax cap. As an indication of his thinking, Governor Cuomo displayed a PowerPoint presentation of the 50 states which showed that New York ranked number one in spending but 34<sup>th</sup> in results.*

*The Governor recommended performance grants to stimulate competition among school districts for additional grants. He earmarked \$250 million for school performance and \$250 million for administration efficiency. He also advocated shared services and consolidation.*

*My guess for the future is very bleak. I see additional charter schools, Tier 6 with a 401K or a combination pension-401K, which would entail special legislation, a reduction in education funds, and a push to merge school districts with enhanced state money.*

*I've been through difficult times in the seventies, and the late eighties, and early nineties, but I've never seen so many divergent groups taking aim at education. The Convention Center was filled with over 2200 people. People stood on line for over 20-25 minutes to go through security and obtain tickets. Some of the comments I heard were about cutting education, closing schools, capping salaries, etc. My personal best was from someone behind me, "When I went to school we had over 35 kids in our class".*

*In these difficult times it is more important than ever to maintain our presence in Albany. ESSAA is present throughout the legislative session keeping tabs on bills that impact education and administrators, both positive and negative. Our fight this year, and probably for the next couple of years, will be to protect what we have rather than proactively seeking legislation.*

*It is more important than ever that members support our ESSAA/PAC fund. Our friends will be under great pressure to go along with the Governor. They will also be facing election challenges. If we don't support them, we will face Tea Party and TaxPac backed legislators who will be outright hostile to public education and public employees. Thank you.*

# Regional News

*A Note From ESSAA's Regional Coordinator, Chuck Smith*



The eight regions across our state are all active in supporting ESSAA members. All regions have or are planning regional networking get-togethers. As usual the weather in the great northeast continues to play havoc with some plans but we also understand it is part of the joy of living where we do.

nominations from colleagues so start thinking about that "stand out" administrator you have the privilege of working with each day.

Many thanks to Committee members: Michelle VanDerLinden and Nancy Lussier from Schenectady and Joe Rajczak and Bryan Wood from Cohoes for their efforts and expertise in creating our first ESSAA awards program.

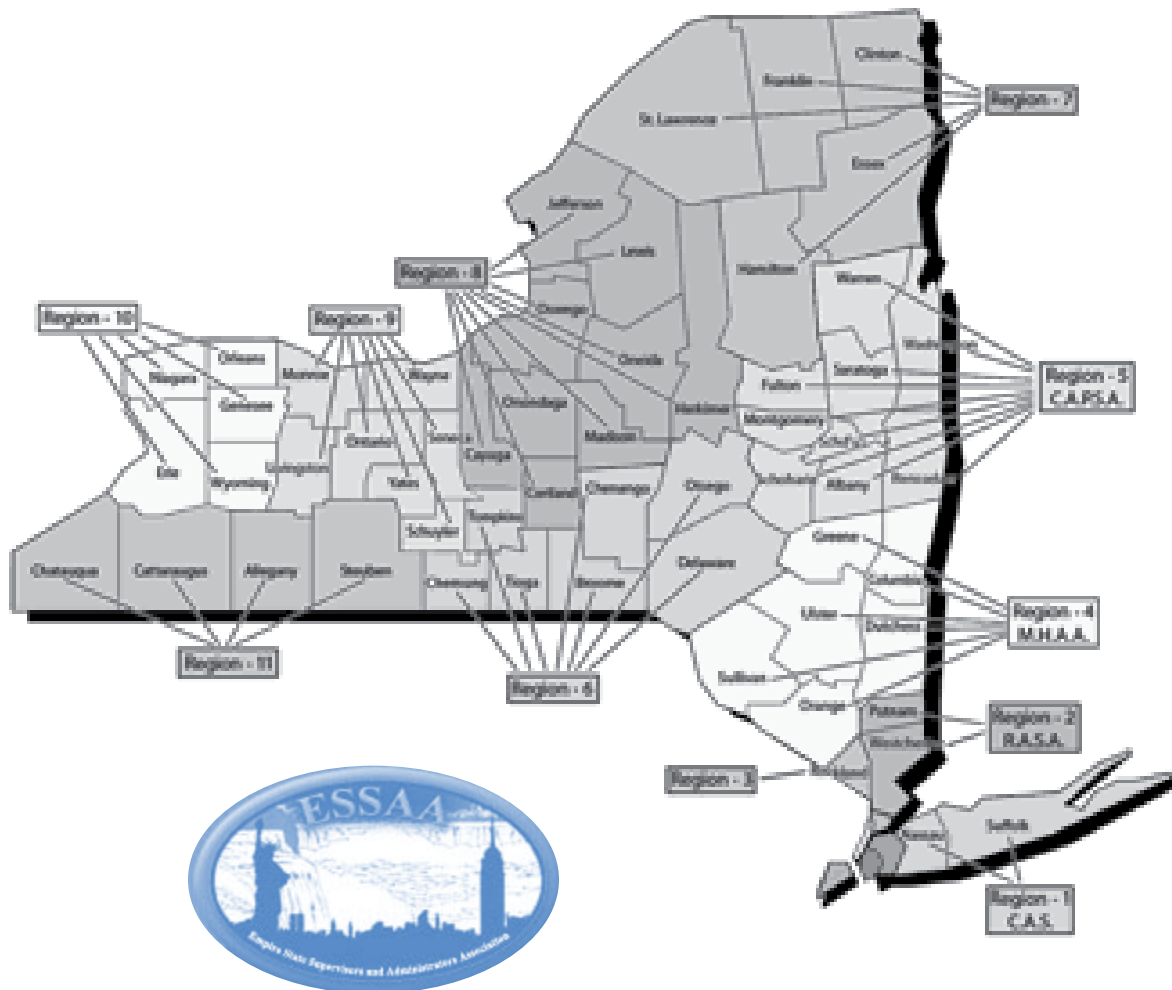
For additional information please contact your regional president or myself. Enjoy the winter season and stay warm.

