

Bedford Central School District Advocacy Position Statements

2016-17



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BCSD needs financial aid from the State of NY



BCSD has a substantial and rising population of high need and at risk students comprised of English Language Learners (ELLs) and students in poverty who receive Free and Reduced Price Meals. Out of 46 districts in Westchester and Putnam counties, the BCSD is:

- #4 in English Language Learner student growth
- #7 in English Language Learner students as a percent of total enrollment
- #11 in Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP) participation

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Yet, BCSD is #40 in the amount of the State aid received.



Provide State Aid to Student Who Need it the MOST.

- ❑ State aid is intended to help districts that genuinely need it most.
- ❑ The aid should be provided for students at risk and requiring mandated services.
- ❑ BCSD represents a diverse community that is more heterogeneous than most districts in Westchester and Putnam counties.
- ❑ The lack of State support for communities with growing English Language Learner populations is hurting those districts the most.



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Key Areas of IMPACT

- ❑ Modifying the State aid formula to increase the weight for ELLs
- ❑ Using current data to recognize the poverty in our community. (The BCSD has had more than 50% growth in ELLs and students in poverty since 2007. Data from the 2000 census (that is being used) is not representative of our current population.)
- ❑ Lowering the extraordinary cost threshold to provide relief to school districts to educate students with extraordinary needs.



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Detailed Overview



Overview

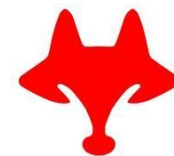
There are five key areas that comprise Bedford Central's advocacy efforts:

- **Unfunded Mandates**
- **The State Aid Formula**
- **Contingency Planning**
- **Property Tax Levy Cap**
- **Special Education.**

BCSD advocates for New York State's school funding model to provide the Bedford Central School District with the ability to provide an adequate, equitable, fair and affordable education for all children.



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Unfunded Mandates

When the tax levy cap was introduced, the Governor recognized that it would be deleterious to New York's public education system unless there is significant mandate relief. However, to date, there has been no mandate relief.



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Unfunded Mandates

Recommendation #1: BCSD calls upon the State to examine all unfunded and underfunded mandates with the goal of minimizing such mandates, which place a burden on local school districts and detract from instructional programs and services for students.



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The State Aid Formula

Foundation Aid is the most significant of the aids. BCSD believes the current formula for calculating Foundation Aid does not fairly represent the need that exists in its constituent communities.



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The State Aid Formula

Recommendation #2: BCSD encourages the Governor and Legislature to utilize methods in State Foundation Aid calculations that fairly represents need in Districts. These include:

- ❑ Distributing State aid through an equitable funding formula with built-in annual adjustments that provides resources and services to all students and complies with NY's Constitution and meets statutory and regulatory requirements.
- ❑ Utilizing the "median" versus the "mean" as a measure of central tendency for data points used to measure district wealth.
- ❑ Utilizing data that accurately portrays student need.
- ❑ Providing accommodations for school districts serving a large number of ELL's through the use of targeted aid or adjustment to the Foundation Aid Formula.
- ❑ Updating the Regional Cost Index so that regional cost differences are measured accurately and incorporated into the formula.

Recommendation #3: BCSD encourages the State to utilize some measure of poverty, specifically Direct Certification Data, in the calculation of Building Aid; and, that the State maintains funding for High Tax Aid.



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Contingency Planning

Under the current and modest property tax levy cap, the ability of school districts to plan for emergencies, unanticipated required expenses, and/or other contingency expenses is severely limited.



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Contingency Planning

Recommendation #4: BCSD calls upon the Governor and Legislature to create mechanisms for school districts to create reserve or contingency funding for potentially volatile or unanticipated expenses, including:

- Teachers' Retirement System
- Other postemployment benefit obligations
- Healthcare expenses for current employees



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The Property Tax Levy Cap

The current property tax levy cap, combined with inadequate State Aid, places unreasonable constraints on the fiscal operations of a school district, and threatens the maintenance of instructional and support programs for students. It is not compatible with increases in school district expenditures.



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The Property Tax Levy Cap

Recommendation #5: Adjust the property tax cap calculation to more realistically align with reasonable increases in expenses.

Recommendation #6: Hold school districts financially harmless whenever they experience the unanticipated, significant loss of revenue due to tax certiorari cases, the unexpected loss of a significant portion of the value of their taxable property, or are categorized in moderate or significant fiscal stress.

Recommendation #7: Provide accommodations and relief within the property tax levy cap for school districts which are the home of a certain threshold of tax-exempt or not-for-profit entities.



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Special Education

School districts maintain a commitment and sacred and statutory obligation to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Meeting such needs in an effective manner brings extraordinary expense upon a school district, which causes local competition for scarce resources.



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Special Education

Recommendation #8: BCSD encourages the lowering the extraordinary cost threshold to provide relief to school districts working hard to educate students with such extraordinary needs.



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