



2021-2022

EDITION



# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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RESHAPING THE  
FUTURE OF  
EDUCATION



# INTRODUCTION

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The 2020-2021 school year was an unprecedented year for communities, schools, the economy and households across New York State due to the COVID-19 pandemic. That continues with the management of ongoing school mandates related to COVID-19 and unexpected costs. The realization of the strong interconnectedness between schools, the economy and families has led to a focus on getting and keeping students in school for the 2021-2022 school year.

In addition, COVID-19 underscored the inequities in our societal systems, including our schools. Many of the issues that schools faced this past year continue. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every aspect of education, adding a new complex layer to the work and expense. Additionally, we see the impact it has had on the mental health of all, staff and students.

As we lay out our priorities for you, we want to begin by emphasizing how grateful we are to partner with our elected officials to ensure the best educational outcomes for the children in the communities we all serve.

## FUNDING TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS ON LONG ISLAND AND ITS IMPACT FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

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Foundational to the struggle for state aid to Long Island public schools is the discrepancy between the percentage of students that are educated on Long Island and the percentage of the overall state aid that is allocated to the schools in this region. Long Island public school districts educate 15.8% of the state's students, yet receive only 12.5% of state aid. This is a difference of \$963 million for Long Island school districts. Our state aid per pupil is 24.1% less than the rest of the state (\$7,233 vs. \$9,528).

In the spring of 2021, funding streams for the 2021-2022 school year came late, but generally in abundance, due to an influx of federal dollars to the state related to COVID-19 stimulus relief funds. The timeline for the development of required expenditure plans was short, particularly in light of the work that school leaders were engaged in related to managing COVID-19 end-of-year protocols.

An analysis of the enacted budget provides a summary of the impact of these varied aids to school districts. We identify several key points below:

- State aid to public schools in New York increased by \$3 billion (11.8%) for a total of \$29 billion, with \$1.4 billion (7.6%) of that designated as an increase in Foundation Aid. The increase in Foundation Aid represents 46% of the total increase in aid to the state.
- The increase of \$270 million in Foundation Aid to Long Island school districts brings the total of Foundation Aid to \$2.4 billion. Of that amount, low-wealth school districts received \$1.7 billion (72.8%), mid-wealth school districts received \$579.5 million (24.4%) and high-wealth school districts received \$66.4 million (2.8%).

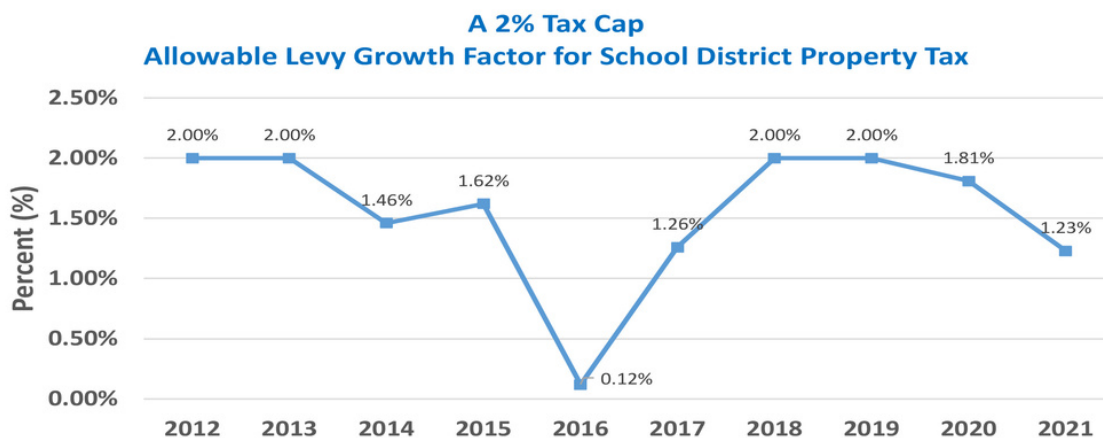


- Total state aid to Long Island public school districts increased by \$417 million (13%) for a total of \$3.6 billion, with \$270 million (12.8%) of that designated as an increase in Foundation Aid. The increase in Foundation Aid represented 64.7% of the total increase in aid to Long Island school districts. As designed, the Foundation Aid allocation for Long Island schools addressed some of the needs that have existed in high-needs school districts.
- Importantly, the enacted budget included a three-year, full phase-in of Foundation Aid, with full funding expected in 2023-2024. For perspective, the state remains more than \$2 billion below the full funding of the Foundation Aid formula for 2021-2022. If fully funded, Long Island school districts would be receiving an additional \$637 million in 2021-2022, with 89.5% of that aid intended for low-wealth school districts.

