

A request to NYS Lawmakers:

STOP & CONSIDER BEFORE YOU VOTE

New York State schools are NOT failing, they have been continuously improving for decades; and where children are not successful in school, poverty is a major factor:

- ➔ **45% of New York's public school students** attend school in a Big Five district which collectively have a graduation rate of 55.7%;
- ➔ **55% of New York's public school students** attend schools outside the major cities; collectively those districts have an average graduation rate of 88.9%.

While our state has fiscal problems, these were not created by public schools, nor will they be solved by destroying public schools. In Monroe County in 2010, school districts held property tax increases to 1.7% even as state aid for education was cut by 9.9%.

Issue	Problems with proposed solution	A better solution
Property tax cap	A tax cap does not address the causes of rising property taxes. A tax cap without real relief from mandates coming from Albany will cause alarming cuts in local government and education services.	Property taxes can best be controlled by Albany paying for its current mandates and by refusing to impose any additional unfunded mandates.
Mandate relief	There is no proposal for controlling the cost drivers for public schools. Albany continues to create new expensive mandates even with current fiscal limitations. And these mandates frequently interfere with making the best educational decisions possible.	True mandate relief that deals with the real cost drivers is needed: * State support for state pension plans; and * Re-examine laws and regulations to eliminate overly prescriptive and unnecessary requirements. Current expensive state mandates should be eliminated or covered by state income taxes. All legislation must include costs of implementation to state and local governments.
Seniority policies	Proposed changes to the seniority system could result in firing senior staff just because they earn higher salaries.	Any system developed to change the way teachers are selected for layoffs will need to be carefully crafted to guarantee fairness. Otherwise local districts and the state will need to use resources for courtroom expenses to defend against appeals to layoff decisions.
Teacher / principal evaluation procedures	Acceleration of the APPR process, as proposed by the Governor, without thoughtful design and a thorough field test will lead to an ineffective, and perhaps more expensive system. This proposal is yet another very expensive unfunded mandate.	Since careers of educators depend on this work being done well, this committee should be allowed to finish its work and conduct a manageable pilot of its regulations, before an untested system is thrust upon practitioners with no research to indicate its value to teaching and learning or its true cost to school districts.
Public employee pensions	Current proposals do nothing to address the pension system's unrealistic assumptions for market earnings or the requirement that school districts increase contributions to make up for market losses.	The state should take over all responsibilities for public employee pensions. If not, it should at least revise its management policies for its pension funds to control losses to the fund, and to better adjust for fluctuations in returns.



MONROE COUNTY EDUCATION COALITION

· Genesee Valley PTA · Monroe County Association of School Business Officials · Monroe County Federation of Teachers ·
 · NYSUT · Monroe County Council of School Superintendents · Monroe County School Boards Association ·
 · School Administrators Association of NYS ·

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