



# CNYSBA NEWS

**Train, Empower, Advocate, and Mobilize for Students**



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## **\*SPECIAL REPORT\***

# **SUMMARY OF GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET**

Foundation Aid increase by \$1.5 billion (5.9%) • Categorical aids and competitive grants increase \$230 million (2.1%) using current formulas • Total education aid increased by \$1.7 billion (4.7%) According to the Executive Budget Briefing Book:

*The FY 2026 Executive Budget begins the process of reforming the Foundation Aid formula by updating the formula's two measures of the percentage of low-income students in a school district, consistent with the recommendations of the Rockefeller Institute of Government and the Board of Regents. The outdated 2000 Census poverty rate is replaced with the most recent Census Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates data, while unreliable free- and reduced-price lunch data is replaced with economically disadvantaged data to better reflect the current population of low-income students.*

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*The Executive Budget also modifies the formula to provide additional aid to low-wealth school districts and to ensure that each district receives at least a 2 percent annual increase in aid, providing a total increase of \$1.5 billion (5.9 percent) in Foundation Aid for SY 2026.*

*"Everybody gets something and I think that we're responding to some of the Rockefeller report," Budget Director Washington said. "I know that this will be a discussion with the Legislature, but we feel like this is a place of minimum disruption but also providing for the current law level of school aid across the board."*

The SSFC position is that this is a much better start than last year. While only two of the Rockefeller Institute's recommendations have been employed by the Governor, there is still time and good recommendations available that the Legislature can include in this "reform" movement.

Let's consider some of the progress achieved to some extent with the Executive Budget Proposal and our suggestions for further enhancements of the Foundation Aid Formula.

For Foundation Aid to work several elements must be in place:

- 1. Rationally determine the level of support for Save-Harmless districts based on wealth and demographics of students (Adequacy and Equity).**
  - a) The Rockefeller Institute was charged with creating a mechanism to diminish Foundation Aid to Save-Harmless districts.
  - b) The Rockefeller Report recommended the gradual diminishment of Save-Harmless funds, and their loss be annually supplanted by fund balances from the affected districts; particularly those with Unappropriated Unreserved Fund Balances in Excess of 4% (RPT §1318).
  - c) When the Rockefeller Recommendations were published, the Governor disavowed any interest in the reduction of Foundation Aid to Save-Harmless districts. Instead, the Governor recommended a 2% increase (due minimum) in the Executive Budget.
  - d) SSFC had recommended the continuance of Save-Harmless status.
  - e) SSFC also found the Rockefeller recommendation on the topic, as a practical matter, would not work as the study had intended; in effect simply drawing down reserves and fund balances of all types over time, until they are exhausted, is not a plausible plan that financially sustains a school district.

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2. **There must be a change in the Adjusted Foundation Aid Amount (FA) to reflect more realistic cost of educating a single child (Adequacy)** (It is only moving by “inflation.”  
(\$8,040 X 1.031 (3.1%)) =**\$8,289**
  - a) The old Successful Schools Model should not be used to determine a primary aid amount.
  - b) A costing out study is needed. (What model should be used?)
  - c) The mission of school districts has increased beyond simply inflation since the inception of Foundation Aid. (Phase-in factor)
  - d) The Rockefeller Report recommends a version of the Successful School Model based on Elementary School Assessments.
  - e) SSFC remains concerned about how an Elementary School Assessment Successful School Model would capture a realistic cost of educating a child. We are willing to listen, but it will be a complicated undertaking.
  
3. **Update and revise the database for the Regional Cost Index; The Regional Cost Index is too broad!** (The Rockefeller Report Agreed but requires more study for a reasonable solution)
  - a) The regions are too large and disparate.
  - b) It is just a labor index and does not contain other factors that affect school district finances.
  
4. **Increased weighting of the following Foundation Aid formula factors: CWR, FRPL/ Direct Certification, Census/SAIPE, ELL, SWD and expand the Sparsity formula elements into different degree levels.** (The Rockefeller Report Agreed but requires more study for reasonable a solution for Sparsity formulas; but make suggestions for the rest.)
  - a) Add more weighting to this item in the formula to promote equity and adequacy.
  
