



# SCHOOL ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

## Key Budget Issues for 2020-21 Impacting Public Schools

### THE KEY ISSUES WE NEED OUR LEGISLATORS TO ADDRESS

1. 2020 - The Executive budget increases Foundation Aid by \$503.8 million. The Community Schools Set-Aside has been increased by \$50 million.
2. There has been no attempt to update any of the portions of the formula that are clearly out of date: the census data, the Regional Cost Index and the Foundation amount to be paid per student
3. Additionally, the Executive Proposal will create another tier to lower Building Aid for many districts and it diminishes incidental cost expense allowances.
4. Further, the transfer of expense driven aid leaves districts in a quandary over future calculations and recognition of expenses for aid. This includes BOCES aid. High tax aid is simply added to Foundation Aid and frozen regardless of merit or need for recalculation.
5. Caps are contained in the Executive proposal for Transportation Aid.

## Twitter / Facebook Messages

1. Use the directory contained in this document to find Twitter handles
2. Follow CNYSBA and SSFFC on twitter and retweet these tweets
3. Friend and/or follow CNYSBA and SSFC on FACEBOOK

## Email Messages

1. Use the directory for e-mail address, add info specific to your district, how this would impact your districts and sent to your legislators

Advocates give voice  
to issues & people  
they care about

Your voice can make  
a difference  
for your community

## ADVOCACY CHECKLIST

**School districts across New York have made devastating cuts to educational programs as they adjust to rising costs that are outpacing revenue.** You know better than anyone how this has impacted your schools.

**This trend of reductions cannot continue without threatening the quality—and equality—of the education available to all students.**

Community advocates must speak up *now*, on behalf of their students and their schools, or risk losing the high level of local public education that they've come to expect.

### **Empower yourself**

- Learn about an issue affecting your local schools (See Action Step #1 below).
- Practice a “laser talk” about the issue (See Action Step #2).

### **Advocate with your legislators**

- Send a letter or email to local legislators. Use Twitter and Facebook, too. (See Action Step #3).
- Establish a relationship with legislators' aides (See Action Step #4).
- Schedule face-to-face meetings with legislators, and ask them to take a leadership role on your selected issue (See Action Step #5).
- Invite legislators to special events at schools.

### **Advocate through the media**

- Write a letter to the editor and send your published letter to local legislators.
- Copy editorials or newspaper articles about your issue and send them to local legislators.

### **Advocate in the community**

- Organize a letter-writing campaign.
- Speak to a local community group.
- Use social media to spread the word about what you're advocating for:
  - Update your Facebook or Twitter status with a key point from your “laser talk.”
  - Share links to relevant news articles or to your school district website.
  - Follow legislators' social media accounts. Use social media to connect with legislators.

Action Step #1:  
Learn key issues

Learn about the key issues we need our legislators to address.

Find out from your Superintendent how these proposals would specifically impact your own district, share them with your state legislators and ask for their support in addressing your district's needs.

Action Step #2:  
Develop a laser talk

Deliver your messages more effectively by telling gripping stories in brief presentations known as "laser talks."

- **Identify the Problem**

In your laser talk, focus first on identifying a problem you want your listener to know about.

Try to connect the problem to an issue the listener already cares about.

- **Present a Solution**

Next, inform the listener about a solution to the problem you just presented. Give examples of how the solution would work and why it would be effective. You might cite a recent study or use other credible statistics.

- **Issue a Call to Action**

The final section of the laser talk is the call to action. Calls to action should be concrete, specific and include a "yes" or "no" question.

- **Work in a personal story**

Try to include a compelling, personal story that expands on your laser talk.

Action Step #3:  
Contact your legislator

Write letters and email messages to your legislator. If you have Twitter and/or Facebook, use them too.

Legislators often report that their inaction on an issue is simply because not enough people contacted them about it. Sending a message is a simple way to ensure your legislators know how you want to be represented.

Keep your message short; a single page is best. Be concise and specific, but add a personal touch.

Twitter and Facebook messages can be effective because they are also available to a wider audience and allow for more frequent communications.

