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New Jersey Association of School Librarians

Legislative and Agency Update

December 2009

Department of Education News

Program Regulations Readopted

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy has readopted the regulations governing Programs and Practices to Support Student Achievement without change. This chapter of regulations outlines the requirement for school districts to provide certain school library media services in every school under the direction of a School Library Media Specialist. As readopted N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2(h) states:

"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." (Expiration date November 24, 2014)

When the regulations were first proposed for readoption NJASL, along with many SLMS and other supporters of school library media programs submitted written comments to the Commissioner recommending that school districts provide a comprehensive school library media "program" to enable students to meet the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS), instead of "services." Furthermore, the commenters recommend that students, teachers and administrators in each school building in New Jersey at all grade levels shall have access to a library media program provided by one or more certified school library media specialists working full-time in the school library media center.

The Commissioner responded to these recommendations as follows: "The Department disagrees with the commenters. The intent of this regulation is to ensure that school districts provide students with access to library media services connected to classroom studies in each school building. As such, these services do not need to be defined as a "program." The provision for library media services in each school building, with a library media specialist, is a local decision based on available resources."

New Jersey to Pursue Race to the Top Grant Money

After considerable discussion, Governor Corzine and Governor-elect Christi agreed in mid-December to submit an application to the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) for a Race to the Top Grant and directed Commissioner Davy to do so.

According to the USDOE, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides approximately \$100 billion for education to assist local school districts and to advance certain education reforms. The State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) in the ARRA contains \$5 billion for competitive grants with \$4.35 billion set aside for the Race to the Top fund to improve education quality and results statewide.

Through Race to the Top, the USDOE is asking States to advance reforms around four specific areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

Awards in Race to the Top will go to States that are leading the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive education reform. Race to the Top winners will help trail-blaze effective reforms and provide examples for States and local school districts throughout the country to follow as they too are hard at work on reforms that can transform our schools for decades to come.

Source: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

State Board of Education

Evaluation and Performance of School Districts (QSAC)

The Board decided to hear public testimony on N.J.A.C. 6A:30, QSAC, following its meeting on December 16. Earlier in the process NJASL secured an amendment in the proposed regulations to provide some measure of accountability to encourage school districts to comply with N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.1(h), Programs and Practices to Support Student Achievement, which require districts to provide certain school library media services under the direction of a certified School Library Media Specialist. The recommended amendment was approved by the Board earlier this year and is scheduled for final consideration at adoption level on January 20, 2010.

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Vol. 6 – 12/29/2009