

**Nassau Suffolk  
School Boards Association, Inc.**



**YEAR 2010  
LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES  
FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION**

On behalf of 112 Long Island school districts, 2.8 million residents and 500,000 students, the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association seeks legislative action that would provide relief for school property taxpayers by:

- ***Committing New York State to pay its fair share of funding Long Island's public schools***
- ***Reforming the Foundation Formula to correct state aid inequities that short-change Long Island***
- ***Providing meaningful relief from costly state and federal mandates***
- ***Resisting attempts to shift costs for pre-school and summer school special education to local district budgets***
- ***Denying any attempts to promote charter schools at the expense of locally accountable public schools***



Long Island's reputation for top public schools derives from: efforts of boards of education and educators serving a supportive and demanding public; business leaders recognizing economic vitality depends on excellent schools; and state legislators acting in their constituents' interests.

For decades this united advocacy has rallied to protect Long Island's investment in its public schools. In these most trying of economic times, they now face their greatest challenge—confronting the school funding inequities that continue to force Long Island taxpayers to bear an unfair local tax burden in order to protect their commitment to sustaining high performing public schools.

The Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association has long advocated for the reform of New York's education funding formula. Under the current Foundation Formula, Long Island continues to realize far less state aid than it is entitled to receive. N-SSBA calls upon the State to fulfill its obligation to adequately fund New York's public schools in order that boards of education may fulfill their responsibility to determine the balance between what is necessary and what is affordable to maintain the educational and fiscal integrity of their communities' schools.



---

## SCHOOL FINANCE

---

It is the joint responsibility of the State and its localities to fund New York's public schools and the obligation of the federal government to adequately fund federal mandates. To maintain the public's confidence in public education and to address impediments to the efficient utilization of taxpayer funds, the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association recommends the following:

- Establish that public funds should support core public education and not be diverted for private school vouchers, tuition tax credits or towards the expansion of services and financial assistance to private, parochial and charter schools
- Address deficiencies in the %Foundation Formula+ that deny Long Island its fair share of state aid and contribute to the inequitable burden placed on local property taxpayers
- Provide relief from volatile increases in pension contributions and health insurance costs
- Seek greater state funding of special education costs
- Exclude increases for health insurance rates, pension contributions, tuition and energy costs from contingency budget cap calculations
- Oppose attempts to shift costs for pre-school and summer school special education to local school district budgets
- Provide timely aid payments in the current year; make no reductions in state aid to education once a state budget is adopted
- Permit school districts to establish reserve funds for TRS and retiree health insurance, recognizing the significant long-term fiscal obligations these items impose
- Utilize more accurate regional cost and wealth factors in determining a community's ability to pay when formulating all state aid distributions
- Impose no mandates that are not fully funded by the State; sunset all existing mandates and reinstate only those that are deemed essential
- Relieve schools of legislative, statutory and regulatory impediments to cost saving strategies and initiatives; maximize utilization of BOCES for increasing shared services opportunities
- Repeal the costly Wicks Law
- Support cost-based funding for children with disabilities by restoring public excess cost aid as an expense-driven aid and impose no funding caps on those entitled to receive appropriate services
- Eliminate costly duplicative and/or unnecessary reporting by streamlining the State's requirements

- Distribute state aid equitably to eliminate the disparity between high and low wealth districts by leveling up
- Maintain BOCES, transportation and private excess cost as separate, expense-driven aids
- Require that all Bills contain a full disclosure of local cost and tax impact
- Hold school districts harmless when properties are removed from the local tax rolls by state and other governmental agencies; expand the use of impact fees for school districts; amend the Real Property Tax Law to permit assessment and taxation of tax-exempt property used for business purposes
- Deny any and all attempts to revoke payments in lieu of taxes+commitments
- Maintain requirement that Long Island schools be held harmless for back payments of successful assessment challenges
- Pay STAR reimbursement funds in a manner that eliminates local districts' need to borrow
- Honor commitment to reimburse schools for MTA payroll tax payments; expand reimbursement to BOCES and special act districts
- Enforce Chapter 287, Laws of 2004, to facilitate Long Island schools' access to NYPA power; permit schools to bundle buildings in order to take advantage of declining rate structure for electric costs

---

## LOCAL AUTHORITY

---

Boards of education are the level of government most directly accountable to the citizens. The right of a community to determine its educational priorities through its locally elected board of education must be respected. To forestall further erosion of local control via federal and state mandates and regulations that assume decision-making authority but not accountability, the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association advocates the following:

