

S. Tier residents quiz Regents

■ Technical and career education, teacher retention top issues.

By ANTONIO M. PRADO and SARA BONISTEEL
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Local educators and community members discussed upgrading career and technical education, ensuring safe school buildings and retaining teachers during meetings Wednesday night with members of the state Board of Regents at Southside High School.

The 15 Regents were in town for a two-day visit with school and business officials. On Wednesday night, Regents board members met with parents and educators in 10 different classrooms at Southside to discuss a variety of educational issues.

Regents Chancellor Carl T. Hayden of Elmira included the safe facilities discussion for the state board's visit because of the ongoing cancer investigation at Southside.

Among the meetings held Wednesday night were:

Ensuring safe and healthy facilities

Hayden recalled that the soil, air and water samples taken by the state showed the school to be safe, but he wanted to know why people remained skeptical of the findings.

Tony LaSarte, head of the school district's health and safety department, said he felt the technical nature of the information and a general distrust of the government and authority figures led to



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Evie Qualle, an applications engineer with Hardinge Inc., talks to New York Board of Regents members Wednesday at the manufacturing plant in Horseheads. The board members end their visit to the area today.

the questioning of the data.

One parent, Karl Kozenko, said he isn't skeptical of the findings and is proud to have a daughter who is a sophomore at Southside.

"It (the cancer) is probably part of our time," Kozenko said. "I don't think that there is any one place you can blame it on."

Andy Carlson, director of the state Health Department's Bureau of Environmental Exposure and Investigation, reiterated his belief that Southside is a safe school for kids to attend.

"I would be comfortable having my children come to this school. There was a tremendous amount of sampling," Carlson said. "Looking at the data... I would also be comfortable with my kids playing sports here."

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Today's schedule

■ State Board of Regents members will visit schools in Elmira, Pine City, Horseheads, Corning, Spencer, Elmira Heights and Painted Post.

■ Regents Chancellor Carl Hayden of Elmira will visit Elmira's Beecher Elementary School at 8 a.m. and Pine City Elementary School at 9:30 a.m.

■ State Education Commissioner Richard Mills will visit Horseheads High School at 8 a.m. and Corning Community College at 9:30 a.m.

■ The Regents will conduct a full board meeting at 12:30 p.m. at Park Church's Thomas K. Beecher Hall, Church Street, in Elmira. The public is welcome to attend.

Upgrading career and technical education

Elmira school board member Paul Vincent told Regents Robert M. Bennett and Harry Phillips III that students who seek a career

and technical education diploma should not have to worry about also passing five regents exams.

"I say we need to de-emphasize the push for Regents on all kids," Vincent said. Phillips disagreed.

"Something like 75 percent of the kids took the easy way out because it was available," Phillips said. "And the world is treating them very harshly. We let them fall through the cracks."

Phillips added that he has seen farmers all over the state using sophisticated, high-tech equipment to run their farms. Vincent, still unconvinced, said that maybe the farmers taught themselves to use that type of equipment.

Many educators in the room agreed with Bennett when he said one possibility for the board is to list six to eight regents exams for students to choose from as opposed to requiring them to pass five regents exams in the future.

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