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SSFC

THE STATEWIDE SCHOOL FINANCE CONSORTIUM

Dedicated to Secure Equitable Funding for New York State Public Schools

State Aid & New York State Public School Districts Annual Professional Performance Review

Knowledge is power. Francis Bacon

Session #1

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Annual Professional Performance Review: SSFC role in a “significant” state aid year is summarized as:

Membership has grown this year to over **420 school districts** – or roughly **61% of the state’s school districts**. This includes districts from the Canadian border in the North and West, down and across to our borders with Pennsylvania, Vermont & Massachusetts, as well as into the Mid-Hudson Valley and Long Island.

Our enrollment, geographic reach and strong corps of public education activists provide SSFC with a powerful and credible platform provided the tip of the spear to increase financial support for our member school districts.

This core of activists must display courage in the face of adversity and demonstrate the leadership needed to convince the Governor and Legislature that our goals have merit and are just.

SSFC remains focused on our goals and has not be drawn into issues or battles that would cause us to be less effective, distract us from our mission or reduce our resources.

Thanks to membership support, we are able to keep moving forward on our shared concerns and remedies for equitable, adequate, sustainable and predictable state aid.

Now, the Focus must be on EQUITABLE AND ADEQUATE DISTRIBUTION OF FOUNDATION AID AND SAVE HARMLESS ISSUES

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Among our key accomplishments:

We continue our concerted, statewide media relations effort that result in regular analytical, reasonable and responsible contributions, state aid updates, and calls to action on Time Warner’s *Capital Tonight*, Public Radio’s *Capitol Pressroom*, Public Television’s *Insight* and in scores of stories and editorials in newspapers and other media, large and small, across NYS.

SSFC private and public workshops, website and media reports arm Superintendents, board members, central office personnel, all levels of school district staff, parents, residents, legislators and influential members of the media with the latest state aid data, examples and evidence about:

Inequities, inconsistencies and the current unpredictable nature of state aid, and;

The fiscal and educational conditions of school districts that were most likely to face fiscal calamity in the future.

Additionally, we continue to fight for helpful and needed Tax Cap changes.

We engage with allies in state organizations and other stakeholders as we significantly expressed displeasure, as well as remedies, to the Governor, state legislators and staff.

Annual Professional Performance Review: SSFC role in a “significant” state aid year is summarized as:

Accomplishments (continued):

We engage with allies in state organizations and other stakeholders we significantly expressed displeasure, as well as remedies, to the Governor, state legislators and staff.

Driven by community/school board forums we hold in every major region of NYS, awareness of our serious needs is defined and communicated, leading to a dramatic escalation in advocacy efforts that fought for real equity based on need. These forums supplement other workshops, consultations and events held in many BOCES regions and interactions with other statewide groups.

In all, nearly dozens of data-driven, accurate and comprehensive presentations to the media, at retreats and community forums, to legislators, local school boards associations, provide to researchers and all other stakeholders every plausible means to clearly explain the fiscal conditions school districts face through the use of our data, website, workshops and community forums. **Our data sets include every NYS school district...whether SSFC members and only SSFC members have access to it.**

Annual Professional Performance Review: SSFC role in a “significant” state aid year is summarized as:

Accomplishments (continued):

We cite and explain to school districts the factors that influence their state aid — or lack of it — and debunk state aid myths. These initiatives create a greater public understanding of the development of school district budgets, the role and the impacts — long and short term — that state aid and the Property Tax Cap...as well as the need for a serious attempt to build a solid base for a new, equitable and predictable Foundation Aid initiative forward. Indisputable and critical SSFC data-driven tactics create a climate whereby state government could no longer marginalize the needs of school districts.

We publish on our website all SSFC data analysis that supports our rich, academically comprehensive and detailed account of the recent history of state aid to school districts — with all of the flaws, missteps, incongruence and political machinations that have made it so onerous when compared to the promises of the CFE court ruling and the creation of the Foundation Aid formula.

We attend and/or present at state conferences, panels, PTAs, with business leaders, and other public programming from already have over a dozen more scheduled for 2017-18.

SSFC website continues to provide easier **access to statewide and school district individual data**, analysis & advocacy materials, as well as letter-writing technology, news on vital developments, events and issues in public education.

Annual Professional Performance Review: SSFC role in a “significant” state aid year is summarized as:

Accomplishments (continued):

We maintain key alliances and work closely with the Mid-Hudson Study Council, *REFIT* (Reform *Educational Financing Inequities Today* on Long Island), *Rural Schools Association* (RSA) and New York State PTA and the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI). SSFC also continues healthy and vigorous dialogue with NYSCOSS, ASBO, SED, AQE, NYSSBA, NYSUT and the Citizens Budget Commission. SSFC’s incontestable data convinces other state organizations to step up their efforts in the fight for more equitable, adequate and sustainable state aid and final elimination of the GEA.

