



Executive Viewpoint

Kevin S. Casey, Executive Director

Spring is in the Air

So it is now officially springtime, 20 inches of fresh snow be damned. Now is the time that our minds theoretically wander to traditional springtime pursuits such as love, gardening, and opening day. Unfortunately, theory and practice are two different things, and I find my mind drifting to budgets, state exams, and lobbying. Yes, I know I am a sad case.

Springtime is budget time and budgets at all levels are fraught with danger. At this time the budgets of which I will speak are all proposed

budgets, and hope springs eternal. On the federal level President Trump has proposed a budget sharply reducing or eliminating several grants and programs in the USDOE that make a real difference to our members. The relatively recently passed ESSA allows states to set aside up to three percent of its Title IIA funds for administrator professional development. Both SAANYS and Commissioner Elia have spoken in favor of this, with neither of us (I'm making an assumption here as to what Commissioner Elia may

have thought) anticipating a proposed federal budget with no Title II funding at all. One does not need to be a math major to know that three percent of zero is zero.

Our state legislators are engaged in the annual budget dance where the governor's budget proposal sets the state aid floor, the assembly one house bill sets the ceiling and the senate one house bill comes somewhere in between, and then the real negotiations begin. This year is different in that the governor's budget eliminates the phase-in of the foundation aid formula, something that was anticipated no more than a federal budget without Title II funding. Right now the assembly and senate reject this proposed elimination, but I wonder if hope springs eternal with our governor.

Springtime is also budget time for school districts. This year's two percent

tax cap is 1.26 percent (irony intended) and it still takes a 60 percent supermajority to override it. We know from recent history that is not easy to do.

Springtime is also the time for state assessments, a topic which has markedly grown in import since the now infamous original APPR plan of 2010 was essentially purchased by the federal government for \$700 million of Race To The Top money. To this day we have not escaped that decision. While there may be a current, but temporary, moratorium on the use of test scores in the most recent iteration of the APPR (is this the third or fourth version? I've honestly lost track), the system is still there, which means springtime is also opt-out season for some. The opt-outs then inevitably lead to recriminations about who is encouraging these opt-outs and why. It sometimes devolves to an-

other exercise in blame the principal, based on the faulty assumption that principals can mandate attendance and test participation. It's akin to the remove the principal from struggling schools philosophy formalized in the SIG grants. In many cases the principal is guilty only of failing to have a magic wand.

Because of these springtime pursuits we are heavily engaged in lobbying. We lobby on the federal level with our partners NASSP and NAESP. We lobby on the state level with our dedicated members on our Government Relations Committee and along with our friends in the New York City administrators union. It is not easy, but you have to be present to have your perspective heard. So what if we miss opening day; there are still 161 games remaining. ■

3-11 ELA Performance Arc

Sponsor Opinion Piece by Dr. Bruce H. Crowder, Senior Researcher, Educational Vistas, Inc.

It would not be unusual for me or any other educator to think solely about my class and grade. However, today that type of focus appears to be changing due to the nature of ELA accountability. As of this moment, the Regents Examination in English Language Arts (Common Core) is the dominant factor for gauging school district accountability. And, in reality, this has always been true, but never truer than today.

Therefore, it is time, in my opinion, to acknowledge the importance of the 3-11 ELA Performance Arc. In

doing so, it may serve as an important reminder to third graders that they are on the front end of working toward meeting an important graduation requirement. In addition, it is interesting to consider why state testing typically begins at grade three. There are very good reasons why this is so. It is at grade 3 that ideas become more abstract. The concept load is heavier. Also, the information load is more concentrated; and therefore, sophistication increases.

In making such previous statements, ones heart

has to go out to third grade teachers who are faced with this awesome challenge of lifting their students from a prior learning environment based on skills and process into the realm of content learning. This may be why increments of growth at grade 3, as reflected on state tests, tend to be smaller compared to subsequent grades; but, it is that foundation laid in grade 3 that contributes significantly to increased growth at subsequent grades.

Finally, to bring closure regarding the notion of an arc from grades 3 to 11, let me explain. The current grade 3 NYS ELA assessment has three parts: multiple-choice items (24), extended responses (2), and short response items

(7). A recent NYS English Regents has three parts: multiple-choice items (24), an argumentative piece to state a claim and support it (1), and a shorter response item based on a central idea supported from a literary device (1).

Now, I do not know about you, but I believe that the third grade assessment may, in fact, outclass the English Regents as third graders begin their arduous trek over the arc.

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"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."
—Fred Rogers

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