

Address critical workforce shortages

Statewide, shortages in candidates to fill key staff positions such as teachers, mental health professionals and bus drivers jeopardize the ability of schools to provide equitable access to a high-quality educational experience for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Establish and expand scholarship and loan forgiveness programs for teachers and mental health professionals who commit to remaining in New York.
- Streamline training and licensure requirements for school bus drivers.
- Extend the ability of public sector retirees to work in BOCES and school districts without pension penalty.



Ensure universal access to school meals

During the pandemic, every school in New York state had the opportunity to offer students equal access to school meals at no cost to students, families or schools. This reduced stigma made it possible for more schools to feed more nutritious meals to more students.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Establish and fund a statewide, permanent School Meals for All program to reimburse schools up to the federal reimbursement rate for all students served.



Support and promote access to mental health services

Students must have access to mental health support services both inside and outside of the school setting. Children and families in crisis cannot succeed academically unless they are able to develop the self-management skills necessary to learn.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Preserve and increase access to school and community-based health and mental health services statewide for all students.



Support stable funding for districts

Foundation Aid and expense-based aids are critical supports to ensure equitable access to programs and services for all students. These aid streams are needs-based and drive the majority of state support to the state's neediest districts and students. Allowing these formulas to run as intended provides not only needed funding but predictability and stability in budgeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Complete the final phase-in of the Foundation Aid Formula.
- Maintain full funding of expense-based aids.

Expand access to career and technical education (CTE)

State support for Career and Technical Education (CTE) is outdated and needs to better reflect the current needs of students, districts and industry partners. Modernized state support for CTE should consider current costs and conditions. It may be necessary to look beyond adjustments to current formulas, and to consider new mechanisms to ensure that all pathways, including CTE, are properly funded.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Raise the amount of CTE instructional salary that is aidable in the current BOCES aid formula from \$30,000 to \$60,000 over the next three years.
- Adopt a commensurate increase in special services aid.
- Consider phasing in a new tier of BOCES and special services aid that reflects the current and future cost of these programs.

Maintain BOCES out-of-state services

BOCES are currently authorized to contract with out-of-state districts for certain services. This authorization expires in June of 2024.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Make this authorization permanent.

