



Resolution Regarding Governor Cuomo's 2015 Education Budget Proposals

Whereas, there is agreement with Governor Cuomo that “access to education, from pre-kindergarten through college, can pave the way to economic and social opportunities – to better jobs and more successful lives”, many of the proposals in the Governor’s 2015 Executive Budget are untenable and will have significant negative consequences.

Whereas, high performing school districts, like Rye City, are extremely effective at educating students and serving our communities. The Governor in his current budget, similar to his previous budgets, treats all school districts in New York as if we are failing. School districts that have demonstrated success through local control of curricula, school faculty and budgets should be celebrated as success stories, not treated as failures who need to be managed by the state.

Whereas, the Governor has chosen not to provide the usual state aid runs by district that can be used by public schools to budget for the coming year. Even if the state budget is passed by April 1st, districts around the state are already discussing school budgets with their communities in anticipation of school boards adopting budgets in April to be prepared for community votes on May 19th. The Governor adds an additional and unnecessary degree of uncertainty to the process of budgeting under a tax cap and inhibits the provision of accurate data for community discussion during the local school budget process.

Whereas, the Governor has proposed increased education funding by up to \$1.06 billion *IF, and only if*, all of his reform proposals are passed. Otherwise the statutory minimum of \$377 million applies. The Board of Regents and the Acting Commissioner have requested twice the top of the Governor’s funding range to begin to allow all public school districts in New York State to provide an appropriate K-12 education while managing the unfunded mandates that Albany continues to impose. Rye City School District has seen a 12.4% increase in enrollment and a 5.5% decrease in state aid since 2008.

Whereas, the Governor states that there has been an unprecedented increase in state education aid over the last three fiscal years, in reality, the State dramatically cut education aid in 2010 and has continued to underfund education while addressing its own deficit by redirecting state education funding through the Gap Elimination Act (GEA). In Westchester and Putnam counties, 47% of school districts, including the Rye City School District, received less state aid this year than in 2008. Since its inception, \$8.8 billion statewide, and \$403 million in

Westchester and Putnam counties has been lost to the State under the GEA; the Rye City School District alone has lost \$2,177,385.

Whereas, the State has a surplus this year, there is no indication that the GEA will end in 2015-16.

Whereas, Governor Cuomo asserts that his proposed reforms would encourage the most talented college graduates to consider teaching as a career, the proposed lock-step, standardized evaluation system which has no parallel in any other profession, would dissuade, not encourage, the most talented.

Whereas, Governor Cuomo proclaims that the State will “enhance the teacher evaluation system to accord teachers and the profession the respect they deserve”, he sets forth an evaluation system that denigrates the professionalism of teachers and administrators and establishes a narrow, one-size-fits-all model.

Whereas, Governor Cuomo proposes increasing the emphasis on the value added model of state tests in teacher evaluations by increasing their weight from 20% to 50%. The black box “value added model” used by the state has been demonstrated by the Lower Hudson Valley Council of School Superintendents’ study to have insufficient controls and not a long enough data set to be useful. The value added concept creates disincentives for teachers to focus on certain populations of students – such as already high-achieving students or special education students.

Whereas, the Governor has proposed the use of outside evaluators to review the classroom practice of teachers, leaving absent the question of who will fund training and time of outside evaluators. School districts such as the Rye City School District have already devoted resources to providing professional development and administrator staffing for the current classroom evaluations required by the current Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). As school districts have in place administrators who are hired to be the curricular leaders and managers of our schools, classroom performance evaluations should be done by the principals who know their communities, students and staff better than any outside evaluator could.

Whereas, the Governor has proposed increasing the weight of state testing from 20% to 50% of teacher evaluations while simultaneously reducing local administrator evaluations of classroom practice from 60% to 15% of teacher evaluations, the critical role of the building principals in evaluating and mentoring their faculty is being dismissed. In the Governor’s proposal, the locally determined portion of a teacher’s evaluation declines from 80% to 15% of the total score.

Whereas, the Governor is proposing a new teacher tenure process which will require five *consecutive* years of an effective or highly effective rating, the evaluation system measures are problematic and policies such as LIFO remain in effect. Nevertheless, a five year probationary period is more appropriate, and the proposed language indicating that districts retain authority to dismiss probationary teachers at any time for any reason is a necessary clarification to 3012c.

Whereas, the current, “expedited” 3020a hearing process remains costly, time-consuming and often ineffective, the proposed changes would shift the presumption in favor of the administrator, strengthen evidentiary standards, and streamline the process. The same presumption of trust for the local administrator should be incorporated into the teacher evaluation proposal.

Whereas, the current practice of the State is to reimburse money already spent by districts on efforts such as the Smart Schools Bond and universal pre-K. It is imperative that all such programs initiated by the State include

upfront funding mechanisms that do not require districts to budget for uncertain state funds in tax-cap restricted budgets.

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Board of Education of the Rye City School District urges State Legislators to review these proposals in detail, gather input from research and from those in the field, restore and increase funding for K-12 public education in New York state, and rebuff the elements of Governor Cuomo's proposed 2015 Executive Budget which will instill inappropriate measures of accountability and negatively impact the classroom learning environment and local control.