



**Council of Administrators  
and Supervisors**  
Supporting Educational Leadership

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

Supporting school leaders, every day.

### **Summary of May 2023 Stakeholders Meeting**

The **Empire State Supervisors and Administrators Association (ESSAA)** held its monthly Stakeholder Meeting on Tuesday, May 23, 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 Director of Professional Learning, Eva Jones; ESSAA Vice President, Shelley Baldwin-Nye; ESSAA Vice President, Dr. Shireen Fasciglione; ESSAA Vice President, John Rickert; ESSAA Vice President, John Zampaglione; ESSAA Vice President, Anthony Baxter; 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:**

## **NYSED Staffing Changes**

In an effort to better align their work, NYSED has adopted three central pillars to guide their efforts:

1. Learning is at the core of all we do.
2. Principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion drive our work.
3. Improved service to students, educators, families, and communities is vital.

Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Educational Policy, David Frank, provided an update on several NYSED staffing appointments, personnel realignments, and organizational shifts within the department. Commissioner Rosa commented that she feels that the changes will better enable NYSED to further advance their ability to implement the three pillars listed above.

A complete summary of the organizational and staffing shifts is included in the attachment at the end of this document.

## **Computer Based Testing Update**

Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Instructional Supports, Jason Harmon, reviewed data relating to the number of students who participated in **Computer Based Testing (CBT)** during the recent administration of the 3-8 ELA and Math Tests.

The Deputy Commissioner shared that over 30% of all students tested utilized CBT, with 330,000 students taking the ELA, and 275,000 students taking the math assessment on the computer.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane asked about the major challenges that remain for further implementation as NYSED moves toward the required implementation of CBT for grades 5-8 next year. Deputy Commissioner Harmon responded that NYSED needs schools to pursue any required technology upgrades to ensure that appropriate infrastructures are in place. He added that NYSED will work to be more responsive to districts that need support, and suggested that Pandemic Relief Funds can be used to support necessary technology upgrades.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane suggested that administering a survey to schools could assist NYSED with assessing the emerging needs of schools who wish to move to CBT. She also recommended sending out a guidance document which includes a profile of the specific components of the technological infrastructure districts/schools need to have in place to successfully implement CBT.

## **Mascot Guidelines**

Commissioner Rosa reviewed the most recent guidance NYSED has released on the new Mascot Regulations. The new regulations require that “team names, mascots, and logos derived from, or that have connections to indigenous peoples, in the past or the present, that are being used without the express consent of such people are contrary to the requirements of the regulations and New York State’s Dignity for All Students Act and must change.”

## **School Discipline Reform**

Commissioner Rosa provided an update on NYSED’s School Discipline Reform Initiative and reviewed some of the testimony that was provided by NYSED staff at recent NYS Senate Standing Committee on Education hearings.

Commissioner Rosa continues to emphasize that the Board of Regents is committed to minimizing punitive exclusionary practices and creating state and district-level plans which avoid the use of practices that remove students from the classroom.

Mrs. Conklin-Spillane responded that, while school administrators certainly support efforts to reduce suspensions, ESSAA members continue to have concerns about mandating the reduction of school suspensions without principals having effective options available which would enable them to maintain school safety and maintain positive learning environments. As an example, Mrs. Conklin-Spillane cited that principals are increasingly being forced to take on the role of DASA Investigator due to the increasing number of incidents that are being reported.

Commissioner Rosa acknowledged the concerns and mentioned that as part of her Senate Committee testimony, she expressed frustration that approved funding dedicated to mental health support for students has not yet been released by the NYS Department of Budget. The Commissioner feels these funds could be used to support therapeutic interventions and counseling that would support reducing exclusionary practices. Commissioner Rosa also testified that she feels the competitive grant structure that is currently in place for receiving the mental health funds is unfair and she supports a process which allocates funds to all districts.

Also, with regards to the Senate Education Hearings, ESSAA was pleased that Vice-President John Rickert, the principal of Niskayuna High School, was invited to provide testimony to the committee on the challenges associated with reducing school suspensions.

## **Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures Performance-Based Learning and Assessment Network (PLAN) Pilot**

Deputy Commissioner, P-12 Instructional Support, Angelique Johnson-Dingle, provided an update on the work of the Graduation Measures Blue Ribbon Committee, most specifically relating to pilots that are occurring related to implementing Performance Assessments as part of the statewide assessment policy.

Deputy Commissioner Johnson-Dingle shared that work is continuing in several pilot school networks (PLAN) across the state, reviewed the various resources that have been developed, encouraged schools to consider participation in the initiative, and outlined the timeline for moving forward.

## **NYSED Stakeholder Meeting Summary Notes**

Below is the link to attachment that includes the informational summary NYSED provided on each of the topics discussed during the meeting.



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**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.*