Chuck Smith  
Regional Coordinator  
[csmith7@nycap.rr.com](mailto:csmith7@nycap.rr.com)

## Big News!!!

The first ESSAA Outstanding Regional Administrator Award will be given to a deserving ESSAA member from each of our eight regions. Look for an E-Blast describing the time frame as well as the nomination process. The program is based on

*continued on next page*



## CAPSA

Joe Rajczak, President

On Tuesday, November 30, 2010 Region 5 held its regional meeting at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center in Albany, New York. All but two districts were represented at this meeting. The election of officers was the focus of the agenda and the officers are as follows:

President -- Joseph Rajczak  
 Vice-President -- Steven Boyton  
 Secretary -- Sue Gorman  
 Treasurer -- Thomas Kostrzebski

The meeting was highlighted by a visit from our State President, Mr. William Evans. Bill spoke about the Race To The Top, meetings with the State Education Department, and the potential for growth in ESSAA for our area. It was great to have our president take time to meet with our region. Michael Starvaggi, our ESSAA Attorney, provided a "legal update, and Tom Vasilof, State Treasurer, spoke about the financial status of ESSAA. PAC fund coordinator, Steve Boyton discussed the importance of the PAC fund in supporting lobbying efforts at the state level, and Ed Keeler the Recruiting Coordinator, spoke about the importance of recruitment of new units in our area. Kim Wilkins also shared insights she gained as a member of the committee to identify components of the Race To The Top initiative.

The meeting was very positive and productive. It was wonderful to have so many of our State leaders in attendance. Our next meeting will be scheduled for the spring.

## CNYSAA

Henry Frasca, President

On Monday, December 6<sup>th</sup> our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Holiday Party was held at the Doubletree Hotel, Carrier Circle, in Syracuse. Despite the unpredictable and nasty winter weather which blanketed New York State, over 50 CNYSAA members enjoyed an evening with their colleagues. The CNYSAA region covers an extremely large geographic area and the members who were in attendance had a chance to network and socialize.

Over the past year CNYSAA has grown in membership to 24 units with 277 members. This growth is the result of keeping our eye on the "big prize" of protecting the rights of line administrators under labor and contractual law. Retaining experienced attorneys with a history of success has been essential. As a reminder, if you are in contact with any colleagues who may be dissatisfied with their present affiliation or are unaffiliated, please have them contact me or Ed Keeler, ESSAA Recruitment Director, and we will be happy to speak to them.

The CNYSAA Executive Board would like to extend its wishes for a happy, prosperous, and successful New Year to all ESSAA members.

# CNYSAA Holiday Party



## MHAA

Ray Palmer, President

As we approach the mid-point of the school year things are fairly quiet with the Associations in Region Four. Three Associations are actively in the process of negotiating contracts with others beginning the process as their contracts are set to expire at the conclusion of the school year. Our attorneys continue to work hard with these units to bring about fair and equitable settlements.

It is important for ESSAA members to remember that just as our attorneys work hard with each association, the ESSAA lobbyist also works hard in Albany to protect our interests. It has always been important to support our lobbyist, but now, more so than ever. All ESSAA members should donate to the PAC fund, so that we can give Robert Ungar and Tony Laurino the means to be as effective as they can to lobby on our behalf. Regional Meeting Region 4 MHAA will be held on Thursday May 26, 6:30 pm in Wappingers Falls.

## RASA

Michael McDermott, President

In November, I hosted a RASA luncheon meeting attended by thirty-two unit presidents. The unit presidents received an update on the work of the Regents Task Force on Principal and Teacher Evaluations. I serve as ESSAA's representative on that Task Force and also serve on the subcommittee entitled "60% Non-Growth Measures for Principals." The other three subcommittees are:

"Non-Tested Subjects"

"Locally Selected Assessments"

"60% Non-Growth Measures for Teachers"

Each of these subcommittees is rendering its initial report to the full Task Force on January 11th. The Task Force as a whole is charged with the responsibility of making recommendations to the Commissioner and Board of Regents for implementation July 1.

