
Let's get NY state school aid right in 2017 (Commentary)



High- and low-needs schools in New York spend different amounts per child, and every year the results reflect that difference, writes the commentator. (*monkeybusinessimages*)



By [Special to syracuse.com](https://www.syracuse.com)

on January 09, 2017 at 8:07 AM, updated January 09, 2017 at 8:08 AM

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By Michael Borges

As the 2017 Legislative session gets underway, we eagerly await Gov. Andrew Cuomo's 2017 Executive Budget, hopeful that New York seizes the opportunity to get state aid right. This year the education budget can offer every student in the state an equal opportunity to learn and achieve success regardless of where they live.

Recent **reports** by the New York State Association of School Business Officials (NYSASBO) document the disparity between the education offered to children living in poverty and the rest of New York's kids. Despite putting an end to the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) and the restoration of billions in school aid over the past three years, the resource and achievement gap continues to grow. High- and low-needs schools spend different amounts per child, and every year the results reflect that difference.

We are at a turning point. This year it is crucial to make necessary [changes in Foundation Aid](#) to provide the educational opportunity the laws intended. Our Foundation Aid Task Force has recommended specific changes to improve the formula's equity, adequacy and stability along with a three-year phase-in of the remaining \$4.3 billion in Foundation Aid promised to schools in 2007 by state leaders. The state Board of Regents echoed this call in their [State Aid Proposal](#).

One year can make an enormous difference in a student's academic success. Every year that goes by without fully funding Foundation Aid is a lost year for tens of thousands of students.

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Of course how much money is spent on education is very significant. But also important is how funds are distributed and how effectively they are used. No one knows better how to get the greatest return for our education dollar than NYSASBO's members, the school district CFOs. With the help of state policymakers we can implement various cost-savings measures to provide more resources to help students succeed. NYSASBO has recommended several ideas to reduce costs and encourage sharing of resources in areas like health insurance, transportation and audits.

No single area of school spending is growing faster than special education.

Fifteen percent of all students now receive special ed, up from 13 percent just two years ago. In 2011, the state Education Department reviewed all of the costly special ed mandates New York requires and found more 300 possible innovations for savings. NYSASBO calls for a legislative panel to review these findings for implementation.

The state share of school funding needs to increase with a concentration on adequate funding for children living in poverty. New York can afford to correct the inequities in the current funding stream without taking away the dollar gains all districts have welcomed in recent years. And school spending can be more effective.

Let's not waste another year. Let's do what is right for our children now, so we can all have a brighter and more prosperous future. Our children don't have a moment to lose!



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