

State Aid Recommendations...

The Executive Budget reduces the share of state aid directed to Long Island schools. While Long Island schools enroll nearly 17% of the students in the state, barely 12% of the aid comes to our districts. This is a “root cause” of excessive property taxes. Accordingly, we make the following recommendations:

- Restore High Tax Aid
- Restore Supplemental Excess Cost Aid
- Restore BOCES Aid to School Districts
- Reject the shift of preschool expenses from the state to the schools
- Modify the Foundation Formula to...

... raise the minimum increase from 2% to 5% with a higher minimum for low-wealth districts.

... utilize a regional cost index that recognizes the true costs of “doing business” on Long Island.

... utilize wealth and poverty measures that are regionally sensitive.

... utilize a sharing ratio that generates a reasonable level of expected local effort.

All of this could be accomplished if Long Island received its traditional share of state aid. Even the traditional share is well below our “fair share”.



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SCSSA FOCUS ON THE FACTS

Setting the Record Straight



NOTHING BUT THE FACTS

Background...

The 2008-09 Executive Budget includes a significant increase of state aid to education. Unfortunately, the distribution of the aid is not equitable, and Long Island doesn't receive an appropriate share. We believe that this occurs because the perception of Long Island doesn't match the reality.

The Suffolk County School Superintendents Association (SCSSA) developed this brochure to "set the record straight" about education on Long Island. We know that an important part of advocating for Long Island schools is dispelling the misconceptions that many have about our region. While it is true that there are several school districts with property and income wealth far in excess of the state average, it is important to remember the following:

- *Nearly 60% of students in Suffolk County are enrolled in school districts that fall below the state wealth average.*
- *Long Islanders use 20% more of their gross household income to pay school property taxes than New Yorkers in general.*
- *The Executive Budget projects a two-year increase in Foundation Aid for Suffolk County schools that is 42.5% below the state average.*

Given the needs of our students, the effort of our taxpayers, the percentage of the state's students enrolled in our schools, and the share of state income and sales taxes paid by Long Islanders, the SCSSA believes Long Islanders deserve more support from the state. We call on the state to provide Long Island schools with an appropriate share of state aid.

Outcomes...

Long Island students outperform students across the rest of the state by every measure maintained by the State Education Department. These measures include elementary and middle-level assessments, as well as Regents exams.

However, the statewide rankings tend to mask wide disparities in student performance between low-wealth and average to high-wealth school districts within the region.

Expenses...

- After accounting for regional cost differences, the average per pupil cost of education on Long Island is below the cost in the county at the median.
- The purchasing power of a state aid dollar on Long Island is overvalued in the SED regional cost index.
- The per pupil cost of education on Long Island rose an average of 2.5% between 1995-96 and 2004-05.
- The average teacher salary on Long Island at the elementary, middle, and secondary levels (\$76,530, \$76,400, and \$76,000) is comparable to the state average (\$71,920, \$72,950, \$73,680).

Revenues...

- Schools on Long Island are supported by two primary sources of revenue – property tax and state aid. What doesn't come in aid must be raised through property taxes.
- On Long Island 70% of the school budget is funded with property taxes. Across the rest of the state (outside of NYC) it's approximately 50%.
- On Long Island 25% of the school budget is funded with state aid. Across the rest of the state (outside of NYC) it's approximately 45%.
- Federal aid, fund balance and miscellaneous revenues comprise all other income.

Local Effort...

- **A recent report from the Office of the State Comptroller indicates that ...**

... while the statewide average property tax per person was \$2,022 in 2005, the average in Nassau was \$3,772, which was second in the state; and in Suffolk it was \$2,887, which was sixth in the state.

... Long Island households paid an average of almost \$10,000 in real property taxes in 2005, which is twice as much as every other region except the Hudson Valley.

State Aid Issues...

- Nearly three quarters (48) of the school districts in Suffolk County received only the 2% minimum increase provided by the Foundation Formula.
- Among these districts are ten low-wealth districts with a combined enrollment of 73,000.
- Suffolk County schools stand to lose \$9.8 million in BOCES Aid and \$5.2 million in Supplemental Excess Cost Aid pursuant to the Executive Budget.
- Thirteen school districts in Suffolk County are slated to lose all High-Tax Aid pursuant to the Executive Budget.