



*New York State Archives*

**New York State Education Department Office of the  
Commissioner Outgoing Correspondence B0466**

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## Overview of the Records

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<b>Repository:</b>	New York State Archives
<b>Summary:</b>	This series consists of outgoing letters and memoranda from Commissioners Allen and Nyquist, as well as from other NYSED staff. Correspondents include state legislators, district superintendents and other school district personnel, school principals, teachers, and citizens. Commissioner Nyquist's letters include letters referred by the Governors Office to the Commissioner for response. These letters generally request information on NYSED programs and policies, or to protest NYSED or local school programs and policies.
<b>Creator:</b>	New York (State). Education Department. Office of the Commissioner
<b>Title:</b>	Education Department Office of the Commissioner outgoing correspondence
<b>Quantity:</b>	17 cubic feet
<b>Inclusive Date:</b>	1956-1977
<b>Series:</b>	B0466
<b>Sponsor:</b>	This series' description was enhanced as part of the States' Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (SIFEPP), in January 2010. The New York Community Trust - Wallace Special Projects Fund provided funding for this project.

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## Arrangement

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Arranged into two subseries: 1. Commissioner James E. Allen's yellow copies; 2. Commissioner Ewald B. Nyquist's yellow copies.

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## Administrative History

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The office of Commissioner of Education was created in 1904 by the so-called Unification Act (Chapter 40) which established the State Education Department and replaced the

Superintendent of Public Instruction and Secretary to the Board of Regents with the Commissioner. Since its establishment by the Regents in 1913, the Commissioner has also carried the title of President of the University of the State of New York. A 1938 constitutional amendment clarified the relative roles of the Commissioner and the Regents, placing the Regents at the head of the Department and naming the Commissioner as the Department's chief administrative officer who serves at the Regents' pleasure.

Dr. James Edward Allen, Jr. was born April 25, 1911 in Elkins, West Virginia. His first position with the New York State Education Department was in 1947 as Executive Assistant to Commissioner of Education Francis Spaulding. Upon Spaulding's death in 1950, he became Deputy Commissioner of Education under Commissioner Lewis Wilson, and, in 1955, was appointed Commissioner of Education. Allen presided over a vast expansion of the New York State Education Department, in terms of both bureaucratic size and authority, including the creation of the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, the creation of new programs in urban education and bilingual education, and the use of data systems, research, and evaluation to improve the education process. Allen was an early proponent of the need for "de facto" school desegregation. During his tenure, Allen ordered various school districts to desegregate, including the Malverne school district of Nassau County in 1963. In 1969, Allen was chosen by President Richard Nixon to be U.S. Commissioner of Education. Significant disagreements emerged between Allen and the Nixon administration over school desegregation and the role of the federal government in education, and he was dismissed from his post in May of 1970.

Ewald B. Nyquist was born November 1, 1914 in Rockford, Illinois. Nyquist became Assistant Commissioner for Higher Education in 1951. In 1955, he was named Associate Commissioner for Higher and Professional Education, and in 1957, he became Deputy Commissioner of Education. On May 2, 1969, Nyquist was named Acting Commissioner of Education, replacing James Allen. On November 21, Nyquist was officially named Commissioner of Education. As Commissioner of Education, Nyquist focused attention on the reform of school operations and curriculum. Nyquist was an advocate of "open education," an educational philosophy emphasizing individualized instruction and student-directed learning. Also, under Nyquist's tenure, the Education Department expanded its focus on higher education beyond traditional public universities. The Regents External Degree Program, proposed by Nyquist in his 1970 inaugural address, allowed for undergraduate degrees, awarded by the Regents, to be given to people based on knowledge and skills gained outside of college. In addition, the Higher Education Opportunity Program, created during Nyquist's tenure, funded programs to assist minority and disadvantaged students in attending non-public institutions of higher learning. Nyquist's most controversial policies were related to school desegregation. Despite a state law enacted in 1969 prohibiting the mandatory assignment of pupils to specific schools to achieve racial balance, the State Education Department assisted several urban school districts in the 1970s in producing and implementing desegregation plans. In the mid 1970s, Nyquist's relationship with the State Board of Regents and state elected officials became increasingly contentious. In 1973, Governor Nelson Rockefeller proposed the creation of an independent "inspector general" to oversee the public school system in New York, thus challenging the independent authority of the Commissioner of Education. Meanwhile, in 1974, the State Legislature imposed term limits on members of the Board of Regents, leading to the replacement of pro-busing Regents with opponents of busing. Nyquist's tenure as

Commissioner of Education came to an end in 1976, when a majority of the Regents voted to dismiss him, the first time a sitting commissioner had been voted out by the Regents.

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## Scope and Content Note

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This series consists of copies of outgoing letters and memoranda from Commissioners James E. Allen and Ewald B. Nyquist, as well as from other NYSED officials writing on behalf of the Commissioner. These letters are generally duplicates of those found in the Commissioner's Subject Files (series 15080), but were maintained by the Office of the Commissioner of Education in order by name of correspondent to facilitate retrieval. These duplicates were called "yellow copies," due to the color of the carbon copies. Correspondents include state legislators, district superintendents and other school district personnel, school principals, teachers, and citizens. Commissioner Nyquist's correspondence includes a group of letters written to the Governor of New York, then referred to the Commissioner for response. These letters are primarily from citizens, and were generally written to request information on NYSED programs and policies, or to protest NYSED or local school programs and policies.

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## Related Information

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### Related Material

B0444Series B0444, includes subject files of Interim Commissioner Ewald Nyquist

Series 15080, which includes the subject files of Commissioners James Allen (15080-77) and Ewald Nyquist (15080-80), contains much of the correspondence in this series, along with other files from the commissioner's office.

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## Use of Records

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### Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of the material.

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## Access Terms

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- Governors--New York (State)
- Supervising
- Education
- Education and state--New York (State)
- Education
- University of the State of New York
- Nyquist, Ewald B., 1914-1987
- Allen, James E., Jr., 1911-1971