## MODIFICATIONS TO THE TAX LEVY CAP

There is little argument that the now-permanent tax levy cap has curbed the rise of taxes across the state. As we illustrate in our graph, 2% has rarely been 2%, making it a challenge at times for school districts to communicate spending plans to their communities. After nine years of implementation, it is now time to make the necessary adjustments to the law to address the unintended consequences. We advocate for the following prudent modifications:

- Establish a fixed 2% tax levy cap, rather than the lesser of 2% or the change in CPI
- Eliminate the possibility of negative tax levy caps
- Include properties covered by PILOTS in the tax base
- Modify the tax levy limit calculation to exclude expenses related to school safety, security and COVID-19
- Exempt the cost of community-approved school safety initiatives
- Exempt the cost of new government mandates
- Exempt the ever-burgeoning costs of health insurance



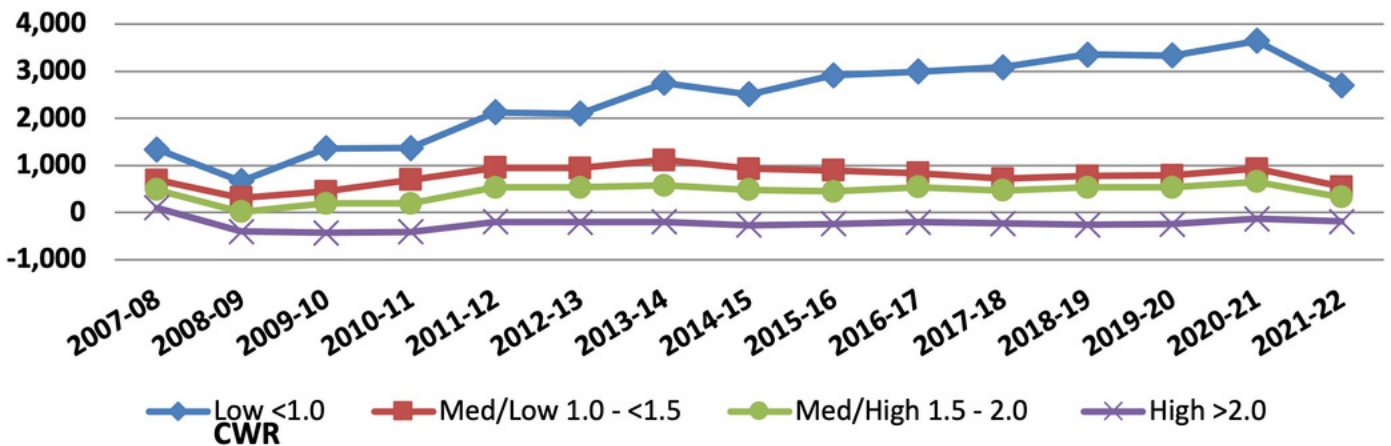


## REVISED/REVAMPED FOUNDATION FORMULA

As is reflected in the chart below, the state aid this past year which was channeled to lower-wealth school districts has decreased the per-pupil inequities that have been evident and growing in the distribution of the Foundation Aid Formula since its inception. School districts are incredibly grateful for the state aid provided. We ask that the state follow through on its commitment to fully fund Foundation Aid in three years.

With the institution of the tax levy limit placing constraints on school districts to raise local funds, a multiyear-formula school aid would greatly assist school districts with long-term planning and budgeting. The year-after-year adjustments to the formula have only served to make it complex and less effective. With the commitment to full funding, it is also time to commit to a statewide task force to do the necessary work to revamp the formula in a way that makes sense for the evolving school district profiles and diverse demographics on Long Island.

### Foundation Aid Owed per Pupil by District Wealth



Note: No CWR is reported by NYSED for Little Flower, New Suffolk, Sagaponack and Wainscott School Districts. Sources 2022 CWR (3/31/21 Legislative State Aid Runs) Enrollment - 2021-22 Property Tax Report Card, NYSED OMS Full Foundation Aid -2007-08 to 2021-22 - Questar III Foundation Aid History

# FEDERAL SUPPORT FOR NEW YORK SCHOOLS



The enacted budget included \$12 billion in federal stimulus funding for New York State. These funds were a combination of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). These funds represent a one-time allocation to be used over multiple years.

Federal stimulus funds directed to Long Island totaled \$855 million. Of this amount, low-wealth school districts received \$620 million (72.5%); mid-wealth school districts received \$192 million (22.5%) and high-wealth school districts received \$43 million (5%).