At the luncheon meeting, Bob Saperstein, RASA attorney, discussed the legal implications of the Race to the Top legislation and strongly advised unit presidents to consult with him if they were approached by district officials regarding negotiations related to the new APPR regulations. Carol Conklin, RASA Executive Vice-President, updated the group on changes in Regents regulations that could impact high schools and middle schools across New York State.

The bottom-line message: there's a lot happening at the State level and we are keeping abreast of it through our ESSAA networks and through ESSAA's representation on the Task Force. Our attorneys are also on top of local and State developments and it is essential for unit presidents to communicate with their attorneys about any changes in local situations. Support for ESSAA's lobbyist in Albany through PAC contributions is more important than ever.

## RCASA

Pam Charles, President

The Nyack School District administrators are excited about the Charlotte Danielson model they are using. This evidence based learning model allows administrators to collectively agree on a "culture of learning". Keep those learning walks coming!

At Rockland BOCES, Pam Charles, administrator at Gateway Academy published a book entitled: *A Life Interrupted: Educational Solutions for Behavioral Challenges* which was released in April 2010. She is presenting in Denver, Colorado at the American Association of Schools. Topic: "Trauma, and Its Affect on Learning."

RCASA has a workshop planned for Feb 17- 19, 2011 entitled, "APPR" What It Means to You." To be held at Rockland BOCES, Building #10, which is also open to non-ESSAA. Attorney Mike Starvaggi will present the information.

## STSAA

Richard Kimble, President

In an attempt to continue to foster and develop relationships within the region, the Region 6 unit presidents were invited to attend the Regional Presidents Meeting held on November 17, 2010 in Binghamton, NY. I am pleased to announce that we had half of the unit presidents there to represent their respective districts. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold. One, to begin to make connections that will help develop a network within the Southern Tier Region; the second was to ask for the assistance of ESSA attorney, Joe Lamendola in providing guidelines and talking points relative to negotiations as we continue to face difficult financial landscapes and contract talks.

During his 'Contract Negotiations 101' presentation, Mr. Lamendola presented the following talking points; identifying your team, gathering background information, the importance of establishing ground rules, identifying your priorities, and discussing the decision to declare impasse, and what the implications are when and if you do so. As the evening progressed, an open discussion was held to identify possible topics and venues in which to begin to address the challenges that our geographic region presents. Suggested ideas included the presentation of topics of interest or hosting a speaker/presenter for the region. Members were interested in having two presentations or discussions in two separate locations. We are hoping to develop a plan with Mr. Chuck Smith, Eastern Regional Coordinator, with these suggestions in mind. More information will follow this spring. If anyone has further suggestions for the Regional presentations, please email or contact me directly.

Lastly, I am encouraging all of our units to communicate with our attorney during these difficult times. We must be especially cautious with any Board proposals relating to concessions, give-backs, or pay-freezes. While each unit is unique, there are certain precautions all of us should heed.

## WNYAA

Mark Beehler, Co-President

ESSAA Region 10 became official last summer and will be known as The Western New York Administrator's Association. The WNYAA is comprised of 4 units with 80 members.

WNYAA Officers are:

Lisa Epolito, Co- President 716-478-4810

Mark Beehler, Co- President 716-677-3143

Renee Salvatore, Treasurer 716-685-5800

Plans are under way for the first "Spring Thaw Meet And Greet," which will be held in late March. We encourage members to bring friends and colleagues from neighboring districts to enjoy the company and camaraderie of WNYAA and hear first hand the benefits of ESSAA membership. More information on the meet and greet will be forthcoming.

Several WNYAA units have been keeping attorney Joe Lamendola busy with contract negotiations. Joe continues to be a trusted asset who proactively communicates with units on current issues and events.

As one of the newest regions, the WNYAA will be focusing on recruiting new units and building a stronger presence in the region during 2011.

# Presentation shows parents how to protect children online

By Kelly Voll, The Citizen  
December 3, 2010

(Reprinted with the permission of The Citizen, Auburn, NY)

AUBURN — In an age when the Internet permeates nearly all aspects of life, one expert believes it is the connection parents form with their children that can be the difference between a dangerous online experience and a safe one.

Former Auburn High School principal Charles Mitchell, who has served as principal in the Southern Cayuga Central School District gives presentations on cyberbullying and Internet safety. He did one Thursday at East Middle School to a group of parents, faculty and students.

Mitchell took the audience on a journey through time, explaining that in the “old days,” communication between students, including bullying, was face to face and children didn’t have a public place to display their thoughts.

“Kids had diaries,” he said. “Kids dealt with each other face to face.”

With the advent of e-mail and the ability to attach photos to e-mails, Mitchell, as a school administrator, began to see how students were using technology to remove communication filters.

