



NYSSBA 2020-21 State Budget Priorities

NYSSBA fully understands the uniqueness of the situation created by COVID-19 in which all New Yorkers are living and realize that many difficult choices will need to be made in all sectors to focus on improving the public health of our state and our nation. We are sincerely appreciative of the leadership displayed by our public officials as we collectively respond in these trying times.

School districts are often the hubs of their communities, providing educational, social, health and nutritional services for students and families alike. These supports are likely to be even more important as we make it through this incredibly difficult situation. In 2020-21, sufficient state aid will be essential to restore lost classroom time and significant disruptions to the educational process. The pressures that school districts have faced in recent years - growing student needs, limited local resources and increasing operational costs - are likely to be compounded by COVID-19 in ways we will not fully appreciate for some time. We are in a rapidly evolving situation that has, and will, affect nearly all aspects of life. As such, it is critical the state do everything in its power to support our schools and our millions of students in the months and year to come.

In addition, school districts need as much clarity as possible from the state prior to completion of their annual budget process so they can effectively plan for the year ahead. We ask that to the maximum extent possible the enacted budget accurately portray what school districts should expect to receive in the next fiscal year so that districts can develop their budgets in a meaningful and transparent way.

Consolidation of Expense-Based Aids

NYSSBA urges the rejection of the proposal to consolidate nearly a dozen separate expense-based and categorical aids into Foundation Aid. In particular, this could negatively impact districts that share services through BOCES and those who see significant growth in charter school costs/enrollment. The proposal would also increase unpredictability of annual state aid allocations to school districts.

School District Operational and Budgetary Flexibility

NYSSBA requests full flexibility with regard to state education funding, particularly in the current year. While state aid supports a wide variety of valuable programs and services, many dollars are for specific purposes. As school districts are currently facing unprecedented circumstances, it is critical that individual districts have the ability to make determinations at the local level as to the most effective and appropriate use of limited resources. All non-federal set-asides and restricted funding categories should be temporarily opened in order to ensure full flexibility.

Additional Budget Items

- Reject attempts to adjust or reduce building aid and transportation aid
- Reject attempts to shift certain CSE special education costs from the state to school districts
- Establish a new period of building and transportation aid amnesty
- Fund Special Act school districts equitably
- Support increased regulation of vaping products and advertising
- Restore the four hour qualifier for automatic paid leave for school district employees to vote in elections