



## **EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION**

Supporting school leaders, every day.

### **Summary of March 2023 Stakeholders Meeting**

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Wednesday, March 29, 2023, via videoconference with Commissioner of Education, Betty Rosa; Deputy Commissioner, P12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle; Executive Director of Educational Initiatives and Strategic Innovation, David Frank; and Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Operational Supports, Jason Harmon.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; ESSAA Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; ESSAA Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; ESSAA Director of Information Resources, Celia Strino; ESSAA Vice-President for Professional Development, Shelley Baldwin-Nye; ESSAA Vice President, John Rickert; ESSAA Director of Professional Learning, Eva Jones; ESSAA member, Dr. Bernadette Smith; ESSAA member, Jennifer Martino; and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

#### **Specific Topics discussed during the meeting included:**

##### **Accountability Restart**

NYSED Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Operational Support, Jason Harmon provided an update on the Accountability Restart initiative. He informed us that final accountability determinations have been sent to individual districts but have not yet been posted for the general public to view on NYSED.gov. NYSED has been conducting ongoing support trainings to assist districts with interpreting the data and guiding improvement efforts.

The Deputy Commissioner also shared that NYSED is currently working on the next phase of the Accountability Restart rollout which will reintegrate more indicators such as Growth Scores and Career and Civic Readiness into the accountability formula.

## **Blue Ribbon Commission – Graduation Measures Update**

Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle, provided an update on the progress of the Blue Ribbon Commission working on the Graduation Measures Initiative. Commission members recently completed their fifth formal meeting where they met with representatives from several colleges and universities. Participants from higher education shared perspectives on the challenges and successes high school students/graduates are experiencing during both the admissions process and the transition into college level coursework. Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle noted that one consistent message that emerged from the discussion was the increased emphasis on applicants being able to demonstrate evidence of soft skills, such as time management, critical thinking, adaptability, and openness to feedback, in the college application review process.

The Deputy Commissioner shared that a more comprehensive update on the work of the Blue Ribbon Commission will be presented at the April Board of Regents meeting.

## **Student Discipline Reform**

Commissioner Rosa and Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle reviewed work being done related to the **Recommendations for Reducing Disparities in and Reforming School Discipline in NYS Report** which was recently published by the NYSED Safe Schools Task Force.

Commissioner Rosa emphasized that districts are being asked to self-reflect on current student discipline approaches, explore best practices being used in other districts, and thoroughly review Codes of Conduct.

Mr. Scampini expressed concern that recent Board of Regents presentations have been very focused on theoretical perspectives of discipline reform. He added that little attention has been paid to examples of specific best practices that schools have implemented or on potential resources that are currently available to principals.

ESSAA member, Dr. Bernadette Smith, emphasized the need for sustainability of practices that are put in place. She expressed frustration with having implemented a very successful ZEN DEN in her building, only to have it discontinued when the funding was cut.

Citing feedback that was shared during a recent ESSAA sponsored webinar on School Discipline Reform, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane stated that practicing administrators have very strong feelings regarding the implications of the recommended reforms and the potential impact on school safety. She emphasized that principals are looking for an entry point on how to take beginning steps with the discipline reform recommendations, and need tools to assist them. She also suggested that the summer months are the most productive period to do this type of work.

After the stakeholder meeting concluded, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane further elaborated on the feedback she received from the webinar. She stressed that school leaders are experiencing competing and compelling pressures in the area of student discipline. Charged with maintaining a safe and accessible learning environment for all students, principals are expected to stop disruptive, aggressive, and dangerous

behaviors, even those generated outside the confines of the school day and school grounds. Principals have limited resources and tools at their disposal, and suspension and exclusion are often what they rely on. While data on the long term ineffectiveness of suspension in changing these behaviors and addressing their root causes is clear, so are staff, parent, and community expectations that students who demonstrate these behaviors be removed for the safety and well being of all who work and learn at a school. Proposed discipline reform has merit, but requires careful planning, deliberate capacity building, changes to codes of conduct, and community trust, to be successful. Finally, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane stressed that school leaders need resources and support to address both immediate needs in the short term, and for long term shifts to be effective in the future.

## **APPR Update**

Commissioner Rosa shared that significant progress has been made toward finalizing the revisions to APPR regulations for teachers and principals. While the updated guidelines will not be included in the new legislative budget, a bill is currently being worked on in the legislature which should be presented for adoption in the near future.

We have been given the opportunity to review a confidential draft of the proposed APPR regulations to provide input, and will share details with ESSAA members once they are released.

## **Additional Information Not Covered During Meeting**

Some agenda items were either not addressed or not fully discussed during the meeting due to time constraints. Commissioner Rosa shared a document with our group which was prepared by NYSED staff to provide more detailed information on certain agenda topics. A link to the document can be found below. Topics covered include:

- Indigenous Mascot Advisory Council Update
- Update on work relating to Student Discipline Reform
- Accountability Restart information
- Status of APPR revisions
- Recruitment and Retention of School Leaders Partnership with SUNY Stony Brook

### ***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](mailto:info@essaa.org). New topics will be submitted to our Stakeholder Committee for consideration.***