5. **Revise the calculation of the CWR.** (The Rockefeller Report Agreed)
  - a) The arbitrary calculation of the CWR should be used as a “selected” CWR with two other options besides a 50/50 split between PWR (Property Values) and APWR (Income Values). Perhaps weighting each in a different ratio (for instance 70/30 to 30/70; 60/40 to 40/60)

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6. **Create and use better and more accurate Measures of Poverty and Regional costs.**
  - b) Replace the 2000 Census with SAIPE. (The Rockefeller Report Agreed)
  - c) Replace FRPL with Direct Certification and Expand Direct Certification to Include more measures of poverty such as SNAP, HEAP, Medicaid) (The Rockefeller Report Agreed)
  - d) Maintain all new initiatives as unrestricted aid (eliminate for instance the Community Schools Set-Aside) (The Rockefeller Report Agreed)
  - e) Caps within the formula must be eliminated as a part of a legitimate phase-in plan (IWI and PNI) (The Rockefeller Report Agreed)

But there are more items that need to be addressed in the aid and finance areas:

#### **Other state aid and financial initiatives**

1. **Corral the increased loss of funds to charter schools.** (No Rockefeller Recommendations)
  - a. Claw-back provisions must be added into law to protect district finances.
2. **Increase Pre-K Aid and permit Transportation Aid for Pre-K programs** (No Rockefeller Recommendations)
3. **BOCES Aid: School districts have already paid expenses relative to these services and await reimbursement in the form of aid. They must be protected and enhanced.** (No Rockefeller Recommendations)
  - a) Increase significantly the \$30,000 salary limit (from the 1990s) on BOCES Aid (Ramp into \$60-65,000)
4. **Excess Cost Aids, Academic Enhancement Aid and High Tax Aid are aid categories that have not been updated in years and continue to be unrealistically frozen or simply without merit in terms of equity. These aids categories should be addressed for equity and adequacy.** (No Rockefeller Recommendations)
5. **All aid due to school districts in the “Prior Year Aid Queue” must be paid on an accelerated basis.** (No Rockefeller Recommendations)
6. **Increase RPTL §1318 to at least 10% 4% is SIMPLY TOO LOW!!!** (The Rockefeller Report Agreed in part and only for a few years)
7. **The state must reevaluate its state aid initiatives every 2 years for equity, adequacy, and sustainability.** (The Rockefeller Report Agreed to this type of reevaluation)

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To make things worse, even with the Executive Budget Proposal initiatives that enhance and support Foundation Aid there are more Save-Harmless Districts, as of this writing, than when the state budget was adopted in April 2024.

We still face a Foundation Aid formula that is outdated, uses the wrong metrics, is often arbitrary, and could potentially increase the numbers of district on Save-Harmless.

We suffer from similar ailments related to Enrollment considerations, the elusive Reevaluation of the Amount of Need, the absence of a Political Will for Change, the existence of the Fear of Change, the legitimate concern about Unintended Consequences, the lack of Equity and Adequacy, the pervasive Perception of School Finances, the lack of acknowledgement of the Escalations in Student and Family Mission expectations, and the significant Escalation of Costs-such as Health insurance, Pensions, Labor, Equipment, and Capital Work.

Coupled with Legal and Political Issues at State and Local levels:

- Leadership Turnover in Boards of Education and Administration
- School Labor Force Issues related to costs and scarcity:
  - Bus Drivers, Bus Monitors, Bus Mechanics
  - Business Officials
  - Superintendents
  - Upper-Level Math and Science teachers
  - Cleaners, Custodians, Maintenance Mechanics

And then there is the remaining elephant in the room:

Zero Emission Buses:

- Key dates 2027-2028 and 2035-2036
- 8 Years For State Transportation Aid?
- Federal Grants/NYSERDA/NYS \$4.2 Billion Bond Issue
- There are ~50,000 non-zero-emission buses in NYS.
- Size of the replacement issue:
  - (50,000 buses X \$400,000 per bus=\$20,000,000,000)
  - Availability?

Additional considerations:

- Infrastructure?
  - **Statewide?**
    - “The Grid” says it can’t be done in the stipulated period.
    - How much will “Grid” preparation, and School Aid cost the state?
  - **Local?**
    - **State Aid?**
      - You will begin to struggle with reoccurring escalating expenses, fund balances will shrink; reserves will be tapped and “right sizing” begins.

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- Building Aid?
    - To retrofit your Transportation Facilities for Charges, ZEB storage, ZEB maintenance you will have to start now to be ready in time.
    - This will take money, planning and luck (approvals, bids, costs, voter approvals)
  - Transportation Aid?
    - This will take money, planning and luck (approvals, bids, costs voter approvals)
- 8 Years of BANs; BONDS; Cash; Reserves?

Does anyone really know how much this is going to cost? I don't think so!

Be well,

Rick

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Click here to view the entire Executive Budget Briefing Book:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/FY2026-Executive-Budget-Briefing-Book.pdf>

Click here for individual school aid runs:

<https://www.budget.ny.gov/pubs/archive/fy26/ex/local/school/2526schoolruns.pdf>

## Governor Signs Bill on School Temperature

*By Brian Fessler,  
NYS School Boards  
Association*

A new law sets 88 degrees as the maximum temperature for occupancy of all spaces used by students in public school buildings, beginning in September 2025. Gov. Kathy Hochul approved the measure in mid-December.

