



Legislative and Agency Update

January 2010

Governor's News

Governor's Inaugural – January 19th

Chris Christie was sworn in as the 55th Governor of the State of New Jersey and Kim Guadagno was sworn in as New Jersey's first Lt. Governor. Guadagno will also serve as Secretary of State. In his inaugural address, Governor Christie stated, "Together, we can build better schools that train our students for a brighter future. Yes, we will have to make better use of the resources showered on education. Yes, we will have to hold schools accountable and give people the choice to pursue alternatives to schools that fail. Yes, we will have to reward excellence, and not tolerate failure. But we can do these things—and once again be a home for growth."

Governor Christie Announces His Pick for Education Commissioner

Bret Schundler has been nominated by Governor Christie to serve as the state's new Commissioner of Education. Schundler is the chief operating officer of The King's College in Manhattan and has previously served as an adjunct professor of public policy. Formerly as the Mayor of Jersey City, Schundler championed policies that became a national model for urban reform. In nominating Schundler, the Governor noted that his background is in sync with his administration's commitment to urban education. As mayor of Jersey City, Schundler structured a public-private partnership to manage its libraries, opened one of New Jersey's largest charter schools, and raised almost \$1 million in scholarship money so that low-income Jersey City families could afford to enroll their children in the government or privately-managed school of their choice. Confirmation hearings will take place in the coming weeks.

Governor Christie Releases Education Subcommittee Report

On January 22 Governor Chris Christie released reports prepared by his Transition New Jersey subcommittees, which conducted thorough reviews of all departments, agencies and authorities of the state and made assessments and recommendations to improve, shrink and, in some cases, eliminate wasteful or inefficient government operations.

"These reports are full of bold ideas and recommendations for change from a bipartisan group of individuals from the private and public sectors," said Christie. "They came to the task with a wide range of knowledge and expertise and gave us unvarnished

assessments of our state government, its strengths, weaknesses, and failures. I want to thank them for their hard work and dedication. In the coming weeks, my Cabinet and I will be consulting with subcommittee members, reviewing each of the reports, and carefully considering these recommendations for improvement and change.” The governor’s 25 page report on education can be reviewed at <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/reports/Education.pdf>

Legislative News

New Law Sets Conditions for Tuition Reimbursement and Salary Guide Credit

In the final days of the 2008-09 legislative session, S2127/A3671/A3228 received unanimous support in both the Assembly and Senate. This new law requires that in order for a board of education to provide its employees tuition assistance for academic coursework at an institution of higher education or additional compensation upon the acquisition of additional academic credits or completion of a degree program:

- The institution of higher education must be a “duly authorized institution of higher education.”
- The employee must obtain approval from the superintendent.
- The employee must attain a grade at or above a “B.”
- The tuition assistance per credit must be set at an amount no greater than the current average cost per credit at Rutgers, The State University.
- The tuition assistance may only be provided at the end of the course once certain documentation has been provided. If the employee leaves the district within one year of the payment of the tuition assistance, the employee must reimburse the district for the amount of the tuition assistance provided. And
- The course or degree must be related to the employee’s current or future job responsibilities in order for tuition assistance or additional compensation to be paid.

The bill will become effective on July 1, 2010. However, the provisions of the bill will not be deemed to impair an obligation set forth in any collective negotiations agreement or any individual contract of employment in effect on July 1.

Department of Education News

QSAC - Monitoring Regulations N.J.A.C. 6A:30

Before leaving office, Commissioner Davy used her emergency powers to readopt the QSAC regulations without amendments before they expired. The readopted chapter took effect on January 20, 2010. Currently the State Board of Education is reviewing these regulations and proposed amendments, including one advanced by NJASL. The Board is expected to adopt the proposal level regulations including NJASL’s suggested amendment at their March meeting.

Race to the Top Grant

The department submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Education for a Race to the Top grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Earlier this

month school administrators were invited to an information session on New Jersey's grant proposal and were invited to sign on to participate in the initiatives outlined in the grant should the state receive funding. Almost 400 school districts signed an agreement to participate. The 250 page proposal outlines four core elements in its plan including:

- Standards and Assessments
- Data Systems
- Great Teachers and Leaders
- Strategies to Turn Around Struggling Schools.

[Race to the Top - New Jersey DOE Strategy All District Meeting January 5, 2010 - PowerPoint Presentation](http://www.state.nj.us/education/arra/grants/rttt/rtt010510.pdf) <http://www.state.nj.us/education/arra/grants/rttt/rtt010510.pdf>

GED Test Sponsor Postpones Date for New Exam Series

The General Education Development (GED) Testing Service has delayed the introduction of new series of exams. The GED, developed by the American Council on Education, is a series of five national exams testing candidates in the content areas of science, social studies, reading, mathematics, and writing in order to allow them to obtain a high school diploma in their home states. Its decision to postpone the new tests is a result of the national conversation about common core standards and the possible need to align the GED with such standards.

Creating 21st Century Schools Professional Development Workshops

The department recently announced that registration is open for the second phase of workshops for The Statewide Systemic Model for Continuous Professional Learning and Growth. Phase two consists of modules of new learning that use the 2009 content standards as the conceptual framework for transforming teaching, learning and leadership, and creating 21st century learning environments. The content and skills offered will serve as the context for ongoing professional learning for teachers and school leaders and the work of professional learning communities.

To register online, go to <http://cie.kean.edu>

State Board of Education

Bret Schundler Appointed Acting Commissioner of Education

Pending confirmation by the Senate, the Board has appointed Bret Schundler as an Assistant Commissioner of Education. Immediately following his appointment, Schundler took the reigns as Acting Commissioner and formally joined the Board at their monthly business meeting. As he stepped forward to head the Department of Education, he expressed his interest to make education the best it can possibly be for every child. Schundler served on the Governor's transition team and helped to draft the Education Subcommittee Report referenced above.

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