- Relieve communities of the mandate to turn over local tax dollars to state-imposed, for-profit charter schools that are not locally accountable
- Retain current moratorium on the establishment of new charter schools by the State Education Department and the State University of New York
- Hold charter schools to the same standards and accountability as traditional locally supported public schools; require audits by the NYS Comptroller
- Allow school districts operating on contingency budgets the ability to determine how best to allocate the scant resources available to preserve the fiscal and educational stability of their schools
- Impose no restrictions on the right of a community to determine the educational opportunities it provides for its students
- Impose no legislation that undermines democracy by enabling the minority to control budget votes through a super majority requirement
- Restore to boards the right to determine the number of times a budget may need to be re-aligned and re-submitted to the public for approval, allowing voters to truly participate in the budget building process
- Restore to locally accountable BOCES boards the responsibility to determine the District Superintendent's salary and benefits
- Impose no caps either on the number of students who are entitled to receive special education services or the funding thereof
- Oppose the requirement that a single high-stakes test be the sole measurement of achievement of the state standards; recognize the validity of multiple measures of assessment and value-added assessment
- Advocate for alternate routes to obtain a Regents diploma
- Amend the Triborough Amendment to the Taylor Law, ending requirement to grant automatic step increases beyond expiration of a contract
- Oppose elimination of strike penalties; oppose legislatively mandated or imposed binding arbitration in any form; restore one-year probationary period for employees who strike

- Oppose efforts of county governments to intrude into the governance authority of locally elected boards of education
- Maintain the requirement of a local referendum for the merger of school districts; provide incentive aid and adequate transition funding for school district consolidation

---

## FEDERAL ISSUES

---

- Provide FY2011 federal funding increases to help school districts avoid post-ARRA funding cliff; build upon ARRA increases to IDEA and Title I
- Defeat all attempts to establish private school vouchers, tuition tax credits and the expansion of services and financial assistance to private, parochial and charter schools
- Restrict any school choice options to locally accountable public schools
- Honor Congress's commitment to fully fund its Individual with Disabilities Education Act
- Raise pre-existing Title I program appropriations to the level initially envisioned in NCLB; assure that *Race to the Top* does not deny schools their share of Title I funding; find alternative to use of *free-and-reduced lunch* data to determine qualification
- Permanently reform the Alternative Minimum Tax to index for inflation and recognize regional wealth differences
- Relieve school districts from the costs incurred by the implementation of the ESEA/NCLB; fully fund all costs attributable to reauthorization of Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Address concerns over federal assessment and reporting requirements; evaluate assessment tools, particularly as they relate to students with disabilities or those not proficient in English
- Oppose the use of a single high-stakes test as the sole measurement of academic success; use multiple measures of academic achievement to more accurately determine students' knowledge and performance
- Provide school districts with greater overall flexibility to make educationally sound decisions; free schools of requirements that unnecessarily or counterproductively hinder achievement of goals
- Increase E-rate funding cap; oppose expansion to other entities until current needs of schools and libraries are met
- Maintain Medicaid reimbursements for services
- Oppose any changes to the Internal Revenue Code that would eliminate the deductibility of state and local taxes and mortgage interest

**NASSAU-SUFFOLK SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**OFFICERS**

Jay L.T. Breakstone, President  
James March, Vice President  
Mary Jo O'Hagan, Vice President  
Brian Sales, Secretary/Treasurer

**LEGISLATION COMMITTEE**

James March, Chairperson  
Patricia Rudd, Vice Chairperson

Lana Ajemian	Maryanne Lehrer
Susan Bergtraum	Karen Lessler
Jay L.T. Breakstone	Mark Masin
Alicemarie Bresnihan	Edward Murphy
Judith Chen	Gregory Nardone
Elizabeth Dragone	Ann O'Brien
Anthony Edelman	Brian Sales
Ronald Ellerbe	Jeannette Santos
Juliet Jordon-Thompson	Gary Schoer
Jim Kaden	Sandra Townsend
Martin Kaye	John Verdone
Fred Langstaff	Stephen Witt

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Brian Sales, Chairperson  
Ronald Ellerbe, Vice Chairperson

Susan Bergtraum  
Deborah Coates  
Martin Kaye  
Ronald Walsh  
Stephen Witt

**STAFF**

Lorraine Deller, Executive Director  
Vivian Molitor, Office Manager

**OFFICE**

219 Bedford Avenue  
P.O. Box 385  
Bellmore, New York 11710  
516-781-2053  
Fax: 516-679-0401  
E-Mail: [info@nssba.org](mailto:info@nssba.org)