



Buffalo ♦ New York City ♦ Rochester ♦ Syracuse ♦ Yonkers ♦ Utica

2016-17 STATE BUDGET PRIORITIES*

- 1. An increase of \$1.4 billion in education funding over the Executive Budget proposal is needed.**

The Conference of Big 5 School Districts and the other members of the Educational Conference Board put forth a proposal calling for an increase of over \$2 billion in school aid next year, which is in line with the New York State Board of Regents State Aid proposal.

New York State continues a strong economic momentum with its fiscal outlook and revenue projections continuing to trend positively. Additionally, billions of dollars from numerous settlement agreements are bringing one-time revenues into the State coffers.

- 2. Foundation Aid increases must be aligned to the needs of school districts including pupil demographics, enrollment growth and local fiscal capacity.**

The six member school districts of the Conference are each faced with a multitude of unique circumstances that must be reflected in the calculation of Foundation Aid increases. School districts must have the fiscal capacity to ensure that each and every child is afforded the opportunity to succeed and to graduate college and career ready. Furthermore, school districts participating in the Community Eligibility Program, which provides meals to all students, must be held harmless from any potential loss of Foundation Aid increases due to fluctuations in pupil poverty data.

- 3. School Aid increases should not be tied to a school district's ability to successfully negotiate a revised Teacher and Principal Evaluation Plan (APPR).**

The Executive Budget mandates approval of a new APPR plan for teachers and administrators by September 1, 2016 in order for a school district to receive any aid increase. The Conference requests an extension of the hardship waiver for school districts who are in ongoing negotiations but are unable to meet the proposed statutory deadline, particularly given that the State recently adopted a transition period with the expectation of a revised APPR statute.

- 4. Funding for struggling schools under Receivership.**

The Conference supports the Educational Conference Board's request for a minimum of \$75 million in new funding for distribution to the State's struggling schools. In addition, the State must make a commitment to sustain targeted support for struggling and persistently struggling schools. These funds are critical to efforts to transform schools.

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5. Additional funding is necessary for English Language Learners.

Our six districts educate almost 71% of New York State's ELL students and the majority of pupils who are newly arrived to the United States, including many refugee students. Additional funding for more bilingual teachers, translators and support services is required.

6. Special Services Aid for Career and Technical Education must be increased and expanded.

The New York State Board of Regents has adopted Multiple Pathways to High School Graduation with the goal of expanding the delivery of career and technical education (CTE) and improving graduation rates. The Conference is requesting three specific changes to funding levels to expand CTE programs in concert with the new pathways:

- a) increase the Special Services Aid per pupil formula-based funding cap of \$3,900;
- b) extend Special Services Aid reimbursement to capture 9th grade students in keeping with the start of our Districts' CTE programs; and,
- c) permit our component member district to access Special Services Aid to expand their in-district CTE programs.

7. School Health Services funding must be restored, increased and expanded.

The Executive Budget cuts school nurse funding for the Buffalo and Rochester school districts. Furthermore, school health funding for the Big 4 school districts has not kept pace with student health, medical needs and the growing programmatic requirements imposed on school health personnel. The Conference requests:

- a) restoration of school health funds for Buffalo and Rochester at \$1.2 million each;
- b) an increase in school health funding for all our districts with Buffalo and Rochester each specifically requesting an \$800,000 increase over this year; and,
- c) an extension of the program to include the New York City and Utica City School Districts.

8. Stronger accountability measures must be applied to Charter Schools and Transitional Aid must be expanded to capture conversion and district-sponsored schools and to extend beyond three years for all schools.

The Conference recognizes charter schools as a public school parental choice option and calls for enhanced accountability measures to ensure that charter school enrollment adequately reflects district pupil demographics including ELLs, special education pupils and children living in poverty.

The Conference also requests an expansion in Charter School Transitional Aid to capture conversion and district-sponsored schools and to extend beyond three years for all schools.

9. Additional targeted funding is needed for ongoing professional development which is vital to improving instructional quality and student outcomes.

We request additional resources for teacher and principal training and professional development initiatives. The Big 5 school districts currently receive no targeted funding for these purposes.