LOCAL AUTHORITY

Boards of education are the level of government most directly accountable to the citizenry. 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 Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association advocates the following:

Reject attempts to further restrict local control of the publics’ schools

▶ Relieve schools of legislative, statutory and regulatory impediments to cost-saving strategies and initiatives

▶ Reform New York’s Tax Levy Cap Law; restore the right of a community to determine the educational opportunities it would provide for its students:
  - Repeal the financial punishment of a zero increase tax levy cap the State would mete out to schools as a consequence of a defeated school budget
  - Restore democratic principle of “one person, one vote”, repeal super-majority requirement for school budget votes
  - Provide that cost increases due to citizen referenda not force a super-majority requirement upon tax cap-compliant school budgets
  - Revoke denial of rebates to taxpayers in tax cap-compliant school districts due to non-compliance of other local governments

▶ Require charter schools to conform to the same standards of accountability as traditional public schools while granting traditional public schools the flexibility and relief from State regulations as are granted to charter schools

▶ Support a pause and review of Common Core implementation in order that serious flaws in the New York’s roll-out may be addressed

▶ Oppose the use of a single high-stakes test as the sole measure of student or school achievement; recognize the validity of multiple measures of assessment

▶ Maintain requirement of a local referendum for the merger of school districts; provide incentive aid and adequate transition funding for school district consolidation

▶ Require consent of school districts for use of public school buildings as polling places

▶ Restore to locally accountable BOCES boards the responsibility to determine the District Superintendent's salary and benefits

Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, Inc.

YEAR 2016

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association seeks legislative action that would protect and sustain Long Island’s highly regarded public schools.

▶ Establish that public funds should support core public education and not be diverted for private school vouchers, education or tuition tax credits or towards the expansion of services and financial assistance to private, parochial and charter schools

▶ End Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)

▶ Address deficiencies in Foundation Formula in order to assure fair funding for Long Island schools

▶ Honor NYS Legislature’s promise to provide substantive mandate relief

▶ Provide sufficient state funding to cover established current year costs, new state initiatives and loss of local revenues attributable to New York’s school tax levy cap

▶ Enact a pause in New York’s implementation of Common Core initiatives in order that acknowledged flaws may be addressed
Long Island schools are among the best in the country; yet when adjusted for regional cost differences, our costs are on par with schools in other parts of the State. Long Islanders have long understood the real value of high-quality public schools. In order to protect the school systems they built and struggled to sustain, year after year they have supported school budget increases to make up for shortfalls in state funding.

In these most trying of economic times, Nassau and Suffolk boards of education now face their greatest challenge…preserving their communities' investment in high-performing public schools with greatly diminished revenues and increased demands.

Long Island continues to realize far less state aid than it is entitled to receive. Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association calls upon the State to fulfill its obligation to adequately fund its 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. To maintain the public’s confidence and to address impediments to the efficient utilization of taxpayer funds, the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association calls upon the New York State Legislature to:

- Establish that public funds should support core public education and not be diverted for private school vouchers, education or tuition tax credits or towards the expansion of services and financial assistance to private, parochial and charter schools.
- Provide local property tax relief through adequate state funding:
  - Abolish Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA): commit to complete restoration of funds previously withheld from school districts since the imposition of GEA.
  - 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.
  - Maintain state funding of High Tax Aid.
  - Provide current year funding to school districts experiencing increases in enrollment of unaccompanied minors and other unanticipated surges in enrollment.
  - Provide targeted funding to assist schools’ compliance with increased requirements for reporting and delivery of English Language Learners (ELL) and bilingual education services.
  - Provide sufficient and sustainable state funding of current P-12 educational program before redirecting funds towards programs for three-year olds.
  - Utilize more accurate regional cost and wealth factors in determining a community’s ability to pay when formulating all state aid distributions; utilize median rather than mean measurement of income wealth; keep Combined Wealth Ratio (CWR) current with district’s actual wealth in order that state aid is promptly responsive to real needs resulting from substantial loss in tax base.
- Distribute state aid equitably; eliminate the disparity between high and low wealth districts by leveling up.
- Commit greater state funding of special education costs in order to mitigate their expanding impact within limited school budgets.
- Suspend the statutory recalibration of Building Aid payments.
- Fund all costs attributable to New York’s SAFE ACT and all measures deemed advisable to ensure safe and secure schools.
- End the backlog of millions of dollars in state payments of prior year claims.
- Fully fund and maintain BOCES, transportation and private excess cost as separate, expense-driven aids.
- Lift cap on reimbursement of BOCES aid to support Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers.
- Fully fund costs of implementing technological requirements for NYS assessments, including Professional Assessment of Readiness for College and Career (PARCC); provide support for local curriculum and professional development.
- Honor the Legislature’s promise to provide substantive mandate relief:
  - Repeal the costly, arcane Wicks Law.
  - Mitigate special education costs by conforming State laws and regulations to those of federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements.
  - Amend the Triborough Amendment to the Triborough Doctrine of the Taylor Law, ending requirement to grant automatic step and lane increases beyond expiration of a contract.
  - Require that all Bills contain a full disclosure of local cost and tax impact as determined by the Office of the State Comptroller.
- Delay implementation date of new mandates until year following next school budget vote in order that costs not be funded from current school program.
- Impose no mandates that are not fully funded by the state; sunset all existing mandates and reinstate only those that are deemed essential.
- Provide that the State offer veterans’ property tax exemptions through state-funding mechanisms in lieu of passing costs onto property taxpayers.
- Permit school districts and BOCES to establish reserve funds for Teachers Retirement System (TRS).
- Extend ability of school districts to access Employee Benefits Accrued Liability Reserve (EBALR) funds.
- Enact legislation that would limit seniority in determination process of teacher layoffs.
- Maximize utilization of BOCES for increased shared services opportunities.
- Permit county and town school tax collection schedules to be adjusted to minimize need for school district borrowing.
- Enforce Chapter 287, Laws of 2004, to facilitate Long Island schools’ access to NYPAl power; permit schools to “bundle” buildings in order to take advantage of declining rate structure for electric costs; disallow LIPA’s arbitrary capping of its PILOT payments.