



EMPIRE STATE SUPERVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

Supporting school leaders, every day.

Summary of April 2024 Stakeholders Meeting

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held their monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Monday, April 29, 2024, via videoconference. Participants representing NYSED included Commissioner Betty Rosa; Senior Deputy Commissioner for Education Policy, Jeffrey Matteson; Deputy Commissioner, P12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle; Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Operational Supports, Jason Harmon; and Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank.

ESSAA was represented at the meeting by ESSAA President, Carol Conklin-Spillane; Executive Director, Mike Starvaggi; Executive Vice President, Skip Voorneveld; Vice President, John Rickert; Vice President, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione; Vice President, Russell Buckley; Vice President, Lisa O'Neill; Director of Professional Learning, Eva Jones; ESSAA member, Jennifer Martino; ESSAA Member, Vince DiGrandi; and Regents/NYSED Liaison, Paul Scampini.

Topics discussed during the meeting included:

- 1. The Need to Re-Examine School Safety and Discipline Policies**
- 2. Mandated Advance Coursework Notification**
- 3. Building a Framework of Public Understanding For Future Student Assessment and Graduation Data.**
- 4. Safety Concerns Regarding the Use of Schools as Election Polling Sites**

Important Note:

The informational summary provided by NYSED prior to the meeting is available as an attachment at the end of this report. The summary includes updated background information, data, and links to additional

guidance and resources on each of the areas being discussed. It also contains updated information on several topics not discussed at the meeting including:

1. **Special Education Services through Age 22**
2. **Plan Pilot Update**
3. **Celebrating Military-Connected Children**
4. **Workplace Violence Protection Act**
5. **Advanced Course Access Notification**
6. **3-8 Testing Resources**

The Need to Re-examine School Safety and Student Discipline Policy

The opening topic focused on the current inconsistent interpretation of School Safety and Discipline Policies across the State, and the need for further discussion.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane expressed that the lack of clarity with the policies, combined with the significant superintendent turnover in recent years, has resulted in school districts now turning to legal counsel, rather than the superintendent, when they seek guidance regarding policy compliance. Mrs. Conklin-Spillane added that it is becoming common practice for districts to take whatever steps are necessary to offset potential liability and avoid litigation, rather than make decisions that serve the best interest of students.

Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle stated that NYSED is committed to continue working to support school districts in this area, and that they are open to discussions about the policy. The Deputy Commissioner also shared that school discipline policy will be a key area of focus for the new Assistant Commissioner of Student Support Services.

Commissioner Rosa acknowledged NYSED's responsibility to work more closely with local school boards, and not just superintendents, in providing guidance in the future.

Mandated Advanced Coursework Notification

Mr. Scampini asked for some clarity and context with regards to the new Advanced Coursework Notification Policy that was approved at the March Board of Regents meeting. **The new regulation requires New York State Schools to provide annual notification of advanced coursework offerings to all families either electronically or by mail, by June 1. The information must also be posted on the district's website.**

Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle responded that the new regulation is in response to a bill signed into law by Governor Hochul in September, 2023. Commissioner Rosa added that the intent of the requirement is not to encourage open enrollment or remove prerequisites to advanced courses, but to raise awareness of opportunities for families. She also hopes the new regulation will encourage schools to reflect on the process they use for enrolling students in advanced courses to ensure there is equity.

Mr. Scampini questioned the June 1 notification deadline since, at this point in school year, most scheduling of students has already been completed. Assistant Commissioner Frank responded that, since new policy

was just put in place last month, NYSED wanted to give districts adequate time to gather and organize the information that will be sent out.

Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle shared a link to a site that includes a summary of the policy and a template that districts can utilize when formatting their correspondence. The link can be found below.

<https://www.nysed.gov/curriculum-instruction/expanding-access-advanced-coursework#:~:text=Notification%20of%20Advanced%20Coursework&text=Parents%20and%20students%20must%20receive,or%20district%2C%20whichever%20comes%20first>.

Building a Framework For Public Understanding of Future Student Achievement Results

At the March Board of Regents meeting, graduation and achievement data for the Class of 2023 (2019 Cohort) was reviewed. During the presentation, it was noted that this graduating class was significantly impacted by the pandemic from both the lack of in-person instruction they received, and with the number of Regents Exam exemptions they were afforded.

ESSAA members have raised concerns that as we continue to transition back to the pre-COVID requirements, it will be important to frame the conversation with stakeholders to prepare for a potential decrease in the graduation rate in the future. ESSAA member Vince DiGrandi emphasized the need to avoid finger pointing with regards to who is responsible and help the public understand what the data communicates.

Assistant Commissioner Frank responded by expressing optimism that New York's students will rise to the occasion and we could see improved scores next year. Deputy Commissioner Harmon acknowledged our concerns and expressed that NYSED will provide support with helping the public understand the variety of factors that could influence a downturn in the graduation rate and student achievement.

Safety Concerns Regarding the Use of Schools as Election Polling Sites

ESSAA member Jennifer Martino raised a growing concern regarding the use of school buildings as election polling sites. Ms. Martino stressed that the increasing safety challenges and the disruptions to teaching and learning create a very difficult environment to manage.

Commissioner Rosa responded that this issue has been raised by other stakeholder groups and she is considering a proposal to the send to the Governor asking her to limit the use of schools as polling sites.

NYSED Agenda Summary Notes - A copy of the document can be found as a separate attachment/link, or to request a copy please contact Bonnie Berry at: bberry@essaa.org.

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.