

Government relations report to NJASL March 30, 2007

State Board of Education:

At the April 4 State Board Meeting, the State Board will swear in two new board members, Edithe Fulton of Ocean County and Kenneth Parker of Camden County. The State Board will also consider for adoption the Commissioner's newly proposed department organization chart. The State Board will also discuss amendments to the regulations pertaining to teacher licensure and standards proposed at *NJAC 6A:9*, Professional Licensure and Standards pursuant to *NJSA 18A:1-1*, *18A:4-15*, *18A:6-34*, *18A:6-38*, *18A:26-10* and *18A:26-2.7*.

At the April 18 Work Session, the State Board will consider vocational education issues. Also at this meeting, public testimony will be heard on State Board Rulemaking and drug testing amendments to Programs to Support Student Development.

Department of Education:

State Monitor Appointed for Pleasantville School District. On March 29, the department announced that Commissioner Davy has appointed a state monitor for the Pleasantville School District. She named John J. Deserable, the assistant superintendent for business and the board secretary in the Evesham school district. Deserable is retiring from Evesham in June and will begin work in Pleasantville on July 1.

Davy made the appointment under the "School District Accountability Act" passed by the legislature last year and just recently signed by the governor, which provides the authority to appoint a state monitor in districts where serious fiscal deficiencies have been identified. Monitors have already been appointed in Willingboro, Camden, Paterson and Irvington. See [DOE press release](#) for more info.

Comparative Spending Guide Released. On March 23, the Department released its 2007 *Comparative Spending Guide*, a statistical report that profiles spending patterns in New Jersey public schools. The *Comparative Spending Guide* can be found online at: <http://www.nj.gov/njded/guide/2007/>.

The New York Times reported that the guide revealed a wide range of spending among the state's schools. The article noted that the Sea Isle City school district, one of the state's tiniest districts, spends more than \$33,800 for each of its 90 students which is nearly three times the state average of \$12,098 per student. By contrast, the Guttenberg district spends only \$7426 per student having cut many extra programs due to budget constraints. [Read more.](#)

DOE to Host Workshop on Student Achievement. On March 22, the department announced that it would host a workshop on student achievement on April 18 in collaboration with Passaic County Community College. The workshop, "What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action," will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Passaic County Public Safety Academy, 300 Oldham Road in Wayne. [Read more.](#)

DOE Launches Web Site in Spanish. Department officials announced on March 22 that the department was launching a website for Spanish speaking families. The site is designed to provide Spanish-speaking families with greater access to information about New Jersey's education system and resources that are available from the state. The [web site](#) contains information on scholarships, English as a second language classes for adults, resources for children with disabilities, the No Child Left Behind Act and educational rights.

Commissioner Reorganizes Department. At the March 7 meeting, the State Board approved the reorganization of the Department of Education proposed by the commissioner. The new structure emphasizes school improvement, research and early childhood education. Some offices are newly created including the Office of Research and Evaluation and the Division of District and School Improvement which will include but not be limited to oversight of the Abbott Supreme Court rulings.

State Legislature

NJASL presents testimony to Assembly Budget Committee. NJASL President Mary Moyer testified at a public hearing on March 20 before the Assembly Budget Committee. The focus of her testimony was the need for an SLMS to be required in every school. Her testimony included examples of all levels of schools without full time SLMS services. A copy of her testimony is attached.

DOE Commissioner testifies on Budget before Assembly Budget Committee. The Assembly Budget Committee questioned Education Commissioner Lucille Davy for over three hours on the administration's proposed education budget on Thursday, March 29. Legislators from both parties focused on the value of the state's assessment procedures as well as whether New Jersey high school graduates are adequately prepared for college. The state's alternate high school exam, called the Special Review Assessment, was criticized especially harshly. The budget, however, appears to have emerged from the committee hearing intact. [Read more](#)

The Senate Budget Committee is scheduled to consider the proposed education budget on April 16 at 10 am in Trenton.

Abbott Superintendents Testify of Pressure to Accept Budget Proposal. On Monday March 26, the legislature's Joint Committee on Public Schools held a hearing to hear from superintendents of Abbott districts on the effect of current state aid figures on their districts. Superintendents from Orange, Paterson, Trenton and others testified.

The Star Ledger reported on March 27 that the Abbott superintendents testified to the panel that they were coerced into accepting inadequate aid for the coming year by state officials. The superintendents stated that districts were threatened with intense audits and potential funding cuts for seeking more.

Governor's Office

Governor Signs School Accountability Act into Law. On March 15, Governor Corzine signed Act 5, the School Accountability Law. This law was part of the package of initiatives that came out of the legislature's special session on school funding and reform. The law contains several provisions designed to make information about school district financial matters more transparent and to allow for more oversight by the DOE. [Read a summary of the bill.](#)

National Issues

High School Students Report Being Bored in Class. A survey reported by CNN claims that a majority of high school students in the United States get bored in class every day and more than one fifth of students has considered dropping out. The survey, [2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement](#) analyzed results from 81,000 students in 26 states. More than half of the students said they spent an hour or less per week reading and studying. Even under these circumstances, three quarters of students surveyed expect to go on to college.

Reauthorization of No Child Left Behind

On March 14, the Washington Post reported that many Republicans are turning against President Bush's NCLB Act. Republicans have introduced legislation allowing states to opt out NCLB testing mandates, a keystone of the act. Republican legislators are fielding complaints from suburban constituents who think NCLB is hurting their schools. [Read more.](#)