

Biographical Information for James Viola



After volunteering at the ARC in Rotterdam, New York as a college student, James Viola began his formal education career in 1975. His local level teaching experience included special education, continuing education, and migrant education; and he administered the special education programs (including chairing the Committees on Special Education) in the Ichabod Crane and Chatham school districts.

His 28-year career at the New York State Education Department culminated with the position of Executive Director for School Improvement and Community Services, in Rest of State. Beginning in the Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID), he was a member of the policy team and established the Special Education Mediation Program. He was the bureau chief and state data manager for special education, and established a new data system that continues today. Later, in the Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary and Continuing Education (EMSC), he was responsible for coordinating with New York City counterparts in rolling-out new programs such as the No Child Left Behind Act and Contracts for Excellence. He was directly involved in establishing and overseeing the statewide network of Regional School Support Centers (located outside New York City), to support causal/gap analysis for the identification and provision of targeted services to improve educational performance in SURR schools and other under-performing schools. He worked with leadership in the Roosevelt, Hempstead, and Wyandanch school districts, and led a department review of the Hempstead High School and of all the schools in the Roosevelt Union Free School District.

Today, Mr. Viola serves as the Director of Government Relations at the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS), where he presents the perspectives and protects the best interests of members and leads the member-composed Government Relations Committee. He remains actively involved in presenting information and facilitating the local implementation of new program requirements set in law and regulation. Mr. Viola is also an SED-trained Outside Education Expert (OEE), who has led 11 reviews of schools in advanced accountability status (Restructuring Schools, Priority Schools, and Focus Schools), including schools in rural, small city, and Big Five school districts.

He continues to believe in, and advocate for, systems planning and continuous improvement to enhance educational services, opportunities, and outcomes for all students.