2019 State Positions

Equity of Opportunity and Access

Prevent School District Insolvency

- Reform the Foundation Aid Formula to provide funding based on adequacy, equity, flexibility, predictability and clarity
- Reform the Tax Cap
- Retain funding for expense driven aids (BOCES, Transportation)
- Hold school districts harmless from lost revenue through non-payment of taxes by sovereign Indian Nations or tax certiorari cases
- Pay districts the over $300 million owed for prior-year aid claims

Funding and Use of Resources

- Provide support for efforts to enhance school safety that includes mental health resources
- Oppose diverting school aid to competitive grants
- Permit the creation of additional reserve funds especially for TRS obligations, Special Education, OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits), EBLAR (Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserves), energy costs and tax stabilization
- Oppose tuition tax credits for private and parochial schools
- Allow capital purchasing under a contingent budget when it is more cost effective than repair
- Oppose passing to school districts costs born by other municipalities
- Fund charter schools through a state mechanism and require the same standards for educational and fiscal stewardship as other public schools
- Provide a stable and reliable funding formula for Pre-K programs, that include the same formula for transportation for four-year olds as is available for K-12 students
- Raise the allowable limit for the unreserved fund balance

Governance / Flexibility and Efficiency

- Ensure community ownership of public school through locally elected school boards
- Expand allowable areas for shared services and educational programs through BOCES and between districts
- Provide sufficient funding to allow for appropriate staffing of the State Educational Department
- Support functional consolidation and technological cooperation between and among districts
- Expand the ability for unaided participation in shared services by other levels of government
- Retain elected school boards' authority to determine superintendent compensation
- Restore BOCES Boards' authority to negotiate compensation for the district superintendent to ensure quality leadership and competitive hiring
- Support a single public vote for school district merger consolidations

Four County School Boards Association

The New York State constitution guarantees a "sound, basic education" for every child, thus ensuring a system of strong public schools. A school aid program was created to further ensure that, regardless of a community's wealth, every child would have access to this "sound basic education".

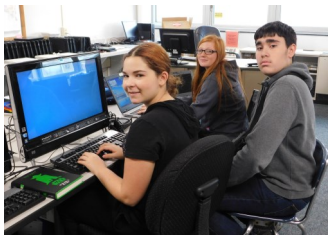
Our Four County School Board members accept responsibility for providing access to high quality "sound basic" education for all of their students. This responsibility is, however, shared with others---the state and federal governments, and the New York State Board of Regents. Our students success is dependent upon a strong, supportive partnership that is built on trust and cooperation between and among these partners.

Despite a high average for per pupil spending, New York continues to have the second worst distribution method of education in the country. The formula is inequitable and does not account for the dramatic increases our region is experiencing in poverty, student mental health concerns and English Language Learners.

This inadequacy and lack of equity in funding (for the state's constitutional responsibility) is left for the local community to absorb. That local source of funding is additionally controlled by the state through the cap on the local tax levy. The impact of this restriction in resources falls more heavily upon small and rural schools (a source of strength and vitality for their communities), their students, and the communities they serve.

Reduced curricular opportunity and lack of funds for necessary staff development are casualties of this lack of resources. Poor and rural communities are left struggling to generate enough local revenue to cover the costs of an education that allows their students to be competitive in a global society.

We need your help to eliminate this educational inequity and to prevent educational insolvency. The state must provide adequate state funding, refrain from creating state initiated education policy requirements, and trust local leadership to make the right decisions to provide an educational program that graduates students who are college and career ready!