For example, taking film to a store to be developed was a filter of the past, Mitchell said. Children with digital cameras have immediate access to their photos without supervision. Parents must step in to ensure photos, texts, e-mails or other forms of online media are not utilized for cyberbullying or for unsafe Internet use, such as posting to social networking websites like Facebook or MySpace.

“When you’re dealing with the Internet, nothing is private and everything is forever,” Mitchell said.

Parents play a larger part in the battle for Internet safety than do firewalls, web-site blocking technologies and other “safeguards.” Even a measure like keeping the family computer out of a child’s bedroom can’t prevent a child from sneaking downstairs at night to use it.

Mitchell advocated “safety over ‘thou shalt not,’” meaning that parents should make their children feel comfortable enough to come to the parent when there is a breach of safety on the Internet. Parents should not simply tell their children, “don’t do that,” and threaten to take away cell phone or computer privileges.

Auburn High School senior Stephen Hodge, who attended the presentation, agreed, saying parents often spend too much time saying “don’t do this.”

“Instead of telling them (children) they shouldn’t go on (chat rooms), tell them how to be safe and to not give out personal information,” Hodge said.

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# Know What They're Thinking: Summary of the Board of Regents Meeting

By David L. Wagner  
ESSAA State Education Department Liaison  
[dwagner5@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dwagner5@nycap.rr.com)

The Board of Regents discussed and considered policy questions for several issues at the December 13-14, 2010 Regents meeting:

## • College and Career Readiness Survey

The Board of Regents would like your feedback on a College and Career Readiness Survey which focuses on three topics: College and Career Readiness Frameworks, Necessary Skills and Knowledge for College and Workforce Success, and New York State Graduation Requirements (current requirements can be found at [http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/gradreq3columnstyle01\\_10.pdf](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/gradreq/gradreq3columnstyle01_10.pdf)). The survey should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and it must be completed in one session.

Please follow this link to access the survey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/LJTTZ6R>

This survey is one aspect of a series of meetings, presentations, and data collection processes conducted in 2010 by the Board of Regents' College and Career Readiness Working Group. Results of the survey will be shared with the Board of Regents at their March meeting.

The deadline for your input is January 31, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

## • Update on the Common Core State Standards

The Board discussed recommended additions to the Common Core State Standards for ELA and Math. The recommendations follow a five-week statewide public feedback period, during which the Department received over 800 teachers, parents, school administrators, and other stakeholders. A [survey seeking comments on the PreK standards is currently underway](#). Survey results will be analyzed and necessary edits made based on public input.

The Board also discussed a [Request for Information on the Development of Curriculum Models](#) due at the end of January, the results of which will shape the Request for Proposal for the development of curriculum models. Finally, the Board discussed the timeline for development and implementation of the curriculum models for PreK-12 ELA and Math and the timeline for integrating the Common Core into our State assessments. In January, staff will present two sets of new PreK-12 standards (ELA and Math), which include the Common Core and NYS standards, and a summary of the public survey data.

See the [Regents item on the Common Core State Standards](#) for more information.

## • Elimination of Certain State Assessments

The Board discussed the proposed amendment that implements recent decisions made by the Board of Regents to eliminate certain State assessments (Checkpoint A Second Language Proficiency examinations (SLP) for languages other than English; Checkpoint B Regents comprehensive examinations in Hebrew, Latin, and German; and the elementary and intermediate assessments in social studies) as a cost-saving measure in the administration of State assessments; and ensures that students have a continued opportunity to earn diploma credit in Languages Other than English prior to grade 9 and meet State learning standards despite the elimination of these examinations.

See the [Regents item on the Elimination of Certain State Assessments](#) for more information.

## • Revised Comprehensive English Regents Exam: Standards Revisitation Update

The Board discussed steps taken by the Department to maintain the rigor of the Comprehensive English Regents Examination as the exam changes from a two-day exam to a one-day exam. The discussion focused on the changes made to the format and composition of the test and how the development of the new exam concentrated on maintaining the validity and consistency around the content being assessed. A [memo from the Office of Assessment Policy, Development and Administration](#) providing an overview of the changes made and the steps taken to maintain rigor on the newly-revised English Regents exam has been widely distributed to the field to inform school officials, teachers, parents, and students.

See the [Regents item on the Revised Comprehensive English Regents Exam](#) for more information.

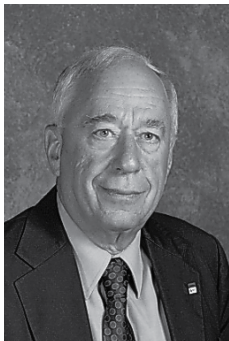
## • Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools Update

The Board received an update on the Department's efforts to support districts to intervene in their persistently lowest-achieving (PLA) schools. The discussion focused on the intervention models that PLA schools are required to implement and the impact that School Improvement Grants and RTTT funding have had on that implementation. The Board also discussed the [Commissioner's December 9 release of SURR/PLA schools identified for the 2010-11 school year](#).

