

August 2009 Advocacy Newsletter

Information gathered by the Education, Environment, Health and Wellness, Family, School and Community Engagement, Parenting and Family Life, Media Safety and Special Education Chairs to assist you in your advocacy efforts



Education

- **BOARD OF REGENTS CONSIDER NEW ACTIONS TO RAISE NEW YORK'S GRADUATION RATE; USE NEW DATA TO GUIDE DECISION-MAKING.** At their June 22 meeting, the State Board of Regents discussed a number of issues related to New York's high school graduation rate. Among the issues discussed were the following:
 - how students, particularly those with the lowest graduation rates, performed;
 - whether to set new graduation rate goals and targets;
 - whether to use a 4 and/or 5-year graduation rate;
 - what the impact of phasing-out the local diploma will be;
 - and how to improve the reliability of the data that districts report to the Education Department.To guide their decision-making on these issues, the Regents reviewed newly available graduation rate data. Go to: <http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/gradrates20090622.html>

- **United States Senate Youth Program:** The United States Senate Youth unanimously passed a resolution in 1962 creating the UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM, a national initiative to provide a yearly opportunity for talented young people with demonstrated leadership abilities to deepen their understanding of America's political processes and encourage them to consider careers in public service. For complete information visit <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/senateyouthprogram.html>

- **Modifications to Grades 3-8 ELA and Mathematics Examination Schedule for 2009-2010:** Earlier this year, the Board of Regents solicited Statewide input on the scheduling of the grades 3-8 English language arts (ELA) and mathematics exams. The survey received over 22,500 responses that informed the policy discussions of the Board of Regents. In June the Board of Regents endorsed moving the administration of the 2009-2010 grades 3-8 ELA and math examinations to the month of May. The State Education Department is currently working on specific details that must be addressed and work is underway to revise current examination calendars and scoring timelines. Updated revised versions reflecting the new administration dates and scoring timelines for the grades 3-8 ELA and math exams will be shared as soon as possible. Additional questions about these changes to the examination calendar may be directed to David Abrams, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Standards, Assessment, and Reporting.

- **GRADUATION: DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS**
Section 100.5 of the Commissioner's Regulations outline requirements for specific units of credit and assessment requirements for purposes of graduation. Additionally, information can be obtained regarding requirements for the following diplomas: Regents diploma, Regents diploma with advanced designation, state high school equivalency diploma and high school individualized education program diploma. Information concerning alternative options for students' attainment of Regents and local diploma requirements can be accessed through this link: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1005.html>

- **Credentialing of Athletic Coaches.** New steps are being taken regarding the credentialing of coaches to assist school districts to better insure student safety. A memorandum detailing

these steps is available on the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) Web site at:
<http://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/resteachers/memos.htm>

- **Teacher Quality Partnership Grants:** The U.S. Department of Education has announced the availability of \$143 million in regular 2009 appropriations and funding under the American Recovery and Rehabilitation Act of 2009 to support new awards under the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants program. <http://usny.nysed.gov/arra/memos/fieldmemo20090603.htm> |



Environment

- **Drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale is big news** in many parts of New York, especially in the Southern Tier. Of particular interest and concern is the method of drilling called hydrofracturing. In this technique, drillers pump a mixture of water, sand and chemicals into the shale to free the gas. The potential effect on water quality is of specific concern to many. Get more information from the following resources:
 - For introductory information and pros/cons, go to: <http://dec.ny.gov/energy/> search for marcellus shale.
 - To find out more about the FRAC Act and legislative efforts to protect drinking water supplies, go to http://www.house.gov/list/press/ny22_hinchey/morenews/060909NaturalGasFrackingBillIntro.html
- **A Workshop on natural gas drilling** is being given by Cornell Cooperative Extension. The locations and dates are listed here <http://www.wten.com/Global/story.asp?S=10704279>. For a totally anti gas drilling perspective, go to www.un-naturalgas.org. Folks in the Catskills might want to check out www.catskillcitizens.org for info on their concerns
- If you have some time, **please visit** one of my favorite sites: www.ewg.org Environmental Working Group is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that uses mainly foundation monies to research issues and products of concern to all of us. Health/toxins, farming, natural resources and energy choices are just a few of the issues that they cover.



Family, School, and Community Engagement

- **Program Connects New Parents to Local Libraries:** American Library Association: Books for Babies Matching Grants. Books for Babies, an initiative of the American Library Association, is a national literacy program that acquaints parents of newborns with the important role they play in the development of their children. Books for Babies Matching Grants of \$500 are available to Friends of Libraries groups, women's groups, libraries, and other nonprofit organizations to be used for the purchase of Books for Babies kits. Grants will be awarded to organizations that currently have a Books for Babies program in place as well as organizations starting a new program. Priority will be given to organizations that effectively use the kits to connect new parents with their local library. Applying organizations must raise matching funds of \$1,000. The next application deadline is October 1, 2009. Visit the ALA website for more information about the program and applications.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/altaff/outreach/booksforbabies/index.cfm>



Health/Wellness

- **SWEET DEALS: School Fundraising Can Be Healthy and Profitable.** This is a free online resource report that describes many practical and profitable options for healthy fundraising

available to schools. You will find names and contact information for more than 60 fundraising companies. www.cspinet.org/fundraising.pdf

