

NJASL
New Jersey Association of School Librarians

Legislative and Agency Update
July 2008

Governor's News

New Law Gives Commissioner of Education Expanded Emergency Powers

On July 7, 2008, Governor Corzine signed A2965/S1911, legislation that grants the commissioner of education unilateral authority to implement certain regulations without public comment or review by the State Board of Education. The new law is filed as P.L.2008, c37. http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL08/37_.PDF

State to Provide \$3.9 Billion Dollars for School Construction

Governor Cozine signed legislation that provides \$3.9 billion dollars in state financing to renovate or replace dilapidated school facilities. S/1457/A2873 designate \$2.9 billion for school district facility projects in Abbott school districts and \$1 billion to finance the State share of all other district school facilities projects, \$50 of which is earmarked for vocational school district projects. The new law is filed as P.L.2008, c39. http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/AL08/39_.PDF

Legal Appeals to the State Board of Education Eliminated

Until recently, the Commissioner of Education would hear and decide controversies and disputes that arise under the state's school laws. Those decisions could be appealed to the State Board of Education, which was the ultimate administrative fact-finder and decision-maker in matters arising under the education laws. Rulings by the State Board of Education could be appealed to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court. A new law signed by the governor on July 7, 2008 eliminates role of State Board of Education in the appeals process. Therefore, all future appeals of legal decisions made by the commissioner would go directly to the Appellate Division of the Superior Court. The new law is filed as P.L.2008, c36. http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/PL08/36_.PDF

Governor Signs Family Health Care Legislation

Governor Corzine signed progressive legislation expanding the NJ Family Care Program and establishing mandates for health care coverage of all children. The bill, S1557/A2624, also reforms health care coverage for individuals, dependents, and insurance provided by small employers.

Under the new law, more low income parents will be eligible for state paid health care. It also mandates that all children under age 19 have coverage through public or private means. The law increases affordability of enrollment by individuals and small

businesses including younger persons by revising the rating systems. Dependent coverage is expanded under certain conditions to dependents 30 years of age or younger. Health insurers, including the State Health Benefits Program must provide notice to parents of dependents about the new continued dependent coverage. The new law is filed as P.L.2008, c 38.

http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2008/Bills/AL08/38_.PDF

Legislative News

Since passing the state budget and other bills reported to you in the June Update the legislature has not met and there are not meetings scheduled at this time.

Department of Education News

New Accountability, Efficiency, and Budgeting Regulations

The commissioner used her expanded emergency authority earlier this month to implement a comprehensive set of regulations governing school district accountability, efficiency and budgeting. The regulations will remain in effect for one year. The 84 page document can be viewed at

[Fiscal Accountability, Efficiency and Budgeting Procedures](#)

Program Regulations

The commissioner also promulgated new regulations entitled ***Programs and Practices to Support Student Achievement***. These regulations implement the School Funding Reform Act P.L.2007, c260. The draft regulations published in April called for a library in every school staffed by a certified SLMS. After careful review by the Attorney General's office and department staff, the draft language was revised before adoption by the commissioner. Below is a summary of the major topics addressed in these new regulations, N.J.A.C. 6A:13 and the two sections that address school library services.

The new rules require that school districts:

Implement a coherent curriculum that is aligned to the Core Curriculum Content Standards;

Provide professional development for teachers and school leaders;

Use State assessment data to make instructional decisions; and

Provide for an academically rigorous, personalized environment to prepare students for post-secondary education and/or careers after graduation.

School districts with a high concentration of students taking the Special Review Assessment (SRA) to meet graduation requirements must conduct a study to determine the causes for the high rate of SRA graduation and to develop a plan for reducing the number of students graduating through the SRA.

SUBCHAPTER 2. STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL PRIORITIES

6A:13-2.1 Standards-based instruction

(h) All school districts shall provide library-media services that are connected to classroom studies in each school building, including 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. Each school district shall provide these library-media services under the direction of a certified school library media specialist.

SUBCHAPTER 3. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR STUDENTS IN HIGH POVERTY AND IN HIGH NEED SCHOOL DISTRICTS

6A:13-3.4 Language arts literacy

(a) Intensive early literacy for grades preschool through three. High need school districts where less than 85 percent of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3 shall provide an intensive early literacy program for preschool to grade three to ensure that all students achieve proficiency on State standards. The intensive early literacy program shall include the following components:

7. A classroom library that reflects the diversity and needs of all students and includes assistive technology;

These regulations will remain in effect for one year. The full text of the new rules can be viewed at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/code/current/title6a/chap13.pdf> or [Programs and Practices to Support Student Achievement](#)

Travel Regulations

According to the commissioner, she intends to implement the final regulations governing travel by local school board members and school employees around August 4, 2008. As noted last month, NJASL has filed an application for a waiver for its Fall Conference to allow individuals to apply to their school district and receive reimbursement for reasonable expenses as approved in the waiver. The commissioner is reviewing NJASL's request and expects to issue her response in early August 2008. NJASL will notify members when the commissioner's determination is received.

State Board of Education

At a special meeting on June 12, the New Jersey State Board of Education approved the appointment of Dr. Clifford Janey as the State District Superintendent of the State-Operated School District of the City of Newark.

Another special meeting was held on June 27, 2008 to approve the appointment of Dr. Dennis Clancy as State District Superintendent of the State-Operated School District of the City of Paterson for an interim period, effective July 1, 2008.

The board elected new officers at its regulation business meeting on July 16, 2008. Ms. Josephine E. Hernandez was elected as president and Mr. Arcelio Aponte was re-elected as vice president. Each will serve a one-year term.

The commissioner reported to the board on the number of school districts that have been monitored in the past year. She also presented the new regulations governing preschool programs and fiscal accountability.

After receiving a report from department staff, the board adopted the resolution to establish the proficiency scores for the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJASK) for grades 5 thru 8 pursuant to NJAC 6A:8-4.1(b).

Teacher Preparation and Certification

At proposal level, the board approved for publication in the *New Jersey Register* the readoption of the regulations pertaining to teacher licensure and standards proposed at NJAC 6A:9, Professional Licensure and Standards.

A few months ago the department proposed certain changes to the certification regulations governing the assignment to teach computer literacy. The discussion level regulations proposed to add the phrase *information literacy* in the authorization of instructional certificates to reflect the competencies teachers must possess in order to be assigned to teach computer and *information literacy* per the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The change was intended to alleviate the confusion many individuals and school districts have about the authorization to teach computer and *information literacy* from the endorsement to teach technology education. Upon further study and comments from the public, the department completely revised the proposed language. The new language does not use the phrase *information literacy* and can be found at 6A:9-5.20 in the following link [Professional Licensure and Standards](#)

Other News

Teacher Magazine recently reported that an American Library Association project will use libraries with computer gaming systems to study how electronic games improve players' literacy skills. Copyright laws prohibit providing a link to this story.

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