See the [Regents item on the Persistently Lowest-Achieving Schools Update](#) for more information. ♡

# School Safety Update

By Charles Mitchell  
Chair – School Safety, ESSAA



As I write this “update” on a cold morning with continued “Lake Effect” snow from Lake Ontario falling, I am very glad that I am a skier, otherwise I’d be looking for a flight south, but then American Red Cross is opening warming shelters in Florida where it is only 65 degrees!

## Exclusive use of your school email account for all “business” communication

I know of several districts that have put this policy in place recently. Personally I think it is an excellent policy for several reasons. First it maintains a record of your communication with parents, students and colleagues on your district’s server. This can be valuable if/when a question comes up as to whether or not you maintained appropriate communication as well as “who said what when”. Saving this traffic on the server can also be useful as a legal record if you are harassed or falsely accused. If you do not trust your district to maintain appropriate electronic records you can always “blind copy” to your personal email outgoing traffic or “forward” to your personal email incoming traffic. It is never good policy to give out your personal email or cell phone number for professional communication. Be aware that if you are provided a cell phone by your school district for “business use” that the cell phone service provider may only maintain information on their server incoming/outgoing phone/text/internet search for a short period of time, limiting your ability to prove what you have done if challenged.

## Use of school provided computers/cell phones/business phones for personal use

Even if your district’s policy states that you have “reasonable” use of this equipment for personal business, it is never wise to do so. The district owns the equipment and server and courts have ruled that anything you do on this equipment is open to inspection by the district and possible disciplinary action if the district decides that what you have done is not reasonable. Also remember that when the NYS Comptroller has done “audits” of school districts they have searched district servers and computers and have no problem going to the “press conference format” to report what they deem to be misuse even if district policy allows. When using school provided electronic equipment it would be wise to assume that anything done is “public” and is “forever”. If your district policy says no personal use, no means **NO**..... to use school equipment in these circumstances is foolish.....insubordination can be the charge!

## Record Retention

Make sure you follow your school district’s retention policy if it is left up to you to ascertain what must be saved legally and

what you can “dump”. The US Supreme Court ruled in 2006 that electronic records all types [emails, correspondence, phone/text records, etc] are legal documents just like paper records that must be maintained for possible evidence in a civil law suit. If you are fortunate to be in a district where the district policy is to “dump” all records from the server after one year, someone else in the district office or Board of Education has taken off your shoulders the responsibility of what must be kept. If you are in a district where you are given specific guidance as to what you must keep and what you can dump then make sure you follow that policy/procedure exactly....and you may want to document when you do this. “Gray area” - or not so Gray” – If you save electronic files to a thumb drive [external drive] then you can assume that the district owns the information. If you save electronic files to an external drive that you personally purchased, you “may” own the information. If you copied to an external drive that you personally purchased during the work day then the district may own the information. What does “own the information” mean? The information on these external drives comes under the USSC ruling on electronic files that must be maintained for possible civil action against you and/or your school district. If you are using your personal phone or personal email account, Twitter account, Facebook account, etc. for business use then you can assume that these are electronic records that come under the USSC ruling. So...do you really want to risk a court order to search your email, Twitter, Facebook accounts? What other things are lurking there that could embarrass you? Remember, it is the disgruntled parent-student-employer’s attorney that is going to be seeking a court order to access this information. Do you really trust a judge to discriminate what is business and what is personal? Do you really trust the allegedly aggrieved party not to leak embarrassing information that has nothing to do with their allegations to their favorite newspaper reporter or TV journalist?

If you, or one of your teachers, is “friending” a student on Facebook or communicating with a student via text messaging, emails, etc. that will be construed as “business” not “personal”. The same is true for groups set up on Facebook for school clubs and activities.

So...Do you really trust others to understand that when you “friend” a student via...etc. is only for “business” and not “personal” reasons?

## School Physical Security Members – Only during the School Day?


Recently an individual was arrested for “flashing” students in a number of local school districts in the afternoon after the end of the regular school day. Most schools now have very good security in place – locked doors, visible scrutiny of those entering the building, sign in and name tag procedures in place during the regular school day, but for some reason they

unlock the doors and end the security as soon as classes are over. This allows anyone to enter a building without clearance while sports teams are practicing, clubs are meeting, teachers are working in their rooms, etc. Security does not end with the end of regular classes! What do you do in your building? What vulnerabilities do you have? How can you address these? Do you need to maintain a check point/sign-in locked door procedure that extends beyond the school day? Do you allow sports teams to go in/out through an unlocked back door to the locker room? Fortunately the “flasher” was identified through video surveillance that was still operating.

