



CNYSBA NEWS

Train, Empower, Advocate, and Mobilize for Students

April Issue: The State Aid Runs from Dr. Timbs

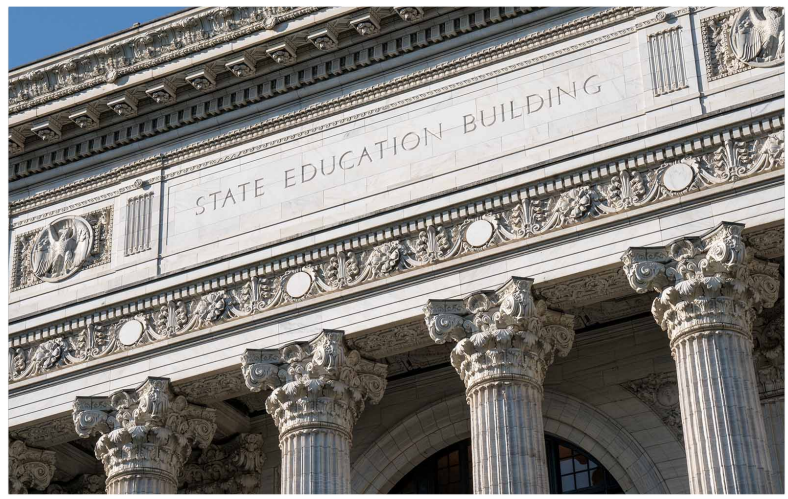


It's that time of the year and with a late budget from Albany, school districts have to work overtime to review The State Aid Runs before the May 17th budget vote.

This year's analysis from SSFC Executive Director Dr. Rick Timbs is extra interesting. Dr. Timbs reviews his best estimate on The State Aid Runs, but also sets his sights on long range fiscal planning with regards to the new laws and mandates for Electric Buses.

Dr. Timbs gives his usual blunt assessment and guidance for districts as we all move forward into 2022-23.

Plus, look for a *You Do What for a Living* Video, an update from Syracuse City Schools and details on the CNYSBA Pathways to Careers event coming in May.



State Aid Runs, Plus Details on Electric Bus Mandate

by Dr. Rick Timbs

Two quick items: The State Aid Runs for 2022-23 State Aid and Long-Range Fiscal Planning with reference to the new state law and mandate about Electric Buses.

The State Aid Runs

Now that the state budget is approved school districts should have received their state aid runs. Please remember that the State Aid runs are just an estimate of a school district's state aid.

Continued on next page





Brighton Academy Students Explore Race through Interdisciplinary Projects

What is race? Does science play a role in its definition?

Eighth graders at Brighton Academy recently embarked on a monthlong project examining these complex questions. In their Science and Social Studies classes, students examined race through different lenses, making connections as they conducted research, examined maps and completed discussions.

In Science, students studied how heredity influences traits from generation to generation. They learned that not all traits are specific to one gene (for instance, eye color can be determined by genetics while skin color cannot), and that genes can be influenced by the environment. In Social Studies, students analyzed political cartoons, videos, and the poem ‘White Man’s Burden’ to help them better understand white privilege.

Read the [full story here](#).

The run is always wrong. That is because some of the numbers are estimate based only on data submitted to date. Here are some examples.

Building Aid

Building aid is often incorrect. It’s not that the state is wrong it may be because a school district will be submitting Final Cost Reports for capital projects for capital project phases that would then be eligible for aid. Those are not counted in the state aid Building Aid estimates because the state does not know when the school district will be submitting them. This all stems from Chapter 97 legislation that indicates the state Building Aid for a project cannot begin until the project has been SED approved, as SA 139 form has been submitted to the Office of Facilities Planning that outlines anticipated costs for the project based on bids and other factors, the submission of a Certificate of substantial completion, and financial the Final cost report that shows how every penny was spend in the project. So, if your school district is finishing a Capital Project this June or December and will submit Final cost Reports, you will be due an amount of Building Aid and that aid is not on the latest state aid runs.

BOCES Aid

BOCES aid is due in the fiscal year after the school district paid for the aid eligible expense. Because the School district fiscal year ends on June 30 of 2022, the state would have no way of knowing exactly how much aid a school district will get in every instance. If a school district were to make additional purchases through BOCES for equipment of services that were aid eligible after the BOCES had submitted eligible data requests to the SED data bank early in the calendar year, they would not be part of the state aid runs for BOCES aid. Submissions to BOCES by June 30, 2022, will be updated to the SED data base and aid will be paid based on that update.

Transportation Aid

Transportation aid is based on data submitted to SED early in this current calendar year. It will not be until June 30, 2022, that all transportation aid eligible expenses are actualized so the amount on the state aid runs are an estimate. *Continued on next page.*

Other Aid categories

The same is true for many other aid categories. Your business official should be prepared to discuss this with board members should they need more information.

