

## Government relations report to NJASL July 31, 2007

### State Board of Education:

**Board discusses grade point requirement in NJ teacher hiring.** At its meeting on July 18, the State Board of Education held a lively discussion about ways to broaden the standards used to hire prospective teachers, including placing less emphasis on their college grade-point average. The discussion was initiated by the board's new president, Ronald Butcher, who has served on the board as a member for 16 years. He questioned the difference between a 2.75 gpa at Marygrove College or University of Phoenix and a 2.4 at Princeton.

"I'd rather [hire the candidate with] the 2.4 at Princeton," he said. Other board members and Commissioner Lucille Davy raised concerns about sending a message that C students at any college are good enough to teach in New Jersey. State officials also noted that the research on the subject is not clear in a summary presented to the board of 34 studies nationwide that failed to reach consensus on whether good college transcripts lead to good classroom teaching. [Read more.](#)

At its next meeting on August 15, there will be opportunity for public testimony on *NJAC 6A:9* Professional Licensure and Standards-Phase 5 Amendments and Praxis II Resolutions.

### Department of Education:

**DOE Commissioner Davy on her way out?** The Star Ledger reported on June 11 that Governor Corzine was considering replacing DOE Commissioner Lucille Davy with State Senator Joseph Doria, D-Bayonne. The word was that the governor wanted Doria to oversee development of a new school funding formula as either Commissioner of Education or the governor's chief education advisor. However, on Saturday, August 4, the Ledger reported that the governor will name Doria as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs after Labor Day. Not clear what all this political intrigue means for education. [Read more](#)

**DOE to recommend that some control be returned to Jersey City and Newark.** The Department of Education released evaluation reports on July 24, 2007 indicating that two districts under state control are ready to resume some measure of local control. Commissioner Davy will recommend to the State Board of Education that Jersey City be permitted to elect or appoint its own school board in the next year and regain control of its fiscal operations. Newark would gain control over facilities and other daily operations, though fiscal operations and personnel would stay in the hands of a state-appointed superintendent. The state took over control of Jersey City in 1989 and in Newark in 1995. [Read more.](#)

**Education Law Center Sues Department of Education . . . Again.** On July 6, 2007, the Education Law Center filed a lawsuit against the state Department of Education seeking to force the department to conduct an evaluation of Abbott reforms and to set benchmarks for progress for the Abbott districts. This evaluation has never been done by the Department despite it being a requirement of the landmark 1998 Abbott V ruling, nine years ago. The suit, citing the State's repeated failure to implement a formal evaluation of the Abbott program, asks for an order directing the DOE, within 60 days, to:

- Prepare a detailed work plan and schedule for undertaking and completing the evaluation of Abbott reforms, and
- Complete and adopt progress benchmarks for Abbott districts.

[Read more.](#)

### **State Legislature**

**Legislature creates new agency for schools construction.** On June 21, 2007, both the Senate and the Assembly passed legislation establishing the New Jersey Schools Development Authority in place of the Schools Construction Corporation and revising the school construction program established under the "Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act." The new agency will be "in but not of" the NJ Treasury Department. The legislation awaits the action by the governor. However, the recently passed state budget does NOT include new funding for school construction.

### **Governor's Office**

**Governor calls for schools to educate students about internet dangers.** On August 1, 2007, Governor Corzine asked Attorney General Anne Milgram and Education Commissioner Lucille Davy to begin training teachers and school administrators on how to teach children about the dangers of the internet. "With all of the benefits that evolving technologies provide us, too many unfortunate opportunities exist for adults to exploit children through the use of the Internet or for children to otherwise experience dangerous situations as a result of the doors that technology has opened," Corzine wrote in a letter released by his office. [Read more.](#)

### **National Issues**

**U.S. Department of Education releases study of rural schools.** Rural students perform better in science than their urban counterparts, and rural teachers are generally happy with their schools according to a study released in July by the U.S. Department of Education. The study reports that about one third of U.S. public schools are located in rural areas. The report also found that rural kids did better in math and reading than urban students. Parents in rural communities were more likely than urban or suburban parents to report attending an event at their children's school. [Read more.](#)

### **Reauthorization of No Child Left Behind**

**House Education Chair Describes Future of NCLB** On July 30, George Miller, the chairman of the House education committee said that No Child Left Behind is not working as well as it should, and that there was no support among lawmakers for continuing the law without significant revisions. At a speech before the National Press Club, Rep. Miller said he plans to introduce legislation in September that includes growth models and multiple measures to determine adequate yearly progress. Miller also said his bill would provide for performance pay for principals and teachers and more emphasis on improving high schools. [Read the speech.](#)

**Congressional Action on NCLB Deferred to the fall.** Congress has delayed any significant action on the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind until it returns from its summer recess after Labor Day. With committees in both chambers waiting until September to produce NCLB

bills, time is starting to run out for completing the reauthorization of the federal law before the 2008 presidential-primary season. The delay could have a significant effect on what those changes could be, especially if a Democrat is elected to succeed President Bush.

**Center for Education Policy Releases report on NCLB effect on curriculum.** On July 24, 2007, the Center for Education Policy issued a report on the amount of time spent during the school week on core academic subjects and how the allocation of time across subjects has changed since school year 2001-02 when NCLB was enacted. The report finds that approximately 62% of school districts increased the amount of time spent in elementary schools on reading/language arts and /or math, while 44% of districts cut time on science, social studies, art and music, physical education, lunch and/or recess. [Read more.](#)