Action Step #4:  
Develop relationship  
with legislators' aides

Action Step #5:  
Meet face to face  
with your legislators

Sometimes knowing legislators' aides can be just as valuable as knowing the legislators. Aides often have a great deal of influence on the assembly members and senators for whom they work as well as more time to devote to your concerns. Try to build great relationships with these essential staff members.

Ideally, your first meeting with a legislator should be before a problem arises. It's also best to schedule a personal meeting in a legislator's local district office. Keep in mind these additional tips for an effective meeting:

- **Be on time.** Legislators have full schedules and may not be available if you arrive late.
- **Be concise.** Stick to your message, and expect no more than 15 minutes for a meeting.
- **Be flexible.** If your legislator is late or can't attend, convey the same message you had planned to deliver to the legislator's aide.
- **Be pleasant and appreciative.** Niceness and a bit of humor can make your visit memorable.
- **Be passionate, not emotional.** Emotional pleas often make others uncomfortable.
- **Be prepared.** Make sure you understand the arguments in opposition to your issue and have talking points prepared to combat them. Answer any questions your legislator may have and promise to follow up if you don't immediately have an answer available. Have some materials that are relevant to your issue to leave behind.
- **Be personal—about your issue.** Speak with passion about local children, local jobs, the local economy, local taxes, etc.

SCHOOL DISTRICT	SENATE DISTRICT	ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
APW	48	120
Auburn	50, 51, 54	126
Baldwinsville	50	129
Candor	51, 52	124
Cato-Meridian	48, 50, 54	130
Cazenovia	53	121
Central Square	47, 48, 50, 53	117, 120, 130
Chittenango	50, 53	121
Cincinnatus	51, 52	122, 126
Cortland	51	125
DeRuyter	51, 53	121, 126
Dryden	51, 52	124, 125
East Syr-Minoa	50, 53	127, 128
Fabius-Pompey	51, 53	127
F <sup>'</sup> ville-Manlius	50, 53	127
Fulton	48	120
Groton	51, 54	125
Hannibal	48, 54	130
Homer	50, 51, 53	126
Ithaca	51, 52, 54, 58	124, 125
Jamesville-DeWitt	50, 53	127, 128
Jordan-Elbridge	50	126
LaFayette	50, 53	126, 128
Lansing	51, 54	125
Liverpool	50, 53	127, 128
Lyncourt	53	129
Marathon	51, 52	122, 124, 126
Marcellus	50	126
McGraw	51	126
Mexico	48	120
Moravia	50, 51, 54	126
N. Syracuse	50, 53	127
Newfield	51, 58	125
Onondaga	50, 53	128
Oswego City	48, 54	120, 130
Phoenix	48, 50	120
Port Byron	54	126, 130
Skaneateles	50, 51	126
Solvay	50, 53	129
Southern Cayuga	51, 54	126
Syracuse City	50, 53	128, 129
Trumansburg	54, 58	125, 132
Tully	50, 51, 53	127, 126
Union Springs	50, 54	126
Weedsport	50, 54	126
West Genesee	50	126
Westhill	50, 53	129

**Please Note:** Because legislative boundaries don't match, multiple legislators may represent single school districts.

**N.Y.S. Senators:** (listed by district #)

**New York Senate** (entire body)

[https://www.facebook.com/NYsenate/info?tab=page\\_info](https://www.facebook.com/NYsenate/info?tab=page_info)

Twitter: @nysenate

**N.Y.S. Senator Patricia A. Ritchie**

**48<sup>th</sup> Senate District Office**

Dulles State Office Bldg., Room 418

Watertown, NY 13601

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Twitter: @SenatorRitchie

**50<sup>th</sup> Senate District Office**

This district is currently vacant

**N.Y.S. Senator James L. Seward**

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**N.Y.S. Senator Fred Akshar**

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**Chair of the N.Y.S. Senate Education Committee**  
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**N.Y.S. Assembly Members:** (listed by district #)

**New York Assembly**  
Twitter GOP: @NYS\_AM  
Twitter Democrats: @NYSMA\_Majority

**Assemblyman Ken Blankenbush**  
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**Assemblyman William A. Barclay**  
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**Assemblyman John Salka**  
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