



NASSAU-SUFFOLK SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION, INC.

MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. BOX 385, Bellmore, NY 11710-0385
OFFICE: 219 Bedford Avenue, Bellmore, NY 11710-0385
JAY L. T. BREAKSTONE, ESQ., PRESIDENT

Tel (516) 781-2053 Fax (516) 679-0401
e-mail: info@nssba.org

LORRAINE DELLER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**NCCSS/N-SSBA/NASSAU PTA
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY MEETING**

Friday, February 5, 2010
9:30 . 11:00 a.m.
Salisbury Center, East Meadow UFSD

WELCOME

**MARY JO O'HAGAN
N-SSBA VICE PRESIDENT**

On behalf of Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association President Jay Breakstone, I welcome you, our partners in education advocacy.

For nearly three decades we have come together in this annual forum to advance the concerns of Long Island's public schools. Not surprisingly, those concerns focused on Long Island's struggle for a fair share of state aid. This year the focus remains unchanged, but the struggle is now on survival...survival of the schools our communities have built and worked to sustain. The fair share we may be seeking this year could very well be a fair share of cuts in state funding.

The State's announced inability to fulfill its obligation to pay its share of school costs can be expected to place unprecedented pressure on an already overburdened local property tax. In anticipation of the tough economic times ahead, school boards have striven to control costs by working towards greater sharing of services and purchasing, consolidating school district functions and containing employee compensation packages. These local efforts will have little appreciable effect without commensurate action by the State.

We call upon the State Legislature to do its part to ease the local property tax burden:

- > Eliminate costly mandates, beginning with the unconscionable waste imposed by the Wicks Law
- > Retain the moratorium on charter school expansion and relieve communities of the mandate to turn over local tax dollars to state-imposed, for-profit charter schools that are not locally accountable
- > Provide relief from volatile increases in pension contributions and health insurance costs
- > Oppose attempts to shift costs for pre-school special education to local school district budgets
- > Permit school districts to establish reserve funds for TRS and retiree health insurance, recognizing the significant long-term fiscal obligations these items impose
- > Provide timely aid payments in the current year and make no reductions in state aid to education once a state budget is adopted

- > Provide greater state funding of special education costs
- > Stop sweetening employee benefits through legislation
- > Honor and make permanent the obligation to reimburse schools for payments to the MTA

and

- > 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

Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association has long advocated for the reform of New York's education funding formula. Under the Foundation Formula, New York's most recent school funding scheme, not only does Long Island continue to realize far less state aid than it is entitled to receive, it falls further behind every year. Our Association has joined in the effort to advance the School Property Tax Relief Act . Framework for the Future+adopted by the Long Island Education Coalition. The Framework provides an alternative to the Foundation Formula that has ill-served Long Island schools and taxpayers.

High performing public schools are an enduring priority for our communities. Long Island's economic vitality depends on retaining its reputation for top public schools. It is incumbent upon our elected representatives to understand that dynamic and join with their constituents to protect this most vital resource.

Now, more than ever in the past, we in the educational community must commit to work tirelessly to build public trust that our school budgets reflect all that could be done to protect the fiscal and educational integrity of our communities's schools.

It may seem the battle is never-ending. But, Long Island will survive this crisis, as it has survived others, through the unity and commitment of the individuals and organizations represented here today.