

April 2009 Advocacy Newsletter

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



Education

- The following website has an updated yearly educational calendar, along with lesson plans, and a wealth of educational resources: www.teachervision.com
- For an **update on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)**, go to: <http://usny.nysed.gov/arra/>
- **2007-08 State Education Department announces release of Special Education Annual Performance Report**
<http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/SpecialEd2007-08AnnualPerfReport.htm>
- **Adjustments to High School Testing Procedures to Address Weather-Related School Closings on January 28, 2009**
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/sar/weather.pdf>



Environment

- The NYS Forum is pleased to announce the **2nd annual IT Greening Conference** on April 30, 2009 in Albany, NY. The focus this year, *Saving Money while Saving the Environment*, will identify actual cost savings. The Conference will build on past success by bringing in high-quality conference exhibitors to further complement and enhance the conference presentations.
To register: <http://www.nysforum.org/events/itgreening/attend/>
- **Get Ready, Get Set, Go: Indoor Air Quality** in schools is gaining more attention and the time for action is now. On **Monday, April 27, 2009** celebrate **National Healthy Schools Day** with activities or events that promote Indoor Air Quality in schools. Go to www.NationalHealthySchoolDay.org and see the new Planning Guide with suggested local activities and events you can set up to get involved and bring much attention to Indoor Air Quality. Whether it is a Student Assembly, School Board presentation, workshop on Children's Environmental Health, make it your own activity or event: you choose; you plan; you organize and Healthy Schools Network will help. For further information call 518-462-0632.
- **BIGGER BETTER BOTTLE BILL:** The [Bigger, Better Bottle Bill](#) is getting closer and closer to reality. On March 6, 2009, [Senator Thompson](#), who serves as chairman of

the Environmental Conservation Committee in the NYS Senate, held a public hearing on the bottle bill in Buffalo. Those who testified were largely in support of the bill. In all, there were 27 different witnesses who testified. Those who testified in favor of the bottle bill discussed how the bill would have a positive effect on the environment while giving people an incentive to recycle their bottles of water, Gatorade and other non-carbonated beverages. The opponents of the bill highlighted two things: Handling fees and unclaimed deposits. Right now, beverage companies in NYS get to keep unclaimed deposits that are estimated at \$140 million a year. Under an expanded bottle bill, those unclaimed deposits would be more than \$100 million. The bottle bill would require companies to return unclaimed deposits to the state.



Health and Wellness

- **NYS Calorie Labeling:** NYC enacted a calorie labeling regulation in a campaign against obesity for major fast-food and chain restaurants last spring and has made a great impact. Westchester, Ulster, Rockland and just recently Suffolk have done the same. Albany is working on it now and other counties are seriously considering the introduction of labeling laws or regulations. A published study on NYC calorie labeling revealed that customers purchased 52 fewer calories when calorie labeling was available on menus and menu boards at point of purchase. Consumers are learning more about the food before they order, and the market for healthier alternatives is growing. Let's get the whole state more health conscious. Be advocates for your county by contacting your county representative and let your voice be heard that you want your county to pass this law on calorie labeling at fast food and chain restaurants.
- **Physical Education Failing the Grade in New York State:** Despite a childhood obesity crisis and state regulations on the amount of physical education students must receive, many school districts across the state are not providing enough P.E. classes. Many school districts cite the lack of time, space, teachers and competing demands of academics. The state fails to enforce its regulations on physical education and only looks into non-compliant districts when parents complain or schools request help. Is your school district meeting these minimum requirements? **K-3** Must participate in P.E. every day, for a total of at least 120 minutes each week. Students attending half-day kindergarten should meet half the requirement. **4-6** Must have at least 120 minutes of P.E. spread out over three days a week. **7-12** Must have P.E. at least three times a week in one semester and twice a week in the other semester. No minimum time requirements for this level, but State Education Department officials say the average should be 90 minutes a week
- **State Parks Access Pass:** Looking for ideas for summer fun? State parks may be your answer. To apply for a state parks pass, go to: www.nysparks.com



Parenting and Family Life

- **Prevent Child Abuse of New York** has a great website. There are areas for general parenting, infant and teen, preteen and teens, child safety, bullying and a resource room section; you can get a wealth of material in PDF format. Visit www.preventchildabuse ny.org.



Special Education

- **State Tracking to Measure Student Progress Toward IEP Goals:** This brief policy analysis presents IDEA language requiring a description of how the child's progress toward annual goals, if the IEP has no benchmarks or short term objectives, will be measured and a description of policies and practices that states have instituted to ensure that IEP teams provide for this. The analysis was based on data received from a survey of all states and a follow up interview with three states. Mechanisms to measure student progress on IEP goals across the nation and specific state strategies for tracking this progress are described. To read the analysis go to: <http://projectforum.org/docs/StateTrackingtoMeasureStudentProgressTowardIEPGoals.pdf>
- **Revised IDEA indicators don't quiet criticism over data collection burdens:** OSEP says it took the concerns of special educators seriously in revising its indicators of state performance under Part B of the IDEA. The indicator system still costs too much and takes too much time, however, according to Nancy Reder, Deputy Executive Director of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE). The 20 Part B indicators are used in developing State Performance Plans and a set of Annual Performance Reports. OSEP did accept some of the recommendations for revising the indicators made by NASDSE and others. For example, it gave states an extra 12 months each year to report any discrepancies in the rates at which students with disabilities are suspended or expelled and to conduct a related review of their special ed policies and procedures under Indicator 4. States should recognize that OSEP is on a learning curve, Ryder said. The agency has made "some really good changes to the indicators, clarified them a good deal," and tightened them, she said. As a result, the indicators are unlikely to change much when the information collection comes up for renewal again in 2012, she said.
- **Education Department asks for emergency designation of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds:** In hopes of getting education aid to states quickly and averting nationwide teacher layoffs, the Education Department (ED) has asked the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to provide the \$53.6 billion in State Fiscal Stabilization Funds (SFSF) as an emergency designation by March 23. If ED receives OMB approval, it will make applications available to state governors March 23 and provide a rolling application deadline. If OMB does not grant ED's request for emergency designation, the regular clearance process for the release of the funds would put ED "well past" the 120-day window specified in ARRA for the flow of stabilization

money -- a possibility that "would clearly go against Congress' intent" and "would cause harm to many states and the students they serve," according to a letter sent by Joseph Conaty, acting assistant secretary for the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. ED said the SFSF is likely a one-time program and that it would probably need an emergency application approval from OMB for this year only. ED officials pointed out the SFSF money is not only to stave off budget cuts but also to lay the groundwork for education reform. It remains unclear when OMB will issue a decision.

- The intent of **Transition Services as they relate to the Special Education** process is to assist students in preparing for life after school. Join this unique workshop where participants will be given the tools they need to enhance and better understand their involvement in the transition process. There are many components of a Level 1 Career Assessment that will be explored in great length. Since they are many members of the transition team, emphasis will be placed on the planning and implementation of the Level 1 Career Assessment. For more information, go to: *The Next Step: Transition Services (C1266) Online*
http://www.omr.state.ny.us/wp/servlets/wp_FormControlServlet
- To read about the discussion on **special education mandate relief** at the March meeting of the Board of Regents VESID Committee, go to:
<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/meetings/2009Meetings/March2009/0309vesidd3>
- **Resources and Scholarships for Students with Learning Disabilities:** The following website will not only assist with the financial aid part, but also helps in stating available scholarships for students with learning disabilities.
<http://nclد.convio.net/site/R?i=nT5Hr5fHzbKw2D91jaMPEg..>