### Your email address: a marketers dream!

On 1/13/10, David Goldman a staff writer for CNN Money addressed this issue when he stated that, “armed with your email address, data miners can hit Facebook and match it up with your user ID. That key unlocks a treasure trove of personal information. At bare minimum, your ID provides access to your name and your profile photo, no matter what privacy settings you have. Those who stick with Facebook’s recommended settings will mine even more; your location, hometown, list of friends, lots of photos, and many of your “likes,” such as activities and interests. That’s a goldmine for companies that are trying to target their products to you.” Remember always that Facebook is a business looking to maximize its profits!!!!!! I always advise creating a special email account [Hotmail, Yahoo, AOL, Gmail] that you use only to establish profiles on Facebook, Twitter, etc. In this way if a marketer gets access to your normal email account and uses the “search” feature in Facebook-Twitter, it won’t “find you” Also never use the suggested “default” privacy settings for these sites – always maximize your privacy and then understand that it still won’t be private; there are ways around these settings.

### The End of Forgetting in the Age of the Web

My “Mantra” in presentations continues to be “In the age of the internet there is no such thing as privacy and everything is forever”. In a recent survey by Microsoft, 75% of US company recruiters and HR folks reported that it is now company policy to do online research about candidates for positions, and a range of sites is utilized for this research, including search engines [Google, Yahoo, etc], social networking sites, photo and video sharing sites, personal Web Sites & Blogs, Twitter, and online gaming sites. 70% of these same folks reported that they have not hired candidates because of what was found online. What does this reality say for our students? Recently I was told of a high school senior in a journalism class whose parents had the student drop the course because one of the requirements was to submit articles to a local newspaper. The newspaper’s policy was that anything submitted became “owned” by the newspaper. Newspapers archive this information so, down the road, say in 4-5 years, a long forgotten article by a then high school student can be resurrected and published anew or made “searchable” in the papers’ archives. The student’s parent did not want her high school work impacting her later in her life. Is this any different that public figures having their written ruminations from college days coming back to “bite them” in the present? The impact on us as administrators on what we communicate today becomes fodder for tomorrow, This is definitely a cautionary note. 

## Getting “Real” About Harassment


By Charles Mitchell  
Chair – School Safety, ESSAA

The buzz word in the news regarding student’s misuse of cyberspace has moved from “sexting” to “cyberbullying”. Essentially the legal term is “harassment”. Bullying whether by traditional methods or use of cyberspace is a form of harassment. Harassment using electronic means in New York State is a crime punishable in family court or in the regular court system for those students who are classified as adults. Educating our students [and staff and parents] in their responsibilities to treat one another with civility [another buzz word] and to be accountable for their actions is always our goal as educators; but when students, staff, or parents cross the line and harass another individual, it is our responsibility to hold that person, or persons, accountable.

Clearly, when students, or staff, use school equipment or go through school servers to harass each other, the school district has legal authority to take action. If students, staff, or parents use their own computers or cell phones to harass another either through messages, phone calls, or use of social network sites, the claim of free speech can be used to muddy the harassment argument. However, schools which document a negative impact of this action on a teacher, administrator, on class decorum, or on a student’s behavior on school property, have no legal problem with taking appropriate disciplinary action.

Recently the headlines on a local TV station was Nasty Facebook Pages Investigated. The story line related to a Facebook group called, “List of [School name] Fagz (And A Hoes). The School District’s Superintendent was quoted stating “Because of our relationship with the police and DA, we will work together and will punish people we’re able to find with school consequences if they’re a student or in the penal system, and we have no intention of stopping at that. The \_\_\_\_\_ School District has already had some success in prosecuting a person who created a derogatory Facebook page three months ago. They were caught and are facing harassment charges.” Kudos to that Superintendent and to that school district!!

Recently I gave a presentation on internet safety and bullying at a local high school. When I got to my power point slide outlining 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Harassment in New York State, one of the teachers who also happens to be a Justice of the Peace spoke up and said he would definitely support charges of 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Harassment for anyone using an electronic device [phone, internet, etc] inappropriately.

We are sometimes too passive about involving the police and court system in issues that negatively impact our students and staff. There is nothing wrong with working in tandem. If someone commits an act in violation of school policy and criminal code, we should go after them both internally and externally. If those who harass think they can hide behind “free speech” it is time for a wakeup call. Take positive public action a couple of times and maybe others will think before they “act.” 

## SNIPPETS THAT MIGHT SURPRISE YOU

### NASBE Responds to Education Issues in State of the Union Address

Arlington, VA — A statement by Brenda Welburn, Executive Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), on President Barack Obama's 2011 State of the Union address.

"Last night, President Obama aptly compared cuts in education spending to removing engines from an airplane in mid-flight. We, like most in this country, support the goal of fiscal stability and responsible spending, but also recognize that a strong system of public education is one investment with a demonstrated, positive outcome. The goals of a strong education system and a fiscally sound nation are not mutually exclusive. The best investment America can make as we forge our way out of our current economic crisis and guard against future crises is to ensure our schools produce well-educated citizens. The students of today need to be prepared for jobs that have not yet been invented.

"We look forward to seeing the President's budget and legislative proposals for education, and working with the Administration and Congress on these critical issues this year and every year."

