

WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

2013 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The tax levy limit, without significant mandate reform, forces school districts to make fiscal and program decisions that negatively impact our children's education. School districts need legislative action NOW to address school budget pressures, ease the local tax burden, and put students first.

APPR, TESTING and TENURE REFORM

- End **reliance on high-stakes tests** as a key evaluation measure for student, teacher and/or principals under NYS school accountability system (APPR), shifting focus to engaging, meaningful, deep learning experiences for all children.
- Address **significant under-funding of APPR** mandate and high-stakes test and implementation issues.
- Enact **Five Year Renewable Tenure** system with professional development and evaluation parameters.

FISCAL REFORM

- Abolish **Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)** which shifts revenue burden from state to local taxpayer, and appropriately fund public school districts across NYS.
- Examine **current mandates** and refer to Legislature and Executive agencies for modification and/or repeal. Require that **newly proposed mandates** undergo comprehensive cost and funding analysis with local input.
- Restore **TRS and ERS 3% employee contribution** requirements that were eliminated in 2000 pension enhancement legislation for Tiers III and IV, thereby providing immediate fiscal relief for school districts.
- Establish **new tier that offers a defined contribution plan option** (similar to CUNY/SUNY) or a hybrid plan.
- Freeze **salary step increases when a contract expires**, and no new contract is in place.
- Control school district **health care premium costs** through legislation that would make Empire Plan State employee contribution levels the floor in all newly negotiated local contracts.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- Better align **NYS Special Education with Federal laws** by eliminating many of the 204 state laws and regulations that exceed federal IDEA requirements, creating a long term solution to district waiver process.
- Address **Burden of Proof** issue at the State level, and align NYS with US Supreme Court decision.

SPECIAL ACT SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Modify NY **special act public school district rate-setting process** to allow special act districts to bill based on current costs (similar to BOCES), and ensure appropriate funding to serve high-need student population.

WPSBA supports the mandate relief platforms that have been developed by the Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents, New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA), and the *Let New York Work* Consortium.