Electric Buses

We all comprehend that there has been a distinct policy shift by New York State concerning the buses purchases by school districts. All new purchases of buses by school district beginning in 2027 must be electric buses and all school district bus fleets must be completely electric by 2035, and this includes even if a school district has contract busing.

There has been a pledge of State and Federal monetary support to accomplish this goal, still, I am concerned about the practicality and fiscal implications of this initiative.

Below are two news article “excerpts” and links to help you guide your thinking as this mandate evolves:

[New York is getting charged up for electric buses Barbara O'Brien Buffalo News, Apr 14, 2022, Updated Apr 14, 2022](#)

The Bethlehem Central School District, outside Albany, was one of the first in the state to decide to add electric school buses to its fleet. The district bought five of them last May. But Bethlehem is learning an old lesson: It's not easy being green. The buses have yet to be delivered.

"Our time has been pushed back, just due to supply chain issues," said Transportation Director Karim Johnson.

The move to electric vehicles of all kinds has been accelerating in recent years, driven by concerns about the climate and health effects of internal combustion engines – and the carbon dioxide they produce – and by the soaring price of gasoline.

The same is true for diesel buses, which also emit harmful emissions. Electric buses may be less expensive to run over the bus' lifetime. That's why New York State is mandating that all school districts start purchasing zero emission buses in five years.

There are about 50,000 school buses in New York, and the state wants all the yellow buses on the road to be zero-emission by 2035.

...Ramping up production is one key. Another is cost.

"Electric buses cost two to three times a normal bus," said Richard Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium. It's something that Bethlehem knows well. Bethlehem Central expected its buses to arrive by January, but the delivery date now is early June.

The list price of one of the 70-passenger buses in the Bethlehem district was \$363,000, and the district received a grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority for \$200,000 for each bus, for a net cost to the district of \$163,000, Johnson said.

A comparable diesel bus costs about \$135,000 to \$140,000, he said. -Buffalo News 4/14/22

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[New York Schools Have Five Years To Begin Electric Bus Conversion: All Buses Must Be Emission-Free By 2035, According To State Budget Provision, Times Union, Rachel Silberstein April 13, 2022 - Bing News](#)

Tomorrow's K-12 students will be boarding electric buses to get to school, according to new state law.

A [provision in the New York state budget](#) enacted on Friday seeks to transform the school transportation sector on an ambitious timeline, requiring all school buses purchased after 2027 to run on electricity and replacing all 50,000 diesel-fueled buses in the state with electric vehicles by 2035.

Environmental advocates applauded the state's investment in clean transportation, but educational leaders and school officials warn that implementation will be financially and logistically challenging.

In the coming years, districts will have to install charging stations and potentially overhaul their electrical infrastructure and bus routes to support the new fleets.

And it's just the first in a series of state and federal mandates targeting school districts to help governments reach their environmental goals, according to Brian Cechnicki, executive director at the Association of School Business Officials, which has lobbied for more government funding and flexibility in the statute.

"There are going to be a lot of challenges for schools to make the switch in the environment of tax caps and reliance on state aid," Cechnicki said. "These are all things that we, as advocates and schools, will need to be mindful of ... remember, the more you have to spend in these areas, the less you have to spend on teachers and academic programming."


While there are numerous state and federal funding streams available to support green initiatives, each comes with its own set of limitations, Cechnicki said.

New York's 2022-23 spending plan injects \$500 million in the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act to support electric school buses and charging infrastructure. New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) will provide technical assistance to school districts during the transition.

The law does include some flexibility. For example, it enables the state Education Department to delay implementation if the 2027 deadline cannot be met without unreasonable cost or parts from overseas, education officials said Monday. School districts can also apply for a one-time, two-year implementation waiver from the department.

Bethlehem Central School District last year [became one of the first](#) in the state to start the process of swapping out its diesel buses with battery-run vehicles. The district secured \$1 million through the New York Truck Voucher Incentive Program (NYTVIP) to supplement the purchase of five electric buses.

Continued on Page 6



**PATHWAYS
TO CAREERS**

Tuesday, May 10, 2022 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Citi BOCES
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The State Aid Runs continued from Page 4

Residents approved the purchase of five buses for the 2021-22 school year in May 2021, but supply chain issues caused manufacturing delays. Anticipated completion at the factory is slated for May 2022 with the buses delivered to Bethlehem in June 2022.

Also approved as part of the bus proposition was \$200,000 for necessary infrastructure, including charging stations for the buses.

The district will have another bus purchase proposition on the ballot this May. Assuming the measure passes, the district will order one more electric bus for the 2022-23 school year. -Times Union, 4/13/22

Summation

While each article helps to frame the general issue, the devil is always in the details. My concern is EXACTLY how much financial support will a school district really get and when?

