

# SAANYS: Defender of Constitutional Rights...

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## Medicare Part B

A hot negotiating item involves Medicare Part B reimbursement. Some school districts reimburse retired administrators for their (and in some cases their spouse's) Medicare Part B payments. Over the past ten years, school districts have attempted to stop reimbursing retirees for the cost of their Medicare Part B payments. SAANYS is sensitive to the importance of safeguarding this deferred compensation benefit and has litigated to preserve this benefit for its members.

As background, a retired administrator's primary health insurance plan is the plan they received from the school district upon retirement. However, at age 65, the retired administrator must enroll in Medicare, at which time Medicare will become their primary health insurance plan and their health insurance coverage from the school district will become secondary.

Medicare Part B covers physician services on an 80-20 split. Payments for Medicare Part B are deducted directly from a Medicare recipient's Social Security check. Some municipalities, including school districts, reimburse their retired employees for the cost of their Medicare Part B payments, pursuant to a CBA provision or past practice. However, with life expectancy rates increasing (for women to 84 years old and for men around 83 years old) these municipalities have tried to curtail or discontinue this benefit entirely.

In 2013, the situation is worse because the federal government now is increasing the cost of Medicare Part B payments based on the Medicare recipient's income. For 2013, higher income earners (based on your tax return), will pay higher Medicare Part B premiums. For example, a person filing an individual return who has an annual income of \$85,000 (jointly \$170,000) or less, will pay the Medicare Part B basic rate of \$104.90/month. However, the rate increases to \$146/month if the person's income is between \$85,000 and \$107,000 (\$170,000 and \$214,000 if filing jointly) and to \$209.80/month if the person's annual income is between \$107,000 and \$160,000 (\$214,000 and \$320,000 if filing jointly). It is therefore realistic that retired administrators in the lower Hudson Valley and on Long Island will have annual income (pension and other income) that will cause them to pay an increased Medicare Part B premium rate. Hence, it is important for active employees to understand this valuable form of deferred compensation when negotiating new contracts and seek continued reimbursement from the school district at whatever their applicable Medicare Part B rate is.

SAANYS is constantly reviewing changes in the law and how any revisions may impact members. As New York's leading organization representing administrators in public education, SAANYS is always on the alert to protect members' rights and ensure that they receive the highest salaries and best benefits available. ■

## Common Core Standards, APPR, and Assessments on Early Childhood Education

Opinion piece by Cynthia E. Gallagher, Coordinator of Early Education Systems, Educational Vistas Inc.

Quantifying educational outcomes presents challenges at any grade level. During the initial implementation of Race to the Top (RTTT), much attention was focused on the middle and secondary grade levels. This was logical, as these grade levels are associated with the majority of state assessments and are most immediate for addressing college and career readiness. Attention must now shift to the early grades of prekindergarten to second grade where the challenges of quantifying outcomes presents even greater challenges.

The first and most obvious challenge is the nature of these grade levels. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten are not required components of the educational system. Unlike middle and secondary grade levels, there has been no systematic yearly grade level progression. Teachers in kindergarten and first grade have students in their classes who may or may not have had any experiences in any type of educational setting, could have had half or full day pre-kindergarten, and may have half or full day

## The December to January Transition...

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to further extend this provision to 2017, in order to coincide with the timeframe for common core-aligned Regents examinations.

- Examinees who achieved a passing score on all five GED® sub-tests, but did not achieve the required composite score of 2250, will be eligible to receive an HSE diploma by passing any of the TASC sub-tests.

After unanimously approving the above emergency action, board members continued to discuss the capacity

of test centers and preparation programs to adequately prepare examinees for the TASC examination. Deputy Commissioner Smith indicated that additional support is needed, especially in connection with the TASC math sub-test. For this reason, the State Education Department will request a \$5 million appropriation from the state legislature for professional development and materials.

Some aspects of the new TASC-based HSE program have not yet been determined or finalized, such as the composite

and individual test scores that must be achieved in order to be awarded a High School Equivalency Diploma. Also, the TASC Readiness Assessment (to replace the Official GED Practice Test) will not be available until the end of February.

Questions regarding the TASC testing program should be directed to NYSED as follows:

For general questions, contact Patricia Mooney at pmooney@mail.nysed.gov.

For questions regarding computer-based administration, contact Robert Purga at rpurga@mail.nysed.gov.

For questions regarding contracts, contact Kimberly Malcolm at kmalcolm@mail.nysed.gov.

For questions regarding the State Alternative Education Steering Committee, contact James Viola at JViola@saanys.org. ■

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kindergarten. This high degree of variation is a structural problem that has great impact on the implementation of the new reforms.

Secondly, it is difficult to determine growth when the student inputs span a wide range of skill levels. There is so much natural developmental and maturational growth during these early years, that it is very difficult to discern teacher related value added. Add to this complexity the fact that there are no prior state assessments attached to these grade levels, it is very difficult to predict future growth.

Thirdly, the tools available to educators at these grade levels are problematic.

Assessments at these grade levels have been developed with purposes different from what is currently needed. Districts have developed their own assessments or pulled together multiple resources to meet APPR requirements.

The complexities of the early grades create unique challenges to successful implementation of APPR. Recent public forums have highlighted the deep concerns of parents and educators of young children regarding implementation. It is time to provide early education the focus and attention that was afforded to the upper grades. ■

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After Hours Pager: 1-800-978-6055

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