The law may result in midday evacuations - particularly at the beginning and end of the school year, when outside temperatures are the warmest.

The law also mandates that school boards create a policy that requires staff to try to "relieve heat-related discomfort" whenever the temperature of an occupied room reaches 82 degrees (as measured at a shaded location that is three feet above the floor and near the center of the room).

[Read story](#)

# STEM at Blodgett Cheerleading Team Boosts School Pride

*Submitted by the Syracuse City School District*



The shouts in the Syracuse STEM at Blodgett cafeteria can be heard from down the hall.

“When we say lions, you say roar!”

The energy is palpable, and the pom poms are waving. The school’s cheerleading team is practicing their cheers – which they’ll perform at the upcoming boys basketball game.

Thanks to support from the SCSD Athletics Department, all middle schools were offered the opportunity to launch a cheerleading team this school year.

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“ELA teacher Leeza Roper usually hosts the dance portion of the school’s annual talent show, so when a group of her 8<sup>th</sup> grade girls expressed interest in cheer, she jumped at the opportunity to support them.”

“At this age, it’s so important for them to have a role model – especially one who’s also a younger woman of color,” Ms. Roper explained. “I didn’t have that when I was their age. The middle school environment can be tough. We focus a lot on adjusting our mindset, controlling our emotions, being accountable for yourself and for your teammates, and supporting each other. This is a sisterhood.”

The girls on the team agree – noting the impact that sisterhood has had on them.

“I used to do dance outside of school, but I stopped because I lost motivation,” 8<sup>th</sup> grader Ellieyanna Lamar shared. “Cheer is bringing me back – it’s fun to get people hyped up! The positive energy of the team is the best part... we all help each other out and help each other be better.”

“It’s really fun to be on a team,” 7<sup>th</sup> grader Anisa Abramson added. “It’s been great to help me learn to talk to different people and meet more people. It’s also a great opportunity for girls to have more options after school, besides volleyball and basketball.”

Head Captain Ti’anna Mosquera noted that Ms. Roper’s personality makes her the perfect coach – noting that she loves them but also holds them accountable.

“Ms. Roper helps us a lot. She’ll get under our skin if we get in trouble!” she said. “It motivates the school when we cheer...and it helps me motivate myself. Because of cheerleading, I have a louder voice sticking up for myself. It also helps keep me from getting in trouble.”

“The cheerleading team motivates me to get my work done so I can get to practice,” Co-Captain Elvianis Pinet agreed. “Being part of the team has also helped me turn myself around in school – I want to be better now... being part of the team makes me want to stay out of the halls.”

Among the practices and games, the cheer team gathers regularly for team building activities, group discussion circles, and more – talking about how they feel and what they could do to improve.

“This has been perfect for my mental health,” 8<sup>th</sup> grader Evonys Rivera shared. “I get stressed out during the school day, but cheer is a distraction. The energy is great. Plus, the boys coach is tough on them – we’re a positive influence and help hype them up!”

Way go to, cheer team... we love seeing you help boost your school’s #SCSDSpirit!



# Falcon Ambassadors Strengthen the Sense of Community at PSLA at Fowler



“Ready for that rematch?” Grant 8<sup>th</sup> grader Dominic Davis asked one of his coaches as he entered the gym after school. “You know it!” the coach replied.

Dominic has something to prove: the previous week, his coach had beat him 5-0 in a game of basketball, and he was ready to make his comeback.

Thanks to the Klinik Kids program, SCSD elementary and middle school students have enjoyed the chance to engage with professional basketball players, coaches, and trainers from around the world. Over the course of six weeks of sessions, the students participate in basketball drills and competitive games, enhancing their skills and strengthening their mental fortitude. Perhaps more importantly, thanks to a partnership with an organization called Half Hood Half Holistic, the students are also introduced to mental health and wellness concepts.

“The biggest piece of Klinik Kids is introducing that mental health component,” Kashif Hameed, affectionately called ‘Coach Kash’ by his students, shared. “Especially in underserved areas, where the waiting list to receive mental health services is so long. We want to hook them with basketball and help them improve those skills, but our primary focus is introducing those concepts that will help them regulate day to day.”

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Each session, in addition to the basketball instruction, students are introduced to concepts including gratitude, meditation, paced breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, goal setting, and more – all in an engaging and fun way.

