



2020 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**
- ◆ Retain funding for expense driven aids (BOCES, Transportation)

Funding and Use of Resources

- ◆ **Provide support for efforts to enhance school safety including mental health resources**
- ◆ Oppose diverting school aid to competitive grants
- ◆ Permit the creation of additional reserve funds especially for Special Education
- ◆ Oppose tuition tax credits for private and parochial schools
- ◆ Oppose passing to school districts costs born by other municipalities
- ◆ Provide a stable and reliable funding formula for Pre-K programs, that include the same formula for transportation for four-year old's as is available for K-12 students

Governance / Flexibility and Efficiency

- ◆ **Provide sufficient funding and support to allow for appropriate staffing of the State Education Department so they can provide the necessary guidance**
- ◆ Expand allowable areas for shared services and educational programs through BOCES and between districts
- ◆ Expand the ability for unaided participation in shared services by other levels of government

Despite having a high per pupil expenditure, New York continues to have the second worst method of distributing educational funding in the United States. As our regional student population continue to change in light of poverty, homelessness, mental health issues, English language proficiency, health, safety, food insecurities, and other socially driven issues, as well as new academic standards, the inadequacy in funding continues to put great strain on our districts.

Inequity in opportunity, access, safety, and well-being because of funding inequity leaves much for local districts to absorb, especially with regard to mandates. The state's tax cap adds additional challenges to the districts, most noticeably, in the small and rural districts which serve as the vital hub of our communities. We need your help in delivering a "sound, basic education" as guaranteed by the New York State Constitution.

The 4 County School Board Association takes our responsibility to provide a high quality and constitutionally guaranteed, equitable education to all very seriously. We need your support in eliminating inequity and preventing financial insolvency through a significant revision of the state aid formula, adequate and equitable funding, ceasing the creation of state initiated policy and placing trust in local Boards of Education to make sound decisions in the education of the children of their communities.





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.

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 aid able 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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