- **The Very Best Kids: *Healthy Steps for Healthy Lives*.** A hands-on program created for 4 to 6 year olds in preschool and kindergarten setting. The developmentally appropriate lessons, activities and take home materials spark a young child's imagination and awareness of healthy eating and physical activity. Also find additional information and activities designed for their children on website. www.verybestkids.com/healthysteps
- **MyPyramid:** A new child friendly version, which details healthy eating and physical activity information for 1st to 6th graders. It contains information and engaging activities for children 6 to 12 years old. Parents can log on to learn about and calculate specific dietary recommendations for their child. www.MyPyramid.gov/kids
- **Asthma: *Managing Asthma: A Guide for Schools (booklet)*.** Asthma is a leading cause of absenteeism. This booklet provides the school personnel with practical ways to help students with asthma come to school each day healthy and ready to learn. Contact NAEPP (National Asthma Education and Prevention Program) through NHLBI (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute) Health Information Center (301)592-8573 or www.nhlbi.nih.gov
- ***Initiating Change: Creating an Asthma Friendly School (toolkit)***

This toolkit will help you convince people in your school and community the importance of promoting asthma-friendly schools. This toolkit will also help you initiate change in your school and community, so that students with asthma will receive the support they need to fully participate in all school activities. www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/asthma/creatingafs
- **Is your school meeting state and national standards?** Use CDC School Physical and Health Education analysis resources to meet them. All three resources below can be used as part of your School Improvement Plan. These are straight forward tools that give administrators, staff, parents and students a chance to get involved and work together to create a healthier more physical educated school.
 - **SHI** (*School Health Index: A Self-Assessment and Planning Guide*)

This tool can help your school assess and improve its physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco-use prevention, safety and asthma policies and programs.
 - **PECAT** (*Physical Education Curriculum Analysis Tool*)

Establishing and implementing high-quality physical education program can provide students with the appropriate knowledge, skills and confidence to be physically active for life. The toolkit will assess how closely the written curricula align with national standards, guidelines and best practices for quality physical education programs.
 - **HECAT** (*Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool*)

Health education is integral to the primary mission in schools. This toolkit contains guidance, appraisal tools and resources for carrying out a clear, complete and consistent examination of health education curricula. Many health topics are covered including alcohol and other drug-free, healthy eating, mental and emotional health, personal health and wellness, physical activity, safety, sexual health, tobacco-free, and violence prevention curricula.

Go to: www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/SHI; www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/PECAT
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/HECAT

Or to request toolkit: **(800) CDC-INFO** (specify elementary or middle/high school)



Parenting and Family Life

- **Navigating Your Way Through the TV Parental Guidelines and V-Chips**-In order to monitor what your child is watching, you need to know the TV ratings and content labels.

The following website helps in giving you special attention to children's programming and General Audience Programming: www.tvguidelines.org

- **Early Head Start (EHS)** is a federally funded community-based program for low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women. www.ehsnrc.org/aboutus/ehs.htm
- **The Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center**, The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is a federal agency funding state, territory, local, and tribal organizations to provide family assistance (welfare), child support, child care, Head Start, child welfare, and other programs relating to children and families. Services are provided by state, county, city and tribal governments, and public and private local agencies. ACF assists organizations through funding, policy direction, and information services. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>
- **The NYS Universal Prekindergarten Program** (UPK) is a State-funded program that provides educationally-based high-quality prekindergarten to four year old children. It has created an earlier entry point to education, assisted in the coordination between a wide variety of early childhood settings and public education and makes progress toward closing the achievement gaps at earlier grade levels. It has helped young children be better prepared to learn. For information: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/upk/>



Special Education

- **Senate votes to make Timothy's Law Permanent:** After years of dedicated advocacy, Timothy's Law, New York's insurance parity law, has passed the Senate with 62 votes. The bill eliminating the expiration of Timothy's Law was delivered to Governor Paterson on July 10, 2009. Timothy's Law ends the discriminatory practice of providing unequal insurance coverage based on diagnosis, helps curb the stigma associated with mental illness, and allows children to receive the services and treatment they need to live full and productive lives. <http://www.nysenate.gov/print/22264>
- **Response to Intervention Website:** NYSED, VESID is pleased to announce the launching of a new website hosted by the [New York State Response to Intervention Technical Assistance Center](#) (NYS RtI-TAC). The website is in the beginning stages of being populated with information on RtI and should be considered a work-in-progress. Resources, announcements, and other useful materials on RtI will be placed on the website for use by schools, professionals, parents, advocates and others who are interested in RtI. The NYS RtI-TAC is funded through a 5-year contract by VESID. Go to: <http://www.nysrti.org/>
- The Board of Regents has **approved for permanent adoption** the amendment of sections 200.1, 200.2, 200.4, 200.5, 200.6, 200.9 and 200.15 which became effective July 16, 2009.
- **VESID announces the addition of eleven (11) new [Special Education Parent Technical Assistance Centers \(TACs\)](#)** across New York State (NYS), including five (5) centers in New York City (one per borough) and six (6) additional centers throughout the upstate region. The existing Special Education Parent TACs on Long Island and Western New York will continue, resulting in the operation of thirteen (13) Special Education Parent Centers in NYS. (<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/parentcenters.htm> or you may contact our office at (518) 473-2878.)
- **The U.S. Department of Education has issued guidance regarding the requirements for students with disabilities who are homeless.** Information regarding the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) is provided in a Question and Answer format available at <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/policy.html>.