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Report: School spending up 2.2 percent, tax levy up .7 percent

By Rick Karlin, Capitol bureau on May 9, 2016 at 11:46 AM



Voters across the state will cast ballots on their local school budgets next Tuesday², May 17, and the state Association of School Business Officials today is out with a report card outlining school spending and tax trends.

Overall spending is up 2.2. percent, but most tax levy increases, which, absent a two-thirds override are tied to inflation, are up only about .7 percent. An increase in state aid makes up much of that difference.

The report notes that student population is dropping statewide, although costs are being driven by increases in certain locations and among high-needs students. Others have also pointed to pay **increases** and the number of administrators as one reason costs go up even if there are fewer students.

Here are the details:

The New York State Association of School Business Officials (NYSASBO) released an analysis of Property Tax Report Card data submitted by school districts to the State Education Department.

The Property Tax Report Card data includes information on the change in tax levies, proposed spending and enrollment for 669 independent school districts. The fiscally dependent Big 5 city school districts are not required to file this information and are not included.

The analysis shows the allowable levy limit statewide was 0.9 percent the

lowest level since the inception of the tax cap in 2012. The allowable levy limit is the maximum amount a school district could raise with permissible exclusions.

The report also documents the proposed increase in the levy that districts will submit to voters on Tuesday, May 17th. The statewide proposed levy increase is 0.7 percent and is the lowest in six years. “School leaders, particularly school business officials, have crafted budgets that continue to incorporate efficiencies and cost saving measures, while delivering a quality educational program acceptable to the voters,” stated Michael J. Borges, NYSASBO Executive Director.

Proposed spending is expected to increase by a modest 2.2 percent and continues a trend of restraint by school districts since the Great Recession. “The complete restoration of funds lost to the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) has enabled many school districts to restore educational programs and staffing to pre-Great Recession levels,” continued Mr. Borges.

Analysis of the Property Tax Report Card data also shows that while student enrollment overall continues to decline, high need districts are the exception to this trend and are experiencing enrollment growth particularly by students in poverty and English language learners. “The growth in high cost students requiring additional support services puts an even greater financial burden on districts that already spend less per pupil than their low need counterparts,” stated Mr. Borges.

“Now that the GEA is finally gone for good, state policymakers need to turn their attention to making sure the Foundation Aid formula operates as intended and drives additional resources to high need districts facing enrollment growth,” concluded Mr. Borges.



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UnCivilServant says:

May 9, 2016 at 1:02 pm

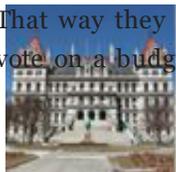
Isn't it lovely how they try to keep this essential vote as low-key as possible, and they keep it away from any elections which might have actual turnout? Almost as if they know the public at large would vote for them to stop wasting money.

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JAB says:

May 10, 2016 at 7:47 am

Actually, they have the vote on the Budget in May so the budget is in place before the previous school year ends. That way they know if they can bring all their teachers back, etc, BEFORE school starts in September. You wouldn't vote on a budget in November, 2 months after School has started, would you?



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