



2024 State Positions

The Four County School Boards Association, representing 20 school district boards of education in Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, and Yates counties, believes education is more than curriculum and instruction. Today's education additionally includes mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, safety, and transportation. These issues coincide with a time of severe financial strain for districts and our state. Four County School Boards Association supports the following positions, and we seek your assistance in achieving these goals.

Equity and Predictability in Funding

- ◆ Provide state aid as agreed for all aidable expenses
- ◆ Increase Career and Technical Education (CTE) aidable salary levels
- ◆ Ensure continuous funding for school-to-work programs so school districts and BOCES can build sustainable programs

Mental Health in Academics and Social and Emotional Learning for all Students and Staff

- ◆ Provide appropriate services for all students based on their individual needs
- ◆ Provide incentives for successful school/human services agency collaboration
- ◆ Fund teacher and staff development to ensure understanding of how poor mental health affects both students and the workplace

Staffing

- ◆ Support the recruitment and retention of all employees through sustained equitable funding
- ◆ Update Civil service laws and regulations to allow school districts and BOCES to be more flexible in constructing job descriptions and identifying specific qualifications to better meet particular needs
- ◆ Support development of career pathways that encourage staff to join and advance within the educational system

Climate Change/Electric Bus Mandate

- ◆ Financial assistance in meeting the State and School District infrastructure needs
- ◆ Set a realistic timeline for conversion to electric buses
- ◆ pursue the implementation of zero emissions buses to accommodate the needs of rural school districts with extended bus runs that current electric batteries cannot support

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Four County School Boards Association

Serving Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, and Yates Counties Since 1975

New and emerging societal challenges demand that school districts assume increased responsibility for accommodating change. Without adequate funding, guidance, and support from the State we cannot meet these expectations.

Equity and Predictability in Funding

To achieve financial stability, school districts must have reliable, predictable, and timely State funding using an equitable foundation aid formula to distribute resources.

Mental Health in Academics and Social and Emotional Learning for all Students and Staff Mental wellness profoundly impacts student academic success. Providing prevention for all and early identification and intervention for students at risk are critical elements of an effective behavioral management program. Many opportunities exist for staff to learn basic techniques that keep students in school rather than in suspension (a national example is Youth Mental Health First Aid <https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org>). Addressing the mental health of our students is achievable. However, the reporting requirements mandated for staff documentation interferes with the quality of the actual education which school districts are able to provide. Please support student and staff wellbeing!

Staffing Requirements Everyone who works in a school district is a role model and a teacher of important life skills. The serious shortage of qualified candidates for all positions in rural schools is one of the most critical problems school boards and administrators face.

The Board of Regents and State and Federal Legislators must work with school boards and administrators to allow for success in recruiting qualified candidates. One solution is to update civil service requirements to allow districts greater flexibility in creating job descriptions and filling positions throughout the district. Another solution is to create partnerships with colleges to begin a pipeline for interested high schoolers or teacher assistants to attend college programs.

Two specific urgent examples of lack of qualified candidates are:

- 1) the chronic shortage of school bus drivers continues to be a significant problem for our school districts. Recruitment issues include lack of interest in driving for public school districts, time and cost of training and licensing, the hazardous nature of the job with managing the increasing volatility of students, as well as the split-shift and/or part-time status of most driving positions; and
- 2) recruiting SRO's who meet civil service requirements and, in addition, have the unique soft skills necessary to be effective in developing positive relationships with students in the culture and climate of a given building.

Climate Change/Electric Bus Mandate

The proposed Electric Bus Mandate-2027 is fast approaching. Rural school districts face many obstacles which include but are not limited to: length of bus runs, time to charge batteries, emergency evacuation of students and drivers safely from a bus, how to transport students if there isn't a charged bus available during an emergency, and grid capabilities, etc. We are very concerned about meeting the suggested timeline and affording both bus purchases and infrastructure upgrades. Legislators can help districts manage issues and mitigate risk surrounding the electric bus transition by looking at the cost, timing, and safety concerns. We would like legislators to advocate for scaling the requirements based on district-specific characteristics such as size, budget, as well as consider a phased approach with zero emissions buses.

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