## LONG ISLAND FUNDING COMPARED TO NEW YORK CITY AND REST OF STATE

With 125 public school districts in Nassau and Suffolk counties, we educate almost 16% of the students in New York State. Long Island has historically been viewed as a high-wealth area, impacting the ability for the region to receive aid proportionate to the students it educates. As the chart below indicates, 30.8% of the money to fund public education on Long Island comes from the state (combining state aid and STAR subsidy receipts), whereas New York City schools receive 39.3% of its funding from the state, and the rest of the state receives almost 49% of its funding from the state. When we consider that less than 2% of school funding comes from the federal government, taxpayers on Long Island are left to make up the almost 67% difference.

	State Aid Receipts	STAR Subsidy Receipts	Total Receipts from State	Federal Aid Receipts	Property Tax Levy & Other Revenue	Total Revenue
<b>Long Island</b>	\$3,381,638,387	\$667,618,034	\$4,049,256,421	\$200,687,213	\$8,880,954,710	\$13,130,898,344
<i>% of Total Revenue</i>	25.8%	5.1%	30.8%	1.5%	67.6%	
<b>New York City</b>	\$11,627,296,699	\$165,469,060	\$11,792,765,759	\$1,237,295,595	\$21,163,459,030	\$34,193,520,384
<i>% of Total Revenue</i>	34.0%	0.5%	34.5%	3.6%	61.9%	
<b>New York State (including NYC and LI)</b>	\$27,986,461,766	\$2,180,647,823	\$30,167,109,589	\$2,406,774,828	\$44,127,510,183	\$76,701,394,600
<i>% of Total Revenue</i>	36.5%	2.8%	39.3%	3.1%	57.5%	
<b>Rest of State (excluding NYC and LI)</b>	\$12,977,526,680	\$1,347,560,729	\$14,325,087,409	\$968,792,020	\$14,083,096,443	\$29,376,975,872
<i>% of Total Revenue</i>	44.2%	4.6%	48.8%	3.3%	47.9%	
<b>New York State (excluding NYC, but including LI)</b>	\$16,359,165,067	\$2,015,178,763	\$18,374,343,830	\$1,169,479,233	\$22,964,051,153	\$42,507,874,216
<i>% of Total Revenue</i>	38.5%	4.7%	43.2%	2.8%	54.0%	



## LONG ISLAND SHIFTS

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Over the past decade, Long Island school districts have seen dramatic increases in English language learners (51.1%) , increases in students and families in poverty (72.7%), increased numbers of individuals with special learning needs (9.5%) as well as a dramatic increase in social-emotional stressors and related outcomes due to COVID-19. School districts are working through the challenges of teaching and learning in a pandemic while addressing these needs.

## EQUITABLE ACCESS

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While the economy in New York State and across Long Island is reeling from the economic impact of COVID-19, it has become clear that open and functioning schools are critical to the overall health of the economy, as well as crucial to the health and well-being of our children. It is also critical that all students get what they need, and that their access to educational services is not driven by what zip code they live in. We outline several critical areas of focus below:

### **Technology**

- Develop state and federal support for access to technology and broadband capacity. This pandemic has proven basic access to technology and the internet impact students inequitably across this state. Solutions to this problem are an equity issue.

### **Social-Emotional Health Services**

- Support for mental health services has never been more important. Mental health issues and substance use and abuse have increased dramatically during this pandemic. The approximate overall budget amount allocated to meeting student mental health needs in Long Island school districts in 2020-2021 was approximately \$64.5 million. Access to care is an equity issue.

### **UPK Funding Future**

- Monies that were allocated to expand prekindergarten programming have changed the trajectories of hundreds of young students. We ask for continued support of high-quality early education programs, both in the way of funding the Long Island Regional Technical Assistance Center for Pre-K and Early Education, as well as by continuing the funding streams for prekindergarten programming.

## OTHER FLEXIBILITY

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- **APPR Adjustments** – High-quality teaching and learning is critical to a functional populace and thriving economy. However, there are components related to EdLaw 3012d (Annual Professional Performance Reviews) that does not drive good teaching and leading. It is imperative for a group of knowledgeable leaders to amend the law in a way that provides for thoughtful local control.
- **English Language Learners** – Modify requirements under Part 154, including increasing the grade span requirements for teaching English language learners to be consistent with those of special education. This will allow the integration of students in a manner that can provide effective education, as well as make the most efficient use of the qualified staff.
- **Establish an “Education Mandate Relief Redesign Team”** to develop ways to reduce the costs of unfunded mandates to school districts.
- **Increase Fund Balance and Reserve Fund Flexibility** – During the expected economic volatility, this would provide school districts the ability to save and borrow from their reserves. Borrowing from reserves should not be tied to repayment with interest.





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