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*The National Association of State Boards of Education represents America's state and territorial boards of education. NASBE exists to strengthen State Boards as the preeminent educational policymaking bodies for citizens and students. For more, visit [www.nasbe.org](http://www.nasbe.org). "Legal Updates From NASBE (National Association of School Boards of Education) Reprinted with permission."*

### Is 'No Child Left Behind' to Blame for Poor Science Test Scores?

by Jeffrey Mervis on 25 January 2011,  
From "Science Insider"

U.S. students don't know much about science, according to the latest results from a national test released today. And one leading science educator says that a big reason for their poor performance is a 2002 federal law that has pushed the subject out of classrooms by emphasizing reading and mathematics.

"For 9 years, elementary school principals have been telling teachers not to teach science because it's not part of No Child Left Behind," says Francis Eberle, executive director of the National Science Teachers Association in Arlington, Virginia, referring to the 2002 law that requires annual testing of those students in grades three through eight toward a 2014 goal of national competence in those areas. "Now those students are in high school, and we're seeing the consequences of that policy."

Eberle is speaking about scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which measures student achievement in reading, math, and science at the fourth, eighth, and 12th grades. The 2009 assessment, which focused on science, found that 40% of high school seniors perform below the basic level in science and only 1% at the advanced level. Younger students did marginally better, with 29% of fourth-graders and 38% of eighth-graders falling below basic and 1%

and 2% at the advanced level, respectively. Among the biggest states, Massachusetts ranks highest and California lowest in grades four and eight, although students from New Hampshire, Montana, and North Dakota scored the best and those from Mississippi scored the worst. (Scores for 12<sup>th</sup>-graders are available only nationally.)

The Obama Administration is no fan of No Child Left Behind, which is seen as putting too much emphasis on annual test scores. Department of Education officials now refer to the law by its generic name, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Education Secretary Arnie Duncan hopes that the next version, now pending before Congress, will offer school districts a variety of incentives for having students demonstrate significant year-to-year progress.

Test officials, which call NAEP "the nation's report card," say the content has changed so much that the results can't be compared with previous assessments in 1996, 2000, and 2005. The new test better reflects the subjects that students learn at those grades, they note, as well as placing more emphasis on whether students can apply textbook knowledge to real-life situations rather than simply recall scientific terms and facts.

Science educators see the changes in the test itself as a big improvement. "It's the best test we've ever had," says Alan Friedman, former director of the New York Hall of Science and a member of the test's oversight body, the National Assessment Governing Board.

Even so, Eberle and others regard the overall findings as very discouraging. "I don't see anything to celebrate here," he says. "Despite all the emphasis on improving educational achievement, there's been a 30% decrease in the amount of science taught at the elementary level, and opportunities for professional development have been reduced. It's not that teachers aren't trying. But there are fewer resources available to them."

### Board Audits Grow In Popularity

A neat hat trick is being played on school districts in Connecticut as Boards of Education hire "auditing firms" such as Prismatic, Inc. out of North Carolina, to evaluate their facilities, programs, and staffing.

In one Fairfield County district, the Board paid an undisclosed sum to have Prismatic nose around its schools and central office. In its eventual report to the Board, the first person praised was the Superintendent – the one who hired the Prismatic! Prismatic went on to recommend *increased staffing in the superintendent's office*; then proceeded to chop and chisel away at the numbers of line administrators and teachers currently employed. It saved some special hacks for the Arts programs and recommended outsourcing these programs or cutting the staff by half.

Of course, this provided the new superintendent and the Board that had hired him with the cover to "save money" and then channel the savings back into the Superintendent's office.

It is especially important to note that, while teachers, staff, and administrators were given the chance to respond to surveys before the audit was completed, no more than 30% of any of these groups responded; and Prismatic went on to cite and pursue the complaints of those who did respond, prior to recommending cut and slash, and using the responses as prima facie evidence.

At the risk of giving your board any bright ideas, you might be interested in reading the pitch behind Prismatic and it's mastermind, Tatia Prieto.



### Prismatic's founder and president is Tatia Prieto.

Tatia has successfully led consulting teams working for school districts and education agencies in 21 states so far. In the past year, Prismatic has fielded teams of two to eight consultants on projects in five states, including Florida and Missouri.

Before launching her own firm, Tatia held leadership positions in two nationally-known K-12 consulting firms. She also gained management experience with a Fortune 500 company, directed survey research for a national polling company, and supervised research projects for a non-profit institute.

Tatia's specific areas of K-12 expertise include grant evaluations, business operations, survey research, transportation, safety and security, food service, technology, and program benchmarking. She holds an MBA in operations from The University of Texas at Austin. She is a Project Management Professional (PMP), certified through the Project Management Institute.