The cost of these electric buses is substantial as is the cost up upgrades to bus garages and the bus maintenance and driver staff. As we have seen sometimes in the past Federal and State support takes time to arrive and the distribution of the support among school district is not always viewed as either equitable or adequate. I wish this initiative had been piloted around the state in varied sizes of districts and terrain before this mandate was set in motion. This will be a learning time for all of us.

Best wishes to all for the passage of a successful school district budget on May 17th!



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The midsize, regional law firm headquartered in East Syracuse, New York, also staffs offices in Rochester and Ithaca. The firm's depth and breadth of experience in school and employment law have enabled them to serve the wide-ranging needs of its clients across the state.

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In the world of 24/7 news and social media, Ferrara Fiorenza is always aware of its clients' desire to maintain both a positive public image and judicious use of district funds. The firm's collaborative and proactive approach to legal issues sets them apart.

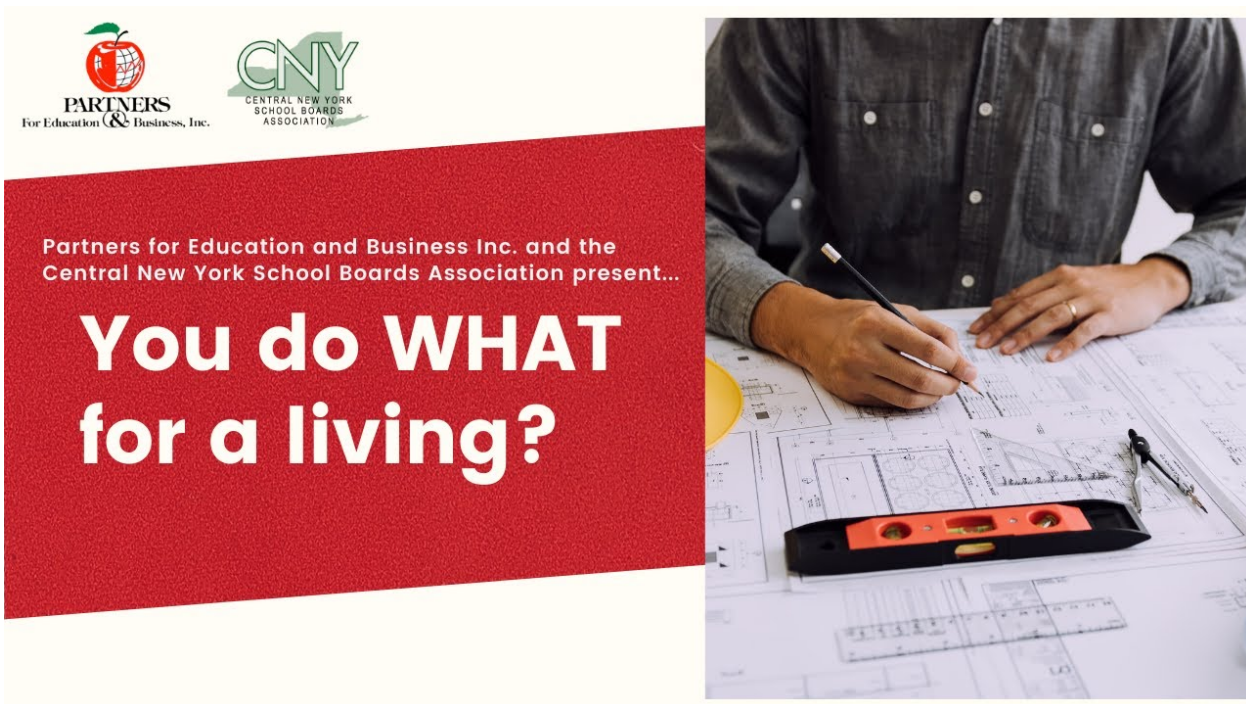
In addition to day-to-day representation of its clients, Ferrara Fiorenza is busy with client-centered training events, briefings and constantly communicating with clients to help them navigate the many complex statutes and administrative regulations impacting school operations and administration. During the height of the pandemic, Ferrara Fiorenza's clients looked to them to help decipher and implement the seemingly daily updates from the State Education Department and Department of Health.

Ferrara Fiorenza is not only committed to promoting and maintaining a safe, productive and efficient environment for educating students and serving school communities, it is also committed to fostering a welcoming, collaborative and team-centered approach inside its own practice—and as a result, the firm has been named one of Central New York's Best Places to work in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

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You Do What for a Living?

Watch our video segment, You Do What for a Living? to learn about Chef Eric Smith, of Giovanni Foods. He's the Director of Culinary Research and Development and Corporate Executive Chef at Giovanni Foods. The interview is hosted by Kathy Birmingham of Partners For Education and Business.



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