



Executive Viewpoint

Kevin S. Casey, Executive Director

Who Will Pick Up the Tab?

We are entering a period of uncertainty, with many important (and related) pieces of the educational puzzle in flux. Over the coming months many will work themselves out, as specific regulations and policies take form, but for the time being, the direction of education in New York State could be significantly impacted by any number of factors.

In my view the most significant of all is the governor's state aid proposal, an increase which is less than half of what was sought by SED or recommended by the New York State Educa-

tion Conference Board (of which SAANYS is a member). It is not unusual for a governor to lowball a state aid proposal to increase leverage in ensuing budget negotiations with the legislature, but a billion plus is a steep climb. The potential impact of a paltry state aid increase is exacerbated by a tax cap just slightly above zero.

The aid increase proposed by the governor is insufficient to maintain current programs and services in the face of rising costs. If not substantially increased, districts will once again be faced with cost-driven decisions with education-

ally destabilizing effects. The governor's budget proposal again calls for an Education Tax Credit (read "voucher system") and seeks to increase aid to charter schools. These proposals would serve, if enacted, to reduce the resources available to public schools at a time when those schools are again wrestling with significant policy change relative to standards, curriculum, testing, and evaluations. While this year the governor did not slam educators in his budget presentation, his proposal understandably lead some to speculate that his opinion of public educators remains unchanged.

In the meantime SED, itself with a shrinking staff and budget, seeks to implement the recommendations of the governor's common core task force, for which no funding was proposed. In the absence of statutory change, SED is engaged in a regulatory jujitsu in order to prevent 3-8 tests from having consequences over

the next four years. It is also seeking to review standards, develop new tests, release and analyze results, modify test times, incorporate a new test vendor...all while the commissioner maintains a punishing schedule of thruway diplomacy designed to demonstrate that SED really is listening to the field. Time will tell if these changes will calm the educational waters. These are all steps in the right direction, but are still incomplete. Just ask anyone whose student performance score will not include a 3-8 test. They still fall into the statutory matrix.

It is the temporary partial patchwork nature of the fix that keeps the opt-out proponents active. Potentially raising the stakes of opting out is the fact that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), while restricting in many ways the reach of the United States Department of Education (USDOE) into the states, maintained the 95 percent participation rate techni-

cally required for federal money. The mere continuation of the participation rate requirement suggests real concern at the federal level that the opt-out movement will continue to grow.

While all this change is occurring so too is the make-up of the Board of Regents (BOR). Two new regents will be added this spring to replace retiring Chancellor Tisch and Vice-chancellor Bottar; and a new chancellor and vice chancellor will be selected by BOR members as its new leaders. One can only speculate as to what policy impact that might have.

There are currently many changes, challenges, and many moving parts, but at the end of the day, if you believe in public education, it is the responsibility of the public to pay for it. ■

For What Purpose Is a Moratorium?

Sponsor Opinion piece by Dr. Bruce H. Crowder, Educational Vistas, Inc.

The reprieve from the audacious impact of APPR may be acknowledged as a time to reset education thinking and action. Regardless of the politicizing of Common Core and testing, teaching, learning, and assessment continue. In our current social and economical milieu, the importance of high learner expectations in core subjects and the soft effect of others is most critical.

It is time for a new foundation for teaching, learning, and assessment. That foundation begins with the identification of high learner expectations at every grade and subject. There may be a need for organized abandonment, as stated by management guru Peter Drucker, to make teaching, learning, and assessment a more appropriate fit for the realities of today. Clearly, yesterday's curricula may

not meet the new criteria for learning.

It was the hope that Common Core would be the basis for that new foundation. However, if Common Core is an explosive designation with incredible political, negative baggage in your district, then you are compelled to replace it. And, whatever represents those high expectations must be vetted publically. This is the beginning!

Following a new foundation of learner expectations, the real work begins for educators who historically have been trapped within classrooms in which they cry for the

opportunity of released time for innovation and development. While expectations for a new foundation for learning come into existence, theories of learning and knowledge acquisition affect the manner in which the expectations are to be implemented. Communities of educators need the time and support to function as such.

New thinking and action often requires new areas of learning. Advanced certificates for teaching and leadership represent the entry level requirement; however, experience *in media res* is where commitment and responsibility take hold for educators as they

value the importance of what it is they need to do. All the intent in the world goes nowhere without the support of time and finances.

We have a window of opportunity. Let us hope that those who hold the power and the resources understand what this opportunity can mean.

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