“Not only are they getting better at basketball and building those skills, they’re also building their community and learning about mental health in a real life setting,” Klinik Kids Mental Health Lead Rachel Johnson, founder of Half Hood Half Holistic, explained. “They may not all become pro ball players, but they’ll all remember this as a formative part of their life... it’s all about positive affirmation and positive reinforcement.”

Last year, the Klinik Kids program was rolled out in four SCSD schools... to such success that this year, it has expanded to reach eight! Now, students at McKinley-Brighton, Webster, Seymour, Grant, Dr. Weeks, Delaware, STEAM at Dr. King, and Syracuse STEM at Blodgett are invited to participate in the free program each week.

“If you’re locked in, say ‘locked in!’” Coach Kash shouts to a gym full of students huddled around him.

“Locked in!” they all shout in response.

“If you have Klinik Kids on your shirt, that means you’re part of this family. And that means we don’t tear each other down – we build each other up. Say ‘build each other up!’”

“Build each other up!” the students shout enthusiastically.

That positive messaging is part of the program’s appeal for students.

“It’s an amazing opportunity,” HW Smith 6<sup>th</sup> grader Lovell Sims, who participates in the program at McKinley-Brighton, shared. “I love basketball, and the sense of community here is so good. It’s a healthy environment. If we come in and we’re in a bad mood, one of the coaches will help us feel better. I just love it. Every day I come back, I learn more and I do better. This really makes me feel like I can do anything!”

“I love to play basketball with my friends,” Grant 7<sup>th</sup> grader Angel Viamontes added. “I want to work on my basketball skills! But at Klinik Kids, we also learn about the importance of wellness and taking care of ourselves. They train us on how to pass and shoot, and also why we should stay hydrated and how to take deep breaths to stay calm. Being here helps me be better in life. It’s taught me how to control myself and my emotions when things are tough.”

Klinik Kids participants also have the opportunity to receive special prizes and participate in special experiences. Late this fall, for example, school administrators at each participating location were asked to select one student to represent the group on a trip to New York City – where they were invited to meet 2016-17 NBA MVP Russell Westbrook. Students were treated to seats in the VIP skybox, and then had the chance to meet players, watch the game, and take pictures with Mr. Westbrook himself.

What a wonderful opportunity to help students improve their physical and mental health – thank you to the Klinik Kids team for offering this experience to our students!

# 2025 CNYSBA LEGISLATIVE FORUMS

## ALL BOCES LINE UP

2/8/25

### OCM BOCES

IN - PERSON / 9:00AM - 11:00AM

Legislators confirmed: Senator Ryan, Senator May, Assembly Members Hunter, & Gallahan.

2/13/25

### CAYUGA-ONONDAGA BOCES

VIRTUAL / 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Legislators confirmed: Senator May, Assembly Members Gallahan, & Lemondes

2/15/25

### CITI BOCES

VIRTUAL / 9:00AM - 10:30AM

Awaiting responses from: Senator Walczyk & Assemblymember Barclay. Rep from Senator Ryans office attending

2/28/25

### TST BOCES

VIRTUAL / 6:00PM - 7:30PM

Legislators confirmed: Assembly Member Dr. Anna Kelles. Awaiting confirmation from Senator Webb.

### WHAT TO EXPECT:

The forums will include a brief overview from Dr. Richard Timbs of SSFC regarding the impacts of the Governor's Executive Budget proposal on the component school districts. We will then invite Legislators to provide any remarks, information, or statements. Lastly, the Executive Director of CNYSBA will facilitate a discussion between school district leaders and the Legislators in the room/zoom.

REGISTER TODAY:

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<https://cnysba.org/cnysba-events/>







# Upcoming CNYSBA Events:

**\*\*\*DISCLAIMER: DATES MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE BE SURE TO CHECK THE WEBSITE PERIODICALLY FOR ANY UPDATES. \*\*\***

## February 2025

**February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025** – OCM BOCES Legislative Forum – 9:00am – 11:00am – (In-Person) [click here to register.](#)

**February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025** – Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES Legislative Forum – 6:00pm – 7:30pm – (Virtual) [click here to register.](#)

**February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025** – CiTi BOCES Legislative Forum – 9:00am – 10:30am – (Virtual) [click here to register](#)

**February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2025** - TST BOCES Legislative Forum — 6:00pm – 7:30pm – (Virtual) [click here to register](#)

## March 2025

**March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025** – Round-Table Event – Mental Health Awareness - *Time TBD – Date Subject to Change* – (Virtual)

## April 2025

**April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025** – Round-Table Event – Recruiting/Retention/Staffing Difficulties - *Time TBD – Date Subject to Change* – (Virtual)

## May 2025

**May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025** – CNYSBA 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dinner – *Time TBD* – The Lodge in Skaneateles – In-Person.