



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



BLOOMFIELD CANANDAIGUA DUNDEE GANANDA GENEVA 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



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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#/). 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 Website: 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