We analyze various state aid proposals and react honestly to strengths and weaknesses. We provide honest, unambiguous and energetic counsel as needed to all others who sought to help us meet our goals. The findings, recommendations and implications of SSFC research clearly motivate other state organizations to create or enhance their research capacities.

SSFC research continues to be validated, strengthened or reinforced by parallel studies and/or academic scrutiny by seasoned and analytical professionals such as Bob Lowry of *NYSCOSS*, Deborah Cunningham of *ASBO* and Bruce Baker of *Rutgers University*, and John Yinger of *Syracuse University*.

Annual Professional Performance Review: SSFC role in a “significant” state aid year is summarized as:

Accomplishments (continued):

SSFC efforts directly contribute to motivate an influential group of Senators and members of the Assembly to argue for funding to school districts that were disproportionately affected by the flawed and discredited GEA formula, the recent recession and the continuously flawed Foundation Aid formula.

In the wake of ineffectual and mysterious state aid proposals from the executive and legislature, SSFC turns up the heat which helps lead to an enacted budget that has recently always broken the PIT barrier with a final tally of direct state aid to schools. SSFC initiatives were clearly influential in building momentum that ultimately convinced the Governor and legislature to direct additional funding to GEA restoration and to bolster Foundation Aid.

SSFC is a founding member of New Yorkers for Students' Educational Rights (NYSER). Under the chairmanship of famed litigator Michael Rebell, NYSER is tries to force NYS to perform an examination of the current Foundation Aid formula as a means to establish an equitable, adequate, and sustainable state public education funding stream as guaranteed by the NYS Constitution. We hope to be in court again soon. The SSFC has help to select additional districts as possible plaintiffs in the continuing case.

Annual Professional Performance Review: SSFC role in a “significant” state aid year is summarized as:

Accomplishments (continued):

- Further, we provided guidance and templates for Long Range Financial Planning by school districts of every size and demographic. Moreover, Comptroller reports have been analyzed and our findings and recommendations disseminated at workshops throughout the state.
- SSFC at every turn held fast to our principles and mission. This was especially true during the final days of the legislative session for 2017-16 state aid. SSFC lead the charge to make it clear that anything but the IMMEDIATE and complete eradication of the GEA was not acceptable. Our partners, the Rural Schools Association, members of REFIT and the Mid-Hudson Study Council provided helpful support in this effort.
- These accomplishments do not happen by accident, or through the wisdom or good will of state government. Our data was and is solid, our rationale persuasive and our demands reasonable. You, in concert with large numbers of stakeholders, motivated the Governor and the State Legislature to produce these victories.
- Further, we provide guidance and templates for Long Range Financial Planning by school districts of every size and demographic. Moreover, Comptroller reports have are analyzed and our findings and recommendations disseminated at workshops throughout the state.

But we are not done yet, not by a long shot...

- Our significant role is undeniable. But it must continue to be a voice for member school districts as the financial future of the state contains some identifiable complications and the financial futures of our member districts will be affected by these state finances easily into the next five years.
- Despite our accomplishments, this school year again poses serious challenges, but we're gearing up to continue our fight for "equity that is based on need, not Zip Code". (The good thing is that other organizations have picked up on that 1995 SSFC catch phrase creation.)
- The current Foundation Aid distribution is a mess. ANY "fix" will take some time, money and resources. There are many who would maintain the status quo and deny equity, fairness and sustainability to those most in need. The next steps will not be easy.
- Due to the complicated nature of the current Foundation Aid formula, the current way it is used compared to the original formula and intent, and the political nature of state aid between a governor and both houses of the state legislature, the amount and distribution of state aid will be volatile and competitive.
- This campaign can't succeed without your continued courage and support. We need to recruit more stakeholders — many more — to our mission for an equitable, adequate, sustainable and predictable state aid agenda.
- You need to reach as many legislators as possible in advance of this especially critical Legislative Session...and we have workshops across the state to assist you. So, let's go!

Major Issues Summary

Formula Considerations

1. Enrollments
2. Adjusted Foundation Aid per TWPU
3. PNI
4. Census Data
5. IWI
6. Regional Cost Index
7. Computation of Local Contribution
8. Unresolved Tax Cap Issues
9. STAR Differentials
10. Politics
11. Media Perception

Other Considerations

“four moving parts” of the formula—

1. the cost of a successful education,
2. pupil needs,
3. regional cost differences, and
4. local district fiscal capacity.

Other Considerations

1. Costing out models
2. Escalation of costs
 - a) Contractual
 - b) Non-contractual
3. Student Performance Issues
4. Public Support
5. Competition-
 - a) Inter
 - b) Intra