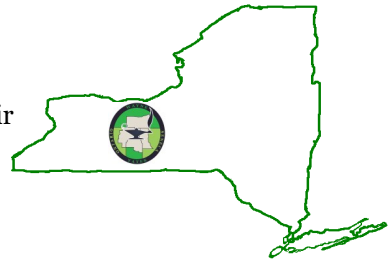


Bill Buchko - Legislative Committee Co-Chair

Robert Groom - Legislative Committee Co-Chair

Tom Nespeca - Executive Director

Beth Thomas - President



Four County School Boards Association
131 Drumlin Court, Newark, NY 14513

Phone: (315) 332-7294
Fax: (315) 332-7380

E-mail: 4countysba@edutech.org
Website: **www.fourcountysba.org**

BLOBLOOMFIELD CANANDAIGUA GANANDA HONEOYE LYONS MANCHESTER-SHORTSVILLE
MARCUS WHITMAN MARION NEWARK NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT PENN YAN PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS
SENECA FALLS SODUS SOUTH SENECA WAYNE WAYNE-FINGER LAKES BOCES WILLIAMSON

Foundation Aid

Four County School Boards Association calls on the state to establish and follow a plan to fully fund the Foundation Aid formula, update components of the formula and continue to work with all stakeholders to create an aid mechanism that is equitable, flexible and predictable.

Establish a plan to fully phase-in the $4.2 billion owed in Foundation Aid.

Review and update the components of the formula that relate to poverty, disabilities, English language learners, enrollment growth, and regional costs.

Conduct a new study to determine the cost of providing each student with an education that prepares them for the future based on current costs, regulations and expectations.

Four County SBA asks the state to improve the data collection for measuring student poverty. Four County would like the state to fully replace the 2000 census poverty data with the "Small Area Income and Poverty Estimate" (SAIPE) in the formula. We would also like the state to use "direct certification" student counts as a replacement to the traditional Free and Reduce Price Lunch (FRPL) in state aid formulas. FRPL undercounts the children in our districts whether designated average need or high need.

The Income Wealth Index (IWI) is used in the formula to compare a district's income wealth to a statewide average. But the state has set a floor of 0.65 (thirty-five percent below state average wealth), regardless of a district's actual income wealth. This is one part of the formula that works against many Four County School Districts with less than average community wealth. Eliminating the floor would allow the formula to more accurately recognize a district's need.

Tax Cap

Four County SBA member districts strive to balance restraint in property tax growth with our mission to deliver the programs and services our students need to be successful and competitive in the 21st century. Without an increase in State and Federal Aid that keeps pace with the growing costs associated with employees, health insurance, the retirement system, and the rapidly increasing student and community needs, the difference must be made up by local revenue, which is generated through property taxes. Please consider the following adjustments to the State Tax Cap on local revenue:

- Counting BOCES capital costs in the tax cap's capital exclusion
- Including properties under PILOT agreements in the tax base growth factor
- Making the allowable growth factor a minimum of 2 percent
- Eliminate negative tax caps
- Reforming the tax cap override process by eliminating the need for a super majority
- Accounting for enrollment growth in the calculation.

Mental Health

While meeting the educational needs of our communities remains the primary mission of our school districts, we are struggling with the growing needs of our students and communities. Our students are arriving at school with physical and mental health needs that are not being met outside the school. Our districts are well aware that a student who is hungry, scared, and dealing with physical and emotional pain and trauma is a student who will struggle to learn.

The mental health crisis is real for the Four County Region. This year our districts have faced student deaths from drug overdose, suicide and homicide. With already limited resources, we have relied upon neighboring districts for professional and personal support.

In response to this crisis, an increasing number of districts want to provide additional services, especially health and mental health services, for their students. However, not all districts have been able to find these resources locally. To ensure that our students have the services they need, several changes could be adopted. Four County SBA would like school health facility spaces to be made a building aid eligible expense. Currently, when determining what portion of a school construction project will be eligible for aid, non-instructional space is generally excluded from the aidable cost. By aiding spaces within school facilities that provide these students with health services in the same way as traditional classroom space, our school districts would be better able to meet our students' needs.

Four County SBA asks the state to support the creation of an expense-based aid for school-based student health services. As our needs continue to grow, the Four County School Districts are developing programs specific to meet their challenges. But when we create these programs, we must do so with funds that we have to shift from instructional programming and other services. State support can help leverage our local resources and assist our districts in addressing the needs of our students while maintaining our academic offerings and extra-curricular programming. We support NYSSBA's call for a new expense-based aid that would reimburse districts for a percentage of the dollars spent on approved services, including but not limited to primary and preventive medical care, nutrition, counseling, and other mental health services.

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