



Legislative and Agency Update

November and December 2008

Governor's News

Governor Jon S. Corzine released an interesting summary of the highlights of his administration's accomplishments in 2008.

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/news/news/2008/approved/20081219a.html>

Legislative News

Both the state Senate and Assembly met several times to discuss pending legislation on numerous topics. None of the bills on school or municipal libraries were considered during the months of November and December.

On November 13th the Assembly Education Committee conducted a roundtable discussion with invited classroom teachers, principals, school counselors and other school personnel on "a day in the life of a school employee."

On December 8th the Senate Judiciary Committee approved the nomination of Ilan Plawker of Englewood Cliffs to replace John Griffith on the State Board of Education, and on the same day the Senate Education Committee considered A15/S1861, legislation to move the election of school board members to the November general election and to eliminate the vote on school budgets which are proposed below the state cap on spending. Budgets proposed above the state cap would be voted on in November on the same date as the general election. This legislation passed the Assembly on May 19, 2008.

On December 15th The Senate Education Committee released S2226/A3568. This legislation proposes to cap payments at retirement by local school districts for unused sick and/or vacation leave at a maximum of \$15,000. As amended, this bill would apply to superintendents, assistant superintendents, and school business administrators and will not apply to any member of a collective bargaining unit. This is the latest piece of legislation aimed at controlling "executive compensation" in school districts.

Both the Senate and Assembly are expected to reconvene early in January. Legislation aimed at easing the impact of the recent economic downturn will be a priority.

Department of Education News

Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy announced that New Jersey recently became the ninth state to join the leadership initiative *Partnership for 21st Century Skills*, a coalition designed to infuse current classroom instruction with skills students need to be better prepared for the workplace. Read more...

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/news/2008/1217skills.htm>

State Board of Education

State Board Retreat

November 5th the Board met to discuss the state's secondary school transformation initiative, the Department of Education's priorities for 2009 and beyond, the Board's strategic plan, and the work of Board subcommittees.

During the morning session, Dr. Grant Wiggins provided a presentation and led a discussion on high school redesign. The title of the presentation was "High School by Design – Toward Genuine and Needed Reform in New Jersey". A lengthily discussion ensued over the proposed new requirements in mathematic and science for high school graduation. Members of the Board questioned Commissioner Davy about the readiness of school districts, teachers, and most importantly students to meet the new graduation requirements and what impact they will have on high school drop our rates.

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/ser/over/1008transforming.pdf>

Davy acknowledged the Board's concerns and noted that the new requirements will be phased in over eight years. She observed that currently there are 19 high schools in the state with extremely high drop out rates. The department believes that the new state curriculum standards and assessments will support local efforts to establish rigorous educational programs and curricula that will prepare graduates to participate in the 21st century economy. Additionally, every student in grades 6 through 12 will have a personalized learning plan to guide their attainment of the new standards. Teachers will receive professional development on models of interactive and applied instruction, especially in mathematics. Finally, content specific standards for teacher preparation and certification will be implemented to prepare teachers in new ways.

The Board also asked Davy about the plan for the new assessments that will be required. For example, how many assessments will there be? Will there be a mechanism to exempt students from certain assessments? Will there be alternative ways for students to demonstrate that they meet the new standards? How many tests must each student pass in order to receive a state-endorsed diploma? What will happen if a student passes the test in a particular subject but fails the course? Davy responded that department's assessment committee will discuss these and other important policy questions in the coming months.

Deputy Commissioner Willa Spicer announced that the department is in the process of compiling information about different models of instruction and graduation requirements in other states and agreed to share this information with the Board in the near future.

Next, Davy identified the department's priorities as graduation code, revisions to the standards and assessment code, preparation of teachers, changes to No Child Left Behind legislation, reorganizing the Department in light of limited resources and listed the CORE legislation as a long term priority.

Board President Josephine Hernandez identified the State Board's priorities as closing the achievement gap, clarifying State Board functions, discussing the relationship and communication between the Department and the Board, and enhancing communication with external stakeholders.

In closing, Davy announced that the department plans to bring experts before the Board to discuss transforming high schools to prepare students for college and the workforce. You can review the proposed regulations at [High School Graduation Amendments](#)

At the Board's business meeting on November 19 Robert Haney was sworn in as the newest member of the Board. Mr. Haney is from Monmouth County and works as an attorney. The Board also discussed certain amendments to the regulations governing the School Ethics Commission, Business Services, and adopted amendments to professional licensing.

On December 17, the Board adopted a resolution honoring Debra Casha who recently resigned from the Board. [Resolution for Debra Casha](#) The Board also discussed pending amendments to the Business Services code and the requirements for high school graduation.

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