



EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

Supporting school leaders, every day.

Summary of December 2022 Stakeholders Meeting

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Monday, December 5, 2022, via videoconference with Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Deputy Commissioner for P-12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle; Deputy Commissioner for P-12 Operational Support, Jason Harmon; Executive Director of Education Innovation and Strategic Initiatives, David Frank; and NYSED Chief Financial Officer, Phyllis Morris.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; ESSAA Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; ESSAA Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld, ESSAA Vice President, John Rickert; ESSAA Vice President, Tony Baxter; ESSAA Director of Professional Learning, Eva Jones; ESSAA Director of Information Resources, Celia Strino; ESSAA member, John Zampaglione; ESSAA member Jennifer Martino; ESSAA member Ashlee Hunt; ESSAA member, Mike Moran; and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Specific topics discussed during the meeting include:

2022-2023 Regents Budget Proposal

NYSED Chief Financial Officer, Phyllis Morris, reviewed the key components of the 2022-2023 proposed budget which will be presented to the Board of Regents for adoption at their upcoming December meeting. Budget priorities focus on:

Equity, Excellence and Access

1. Advancing Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education.
2. Expanding access to Career and Technical Education.

3. Ensuring funding equity for Students with Disabilities.
4. Preventing hunger from impeding learning.
5. Responding to the impact of the pandemic.
6. Promoting transparency through accountability.

Improving Customer Service

1. Providing more efficient customer service through increasing staff capacity and modernizing NYSED's information technology systems.
2. Supporting multilingual students and their families.
3. Creating a Data and Information Management System to support fact-based decision making.
4. Providing mandate relief to school districts and NYSED.

P-20 Continuum

1. Providing high quality, integrated, seamless, universally available Pre-Kindergarten.
2. Expanding regionalization and reorganization of aid programs to promote equity and ensure that a wide variety of educational programming is available statewide.
3. Incentivizing regionalization and promoting Regional Technical High Schools.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane again stressed the need for NYSED to dedicate increased funding to support the recruitment and mentoring of new educational leaders.

David Frank, the NYSED Executive Director of Education Initiatives and Strategic Innovation expressed appreciation to Mrs. Conklin-Spillane for her recent participation in a planning call that also included Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Higher Education William Murphy, Asst Commissioner for the Office of Teacher and Leader Development, Alex Trikalinos, and Dr. Terry Orr, the Director of the Educational Leadership, Administration and Policy Program at Fordham University. The group discussed a current pilot project which is focused on building a sustainable and systemic mentoring approach which would expand the level of support for new educational leaders.

Chronic Student Absenteeism

Commissioner Rosa expressed a growing concern with the increased level of chronic absenteeism they are seeing as students struggle with the transition back to school from the pandemic. The Commissioner went on to say that she feels that issues with student mental health are a primary reason for poor student attendance.

Mr. Anthony Baxter, a middle school assistant principal from Sleepy Hollow, shared that he has observed as much as a two-year regression in both the maturity and learning level of students as they work to address the learning gap and effectively deal with social emotional learning issues.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane suggested that showcasing exemplary schools where equitable and inclusive environments that promote social emotional learning have been implemented could be a valuable resource.

School Mascot Regulations

Mr. John Rickert, the principal of Niskayuna High School in the Capital Region, asked if guidance will be forthcoming which better clarifies the NYSED directive that specifically prohibits schools to utilize Native American mascots. He expressed frustration that he has been receiving conflicting feedback from community members who are confused about whether the district is in compliance with the new regulation since Niskayuna eliminated their Native American mascot but have currently opted to keep their team name – the Silver Warriors.

Commissioner Rosa responded that an advisory board is currently being formed to begin sorting through questions that have been brought forth and more specific guidance will be released in the near future. The Commissioner explained that as the advisory board reviews questions, they will focus on **both** the **team name** and the **team logo**, and whether they are perceived as offensive by indigenous groups in the community.

Update on Graduation Measures Initiative Committee

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane inquired about the progress of the committee working on the Graduation Measures Initiative. Commissioner Rosa responded that the Blue Ribbon Committee is scheduled to meet in the near future and that, despite what is being publicized in the media, there has not been any decision made to eliminate Regents Exams. The Commissioner emphasized that the focus of the committee's work is on promoting strength of rigor, critical thinking, and creating multiple ways to assess what students know. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane expressed that these goals can be achieved while still maintaining Regents Exams as an option for students to achieve a diploma.

Deputy Commissioner Angelique Johnson-Dingle also shared that NYSED is setting up an online Thought Exchange on their website as a means for the Graduation Measures Committee to continue to gather more stakeholder feedback and ideas as recommendations are put 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.