



EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

Supporting school leaders, every day.

Summary of June 2023 Stakeholders Meeting

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, via videoconference with Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Deputy Commissioner, P12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle; Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Education Policy, David Frank; Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Operational Supports, Jason Harmon; and Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs, Keshia Clukey.

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, Shelley Baldwin-Nye; ESSAA Vice President, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione; ESSAA Vice President, Russell Buckley; ESSAA Vice President, John Zampaglione; ESSAA member, Jennifer Martino; ESSAA member, Vince DiGrandi; ESSAA member, Mike Moran; and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Important Note: Recently, in an effort to make Stakeholder Meetings more productive, NYSED is has begun providing ESSAA representatives with a written summary of topics they will be addressing, prior to the meeting. The summaries include updated background information, data, and links to additional guidance and resources on each of the areas being discussed. The summary is presented in a bulleted format, is easy to read, and includes useful talking points relating to the many initiatives that are being worked on at NYSED which can be shared with colleagues and staff members.

The informational summary for this meeting is available as an attachment at the end of this meeting report.

Specific Topics discussed during the meeting included:

Release of Transgender Legal Update

Deputy Commissioner, P12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson Dingle provided a review of the recently released **Transgender and Gender Expansive Students: Legal Update and Best Practices**. Citing a presentation to the Board of Regents at their June 12 meeting, the Deputy Commissioner emphasized that NYSED continues to take steps to assist Transgender, Gender Expansive, nonbinary, and intersex students to feel safe and supported in school.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane suggested that guidance from NYSED, with regards to steps that principals can take during the summer to assist staff with implementing the supports, would be helpful as they continue to implement the guidelines.

The attachment at the end of this meeting summary provides an overview of the legal update. Additionally, the links below will allow you to access the entire document along with the actual archived presentation from the June Board of Regents meeting.

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/student-support-services/creating-a-safe-supportive-and-affirming-school-environment-for-transgender-and-gender-expansive-students.pdf>

<https://vimeo.com/836325131>

Substantial Equivalence Guidance

Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank, shared that the final revisions associated with the new Substantial Equivalence regulations should be released early this summer.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane reminded the Assistant Commissioner of concerns that ESSAA had expressed with regards to the unfair burden associated with asking local school districts to carry out the required Substantial Equivalence reviews of non-public schools within their districts. Assistant Commissioner Frank responded that NYSED recognized this issue when developing the new policy. He stated that non-public schools have seven different pathways available to pursue approval which do not require a review by the local school district. He also added that school districts have the additional option of contracting with their local BOCES to carry out a review process if necessary.

Early Childhood Summer Literacy Conference

Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle previewed the upcoming **Early Childhood Summer Prekindergarten – Grade 3 Literacy Institute** scheduled for this summer. The event will take place on **August 17** at the **NYS Cultural Education Center in Albany**. The agenda includes two highly respected keynote speakers along with breakout sessions on special education inclusion, cultural education, ELLs, and P-3 curriculum and instruction. Attendees have the option of attending in person or participating via livestream.

A link to the conference flyer can be found at the end of this report.

Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Aid (CRRSA) Liquidation Survey

Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Operational Supports, Jason Harmon provided an update on potential changes with requirements associated with the spending of CRRSA funding. The Deputy Commissioner stated that NYSED recognizes many districts may require flexibility with effectively spending the remainder of their funding allocations and that they are in the process of developing a request to the US Department of Education (DOE) which would extend the September 30, 2023 deadline for the spending of certain CRRSA funds.

Deputy Commissioner Harmon emphasized that the NYSED request is still being developed and has not been approved by DOE at this time. A survey will be going out to districts in the near future in an effort to collect supporting documentation from school districts which NYSED will include in the request to provide specific evidence for why DOE should support the proposed extension.

ESSAA Items Requesting NYSED Response Included:

Ensuring Safe and Orderly School Environments

At recent stakeholder meetings, ESSAA representatives have shared concerns with emerging NYSED recommendations relating to **the Recommendations for Reducing Disparities in and Reforming School Discipline in New York State** that was released earlier this year. Prior to this month's meeting, several concerns have been expressed by ESSAA members specifically related to mandating the reduction of suspensions without principals having effective options available which would enable them to maintain school safety.

Commissioner Rosa responded that she would like to bring our concerns to Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Student Support Services, Kathleen DeCataldo, to both discuss our concerns and review the information that came out of a recent follow-up meeting of the Safe Schools Task Force.

Mr. Scampini asked Commissioner Rosa for any specific recommendations she could offer principals which would assist them as they work with staff over the summer to begin integrating key components of the School Discipline Report recommendations. The Commissioner responded that while the **Solutions not Suspensions Bill** failed to be acted on in the most recent legislative session, she feels it will come up again for reconsideration in the next session. The Commissioner added that NYSED guidance will be forthcoming in the near future and principals need to focus on improving all areas relating to school safety.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane reemphasized the need for NYSED to revisit the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) requirements. ESSAA members continue to express concerns that the regulations, as currently written, continually force principals into the role of investigator and prosecutor and severely hamper their ability to be effective school leaders.

Commissioner Rosa responded that she is aware of our concerns and that she has heard similar thoughts from other stakeholder groups. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane stated that ESSAA is willing to work with NYSED, would welcome the opportunity to participate in deeper discussions about revising DASA regulations,

and would appreciate a written statement from NYSED related to possible changes to DASA requirements.

Current Legislative Bills

ESSAA member Vince DiGrandi asked Commissioner Rosa about the status of two proposed legislative bills, one which would reduce the annual number of required Lockdown Drills and another that would require schools to begin the school day no earlier than 8:30AM.

The Commissioner responded that she is familiar with both bill proposals and has participated in discussions with legislators on the potential benefits and drawbacks of each of them.

With regards to reducing the number of lockdown drills, the Commissioner feels that there must be at least a minimum of two required annual drills.

With regards to the 8:30AM start time, Commissioner Rosa feels that, due to the various logistical difficulties this requirement would create, this is a decision that should be left to the discretion of individual districts.

NYSED Stakeholder Notes

Below are links to the attachments that include the informational summary NYSED provided on each of the topics discussed during the meeting and the flyer with detailed information on the P-3 Early Childhood Summer Literacy Institute.

[ESSAA Stakeholder June 2023 Annotated](#)

[P-3 Summer Institute Flyer](#)

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.