

NJASL

New Jersey Association of School Librarians

Legislative and Agency Update April 2008

New Jersey Legislature

Neither the Senate nor the Assembly is scheduled to hold a session until late May. Likewise, no legislative committees are expected to meet until May with the exception of the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee and the Assembly Budget Committee. Over the next few weeks, these committees will hold public meetings at which each department of state will present their proposed budgets and respond to questions submitted by the committees in advance of the scheduled meetings. However, the state Senate unexpectedly called a meeting for April 7 to consider a few bills waiting final action. When it met two bills of interest received final passage.

- **Paid Family Leave Legislation**

On April 7, 2008, the state Senate passed S-786/A-2082 by a vote of 21-15. School employees are prohibited from using sick leave to care for a sick family member or new child. This legislation will allow school employees and other workers to take up to six weeks of paid family leave to care for a sick family member or a new child. The bill would permit an employee to collect two-thirds of their salary while on leave. The bill is on the Governor's desk and he has indicated that he will sign it into law.

- **Municipal Library Surplus Funds**

Assembly bill 1265 has been signed by the Governor and is now law. This new law permits municipal board of library trustees to transfer surplus funds to municipality for tax relief under certain conditions.

The new law will permit a municipal board of library trustees to transfer to the municipality any excess library funds beyond the amount it needs to operate the library and maintain a reasonable library surplus. The municipal free library will be permitted to retain a sum equal to the amount of the audited operating expenditures of the library for the most recent available year plus an additional 25% of that amount as surplus. A board of library trustees will need the approval of the State Librarian to affect the transfer. This law will not apply to municipal free libraries established after the effective date of the new law until their eighth budget year.

Department of Education Budget Hearings

The Department of Education presented its proposed budget to both budget committees during the week of April 7. At separate meetings, Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy provided each committee with an overview of the department's proposed budget and a discussion of the department's priorities for the coming fiscal year. After Davy's

presentation, members of the budget committees had the opportunity to ask questions and to request additional information on aspects of the department's proposal.

Highlights of Davy's remarks included a discussion of how the new funding formula will ensure that state aid is being efficiently appropriated and invested in the improvement of student academic performance. She noted that accountability for districts, fairness for taxpayers and equity for children guided the department's efforts in constructing the proposal. The presentation ended with a short overview of the department's initiatives the most important of which, according to Davy, "...will help students prepare for life and work in the 21st century." Literacy, particularly in the early grades, best practices for middle-school grades, redesign of high schools, early childhood education, and a new state assessment program were among the initiatives discussed.

State Board of Education

March 19 Meeting

School Funding

The Commissioner stated that school aid has been successfully distributed. Districts seeking waivers of their local tax levies have been reviewed and notified.

Monitoring of School Districts

The Commissioner reported that the Department is in the process of finalizing the placement on the continuum of the 126 districts that completed the QSAC process. The Commissioner's final determinations will be provided to the State Board shortly.

Special Review Assessment

Assistant commissioner Jay Doolan and Timothy Peters, director of the Office of State Assessment highlighted the revisions made to the proposal based upon the recommendations submitted by the public and other stakeholders to enhance the alternative instrument developed to satisfy the state graduation test requirements.

Career and Technical Education Five-Year Plan

Adopted a resolution to reauthorize the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006:

Managing for Equality and Equity in Education

Approved the re-adoption of N.J.A.C. 6A:7 without amendments for the sole purpose of maintaining the rules in order to avoid a regulatory lapse.

Bilingual Education

Approved the re-adoption with amendments of N.J.A.C. 6A:15. The State Board recommended including a definition of "semester" as one-half of the school year.

Discussion Item

Assistant commissioner Jay Doolan, Cathy Pine, director of Office of Professional Standards and Robert Higgins, director of Licensing presented a preview of the key amendments proposed for the re-adoption of N.J.A.C. 6A:9.

April 16 Meeting

Regulations to Implement the School Funding Reform Act

At the April 16 meeting of the State Board of Education Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy discussed the draft of the School Reform Program regulations. Davy asked the Board to review the draft of Subchapter 1 and to provide her with input. She also informed that Board that the same information has also been circulated to key stakeholder groups for their review and input. She explained that the new regulations are organized into two key sections. The first part, which the Board received today, focuses on the rules governing programs for standards based instruction that all school districts will be required to meet.

The program regulations are proposed as Subchapter 1 and are designed to provide a framework for school districts regarding mandated programs and services. As currently written, they allow districts the opportunity for flexibility and creativity in developing the required programs and do not dictate a specific approach that all districts must follow. Once the regulations are finalized, the department will develop guidance documents and models as reference tools for districts to use as they redesign existing programs and implement new ones.

The second part of the new rules is still under final review at the department and will be circulated in the near future. This section will outline the rules for school financing and budgeting in a very detailed and specific manner. Davy noted that Subchapter 2 is lengthily, detailed and prescriptive. Her plan is to have the new School Funding Reform regulations in place by September 2008 thereby providing local school districts the opportunity to use the 2008-09 school year as a planning year with full implementation of the majority of the new requirements beginning September 2009. She noted that a few of the new requirements would be phased in gradually over several years to allow districts time to develop new programs and the capacity to implement them.

Important News for School Librarians!

The draft of the program regulations states the following:

N.J.A.C. 6A:XX-1.1 Standard-based instruction

(g) All school districts shall provide library-media services in each school building, including a certified school library media specialist and access to computers, district-approved instructional software, appropriate books including novels, anthologies and other reference materials, and supplemental materials that motivate students to read in and out of school and to conduct research.

There will be limited opportunity to provide comments to the Commissioner on the draft and the timeline for analysis and input is likely to be short. Also, NJASL can expect stiff opposition to the requirement outlined above from superintendents, school boards, and

other groups. I requested a copy of the draft regulations and asked that NJASL “officially” to be added to the list of stakeholders to whom future drafts are sent and the opportunity for input is extended. As more information becomes available, you will be notified.

Professional Licensure and Standards

Assistant commissioner Jay Doolan presented at first discussion proposed changes to the regulations governing teacher certification. Only a few provisions in the current regulations are proposed for amendment. The proposal at N.J.A.C. 6A:9-5.20 Computer Literacy needs further analysis and possible amendments to clarify the duties authorized under the new endorsement title. [Professional Licensure and Standards](#)

Religious Holiday Calendar

The Board approved a resolution to approve the Religious Holiday Calendar for 2008-09. This calendar is used by local school districts to construct their school calendars. [Adoption Resolution](#) with calendar.

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