



# Four County School Boards Association

## 2022 State Positions

Education is more than curriculum and instruction and includes mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, safety, and access to broadband. These issues coincide with a time of severe financial strain for districts and our state. The Four County School Boards Association, representing 20 school district boards of education in Wayne, Ontario, Seneca, and Yates counties, supports the following positions, which are largely in line with positions that Governor Hochul discussed in her 2022 State of the State Address. We seek your assistance in achieving these goals.

### Equity and Predictability in Funding

- ◆ Ensure predictability in the budget. Do NOT support mid-year cuts in school funding, but instead, help schools achieve fiscal stability
- ◆ Provide state aid as agreed for all aidable expenses
- ◆ Work to secure federal funding for Covid-19 relief consistently and not as a “one-and-done” action. We urge you to advocate for President Biden’s ongoing substantive assistance throughout the pandemic. Along with Governor Hochul and NYSSBA, we agree that New York needs the help of the federal government to continue educating our children effectively by covering Covid-19-related expenses
- ◆ Increase the cap on CTE aidable salary

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

- ◆ Provide financial and enhanced 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 the pandemic continues to affect all mental health and stability

### Staffing

- ◆ Support the recruitment and retention of all professionals through funding and regulatory changes to attract employees e.g., bus drivers, staff, mental health professionals etc.

### Equitable Internet

- ◆ **Accessibility:**
  - Ensure broadband reliability, of high quality, and affordability to all families including infrastructures that would address barriers to broadband accessibility
- ◆ **Affordability:**
  - Offer families the opportunity to purchase discounted communication devices through BOCES
  - Expand E-rate funding to families and organizations to pay for internet access



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MARCUS WHITMAN MARION NEWARK NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT PENN YAN PHELPS-CLIFTON SPRINGS  
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Serious educational and social issues have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 Pandemic. These issues are not new, but current conditions have magnified the challenges of providing the sound, equitable, public education guaranteed by the Constitution of New York State.

## **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>). A very successful local example is an on-line course for staff to support and build resiliency in themselves and students created by 15 BOCES staff members in 2016 ([https://rise.articulate.com/share/sPm-2McbqIRFqnWCVSDwMkFbuDOud\\_sc#/](https://rise.articulate.com/share/sPm-2McbqIRFqnWCVSDwMkFbuDOud_sc#/)). All staff now take the 2-hour course at the beginning of the school year. From 2016 to 2021, the Finger Lakes Secondary School and Wayne Educational Center saw a > 99% decrease in the percentage of students leaving instructional classrooms. Addressing the mental health of our students *is* achievable. Please support teacher training!

## **Staffing**

The chronic shortage of school bus drivers continues to be a significant problem for component school districts of Four County School Boards Association. Several issues contribute to the significant lack of interest in driving for public school districts, including but not limited to the time and cost of training and licensing, the hazardous front-line worker nature of the job, especially during a pandemic, the extra time required for per trip deep sanitation, the increasing volatility of students and society in general, as well as the split-shift and/or part-time status of most driving positions. The shortage of school bus drivers is negatively impacting the equity of access to education for all students.

**Every student deserves a great teacher.** The serious shortage of qualified candidates for all positions in rural schools is one of the most critical problems school boards and school administrators face. The Board of Regents and State and Federal Legislators need to work with school boards and school administrators to allow for creativity in recruiting qualified candidates. The process for certifying qualified teachers needs to be reviewed while continuing to insure quality candidates without discouraging candidates from other states or those who want to enter the profession after another career.

## **Equitable Internet**

While grants have been helpful for providing 1 to 1 devices and programming to students, many children are unable to access the internet at home. This lack of access severely limits their ability to complete homework assignments or participate in remote learning. Parents at home also need access to technology and reliable and affordable broadband, in order to communicate effectively with teachers and school administrators to support the education of their children. The Four County School Boards Association strongly advocates for governmental assistance to provide reliable and equitable internet access to all children attending public school districts, particularly for children attending rural public schools.

## **Four County School Boards Association**

**Jennifer Schoene** - Legislative Committee Chair, **Emily Fisher** - Legislative Committee Vice Chair

**Russell Harris** - President, **Stephen P. Miskell, Ed.D.** - Executive Director

131 Drumlin Court, Newark, NY 14513

Phone: (315) 332-7294

Email: [4countysba@edutech.org](mailto:4countysba@edutech.org) Website: [www.fourcountysba.org](http://www.fourcountysba.org)



**Vision Statement** - A respected and strong collective voice for excellence in public education

**Mission Statement** - The Four County School Boards Association will provide training and advocacy opportunities to support and advance excellence in public education and promote the achievement of all students through effective governance