## Momentum Building for Common Core State Standards, But Implementation is Years Away

*Reprinted from the Center on Education Policy*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – (Jan. 6, 2011) – States that have signed onto common core state standards in English language arts and math are moving forward with little resistance, though full implementation is several years away for most of them, a new report from the Center on Education Policy (CEP) released today finds.

Most states plan major changes to assessments, curriculum materials, professional development and teacher evaluation as part of the new standards. Many of these changes, however, are years away. For example, 23 of the 31 states that plan to require school districts to implement the common core standards do not expect to fully institute the requirements until 2013 or later.

*States' Progress and Challenges in Implementing Common Core Standards* is based on a confidential survey of state deputy education secretaries. Forty-two states and the District of Columbia responded to the survey between October and November 2010. The goal of the survey was to learn more about state progress toward adopting and implementing the voluntary K-12 common core state learning standards.

"States are making progress and see strong support for common core standards, but this is going to take a long time and a sustained effort to see through," said Jack Jennings, CEP's president and CEO. "It's also noteworthy that states vary on approaches to higher education policy and on how much they will require districts to do to support the new standards."

At the time of the survey, 32 states had adopted the standards; four had provisionally adopted the standards, which means that further action is necessary, such as legislative approval; one state decided not to adopt them; and five of the six undecided expected to reach a decision this year while the other was unsure when a decision would be reached.

Officials in 36 states said that the rigor of the common core state standards and whether they would serve as a foundation

for statewide education improvement were very important or important considerations in their decision to adopt the standards. By contrast, 30 states said they decided, in part, to adopt core standards because they felt it would improve their chances of winning federal Race to the Top funding. (States could cite multiple reasons for adopting the standards.) "The federal incentive of Race to the Top funding clearly played a role in states' decisions to adopt common core state standards," Jennings said. "But, the improvement of education was a more important factor for the states."

Many states said it will take until 2013 or later to fully implement the more complex challenges associated with the common core standards. Most states expect to make changes in professional development by 2012 or sooner, but it will take until 2013 or later to fully implement major changes in assessment, curriculum, and teacher evaluation and certification. Of the 27 states that plan to change student assessments by 2013 or later, six gave 2015 as the timeline. "Given the time it's going to take to fully implement the standards and the policy changes necessary to support them, it's going to be important that states continue to make progress on other immediate but related efforts to improve schools," Jennings said.

The survey found that states lack solid plans to coordinate with higher education on linking college admissions requirements or curriculum to the common standards. Just seven states plan to align first-year undergraduate core curriculum with the standards while 26 states did not know if this change would be implemented, and three said it would not. Twenty-four states did not know if undergraduate admissions requirements would be aligned to the standards, while eight said they would, and four said they would not. "Supporters hope that the common core standards will encourage a seamless system of education from elementary school through college," Jennings said. "This is far from being realized."

Many challenges remain for states implementing the common standards. Twenty-one states said that developing a teacher evaluation system that holds teachers accountable for the standards is a major challenge, and 19 states said that finding adequate funding was a major challenge. A total of 21 states expected to face a major or minor challenge aligning teacher preparation programs with the standards. "The challenge states expect to face with teacher preparation programs seems to reflect a disconnect between K-12 education and higher education around the standards," Jennings said.

Although most adopting states will require school districts to implement the common core state standards, the majority are not requiring districts to change curriculum and teacher programs to support the requirement. The district activities that are being required by the greatest numbers of states include providing professional development to support the standards (13 states), implementing evaluation systems to hold educators accountable for students' mastery of the standards (11 states), and developing new curriculum or instructional practices aligned with the common standards (10 states).

"The movement toward common state standards clearly has momentum that can help states navigate through the hard work ahead," Jennings said.

The full report is available online at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

*Based in Washington, D.C., and founded in 1995 by Jack Jennings, the Center on Education Policy is a national independent advocate for public education and for more effective public schools. The Center works to help Americans better understand the role of public education in a democracy and the need to improve the academic quality of public schools. The Center does not represent special interests. Instead, it helps citizens make sense of conflicting opinions and perceptions about public education and create conditions that will lead to better public schools.*

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information about ESSAA?*

Please contact Ed Keeler.  
Telephone 315-736-0629 or  
e-mail: [e.keeler@verizon.net](mailto:e.keeler@verizon.net)

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### Attention ESSAA Members Retiring in June:

Because retired educators remain informed about and interested in supporting excellence in education for all New York State students, ESSAA has formed an organization for the retired administrator. **The Retired Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association** will devote 100% of it's time and resources to serve the interests of retired administrators, work to improve the quality of life for all retired educators and insure excellence in education for all children in New York State. Additionally, all the benefits of ESSAA membership (*excluding the life insurance*) are available. The annual fees are \$25 dollars per calendar year (\$10 of which will go to the ESSAA PAC).

Tear Off Form to be sent to:

**Retired Empire State Supervisors & Administrators Association**  
**C/o Herbert Dickson**  
**2636 Quail Ridge Road**  
**Endicott, NY 13760**



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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Former Unit \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_