

Educator, Facilitator, Engine for ECONOMIC GROWTH

BOCES are the premier example of inter-municipal collaboration in New York state. Since its creation more than 70 years ago, local school districts have been able to use BOCES to provide a wide range of educational programs and services through an organizational structure that is a model of shared services. BOCES are able to leverage the strength of multiple school districts and provide a variety of services that, individually, school districts could not provide because the costs would be prohibitive.

With this in mind, the BOCES of NY State would like to underscore several important items that would assist BOCES in our mission:

Increase the Aidable Salary for Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs

BOCES are a major provider of high quality, cost effective Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs in New York. Every year, thousands of students statewide participate in these programs, creating a critical pipeline of future employees for many sectors of our economy. CTE programs are designed and carried out with guidance from business leaders and industry insiders from across the state, in a variety of crucial industries such as healthcare, construction, manufacturing and other valuable trades.

For more than 30 years, this part of the BOCES Aid formula has gone unchanged, and component districts currently receive reimbursement for only \$30,000 of an instructor's salary. The average CTE instructor salary statewide is \$67,000, which means the remaining financial burden falls to local taxpayers, resulting in reduced access for students to these highly successful and important programs.

Recommendation: Increase over the next three years the aidable salary for CTE instructors to \$60,000, with a comparable increase in special services aid.

Preserve and Protect Expense-Based Aids

Schools across the state rely on expense-based aids to invest in student success by supporting an array of services and programs that students would not have access to otherwise. These aids provide much-needed predictability and sustainability for school district budgets. Past Executive budget proposals have called for the consolidation and capping of these aid categories. Given that expense-based aids support critical services such as textbooks and instructional materials, BOCES services, transportation and technology equipment; any change to this funding structure would upend school budgets, especially in high need districts.

Recommendation: Maintain current expense-based reimbursements structures.



Other Supported POSITIONS:

Support the Continued Phase In of Foundation Aid

Foundation Aid makes up a sizable portion of school districts' budgets, and will remain as such to meet basic student needs. BOCES of NYS applauds the state for committing to fully funding Foundation Aid. However, we also encourage the state to continue to evaluate the formula and ensure we are considering updated costs, measurements of poverty and other factors, including maintaining save harmless and due minimum increases for all districts.

Recommendation: Continue to support the full phase in of Foundation Aid.

Support and Promote Access to Mental Health Services

The need for access to mental and behavioral health services pre-dates the pandemic. Now, there is an even greater need to focus on social-emotional learning and wellness in schools. Students must have access to much-needed support services both inside and outside of the school setting. These services are necessary to address the most immediate needs of our students, but to also help them continually develop the self-management skills necessary for success.

Recommendation: Preserve access to community-based health and mental health services statewide to ensure access to these critical supports for all students.

Support Efforts to Address the School Bus Driver Shortage

Statewide, school districts and BOCES continue to experience a shortage in available bus drivers. This jeopardizes the ability to get students across the state to school. Federal changes to training requirements that will take effect in February of 2022 will further exacerbate this shortage.

Recommendation: Work with local, state and federal policymakers to recruit and retain school bus drivers, while also partnering to create new pipelines.