# Four County School Boards Association

## 2022 Federal Positions

As advocates for the 39,000 students in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, the members of the Four County School Boards Association set forth the following recommended legislative actions:

- ◆ Denotes items with no direct Federal fiscal impact

### Student Issues

#### Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA/ESEA)

- ◆ Advocate for implementation to follow the intent of the law
- ◆ Eliminate the 95 % test participation rate as a trigger for withholding funding

#### Early Childhood

- ◆ Support voluntary, locally-determined early childhood education programs with a separate, dedicated funding stream

#### Child Nutrition

- ◆ Provide local districts with the flexibility to operate school lunch programs in a way that meets local needs
- ◆ Involve school board members in any process to amend school lunch and breakfast program nutrition standards
- ◇ Fully fund all requirements under the Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act (HHKA)
- ◆ Restore “offered” vs “served”
- ◇ Support legislation to allow all schools to offer school meals to all children at no charge
- ◇ Improve the area eligibility test to allow summer and afterschool meal sites to participate if 40% of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price meals
- ◇ Provide funding for summer transportation grants to provide innovative teaching approaches and mobile meal trucks
- ◇ Build upon the success of the Community Eligibility Program by piloting it statewide

#### Reaffirm the Role of Local School Boards

- ◆ Ensure the Executive branch does not exceed its authority
- ◆ Recognize the local education agency as the principal democratic governance body in determining how children are educated
- ◆ Restore maximum flexibility to local school boards, freeing them from unnecessary mandates

### Funding Issue Corrections by Legislation

#### School Choice Vouchers and Tuition Tax Credits

- ◆ Oppose diverting public funds to non-public schools and the charter industry
- ◆ Support existing, evidence based public school choice options
- ◆ Hold all schools receiving public funds to the same financial and academic accountability standards

#### Fulfill the Promise with Sufficient, Sustained Funding

- ◇ Increase federal investments in Title 1, IDEA , ESSA and related education programs
- ◇ Ensure federal funding flows directly to local school districts rather than through state education departments
- ◇ Oppose funding through competitive grants
- ◇ Prevent another round of across-the-board cuts (sequestration)
- ◇ Retain current funding thru Impact Aid and hold districts harmless from revenue lost through taxes not paid by Sovereign Indian Nations

#### School Based Medicaid & Healthcare Reform

- ◇ Continue payment of the federal portion for medical services provided to public school students
- ◇ Reject proposals to convert Medicaid to a per-capita grant program
- ◇ Changes to healthcare should include amendments to the Cadillac Tax
- ◇ Simplify the Medicaid billing process for schools to ensure that fewer dollars are spent on administrative costs.



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## THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN IS THE KEY TO OUR NATION'S FUTURE

School boards in the Four County region of New York State (Ontario, Seneca, Wayne and Yates Counties) are committed to providing high quality education for all students. The success of this effort is dependent upon a strong, supportive partnership between local communities and the state and federal governments. Most funding for education comes, appropriately, from state and local sources. The federal government's role has historically been to supplement these resources with funding targeted toward specific needs, particularly those that provide equal opportunity and access, and are important resources in support of public education.

An educated citizenry is essential if we are to retain our position as a global leader. To prosper, we must provide the opportunity for all children to learn and be prepared to make meaningful contributions to our nation's success. Reliable and sustained financial support for our public schools, where the majority of our nation's children are educated, is critical. Our schools continue to experience dramatic increases in the cost of health insurance premiums, pension contributions, and services for children with disabilities. We must provide intervention services for "at-risk" students and expanded opportunities for higher achievers. Meeting unfunded or underfunded mandates places an additional demand on local district resources and a burden on local taxpayers. Our New York State districts have the added constraint of budgeting within the tax cap imposed by the Governor and the Legislature. All of these factors have a greater impact on the low-wealth/high-need school districts that make up the Four County area.

We must continue to invest in our future by providing quality public education. Congress must focus on a long-term solution to funding education in America and oppose any policies that would weaken our public schools. This will help ensure our students' success in the global marketplace and also help strengthen America's economy. Necessary funding must accompany all federal mandates. Past promises must be kept!

### Support Public Education



### Support Academic Achievement



### Support Our Children



**The Four County School Boards Association** is comprised of *mostly rural, low wealth, high need school districts which are* located within the New York State Counties of Ontario, Seneca, Wayne, and Yates. Situated in the Finger Lakes, the area educates 39,000 students (NYSED) and represents 262,302 community members (2010 U.S. Census).

The organization strives "to strengthen the leadership skills and advocacy efforts of its members by setting high standards in the areas of board development, legislative activity and opportunities to come together to share concerns and successes." The Association represents its member school boards to legislative and regulatory bodies at the local, state, and national levels.

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