2013 GOLD MEDALLION ENTRY—Special Communications Project/Campaign

Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options

SUBMITTED BY
Capital Region BOCES and Questar III BOCES (joint entry)

PROJECT SYNOPSIS
New York’s public school districts have faced a multi-year “perfect storm” of funding challenges percolating down from the state level. Across the state, there is concern that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. A lack of state leadership on adequate and equitable school funding and mandate relief threatens to shortchange a whole generation of school children and unravel hard-won gains in academic achievement.

At the request of the superintendents from 47 school districts in the Greater Capital Region, a team of communication specialists from the Capital Region BOCES and Questar III BOCES, supported by the Questar III State Aid Planning Service, developed an extensive, regional advocacy campaign designed to:

1. Inform and energize influential stakeholders from the 47 school districts.
2. Draw region-wide attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools.
3. Help our elected state representatives understand their responsibility to adequately and equitably fund public schools.
4. Catalyze local grassroots organizing and effective public information campaigns to help school district leaders build informed consent for potentially contentious school budget votes.

Two major events anchored the campaign: a large-scale public awareness forum and an advocacy training event designed to empower parents and community residents to reach out to legislators about these issues.

The campaign successfully galvanized the growing frustration and concerns of educators, parents, students and community residents into a targeted “Call to Action” that resulted in additional state funding, numerous editorials echoing our messages, more informed media coverage of school funding issues, and greater public understanding of the budget challenges facing schools.
Research: Like public schools around the country, New York schools face a slow-burning fiscal crisis fueled by a recently enacted property tax “cap” and an erosion of federal and state funding to support day-to-day school operations. New York, facing financial problems of its own, has balanced its budget in recent years by withholding public school funding—via its “Gap Elimination Adjustment” (GEA)—creating a funding gap at the local level for schools to deal with. In the three years since the GEA was introduced, the 47 school districts in the Greater Capital Region have lost $305 million in aid, and nearly all now receive less state aid than they did in 2008-09—while costs and academic expectations are skyrocketing.

What state funding remains is distributed to districts based on an outdated, inequitable formula, leading to a growing concern among education advocates that the quality of education a child receives in New York is increasingly being determined by his or her zip code. Meanwhile, legislative relief from costly unfunded state mandates—promised in conjunction with the passage of the property tax “cap” last year—is now being dubbed by state leaders as a “non-starter.”

A 2012 survey of school leaders by The State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) found that 15 percent of Capital Region superintendents believe their districts will be financially insolvent in two years, while 22 percent say their districts will reach educational insolvency in that time. With schools struggling against these new fiscal realities, the objectives of the advocacy campaign were to:

1. Inform and energize influential stakeholders from 47 school districts.
2. Draw region-wide attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools.
3. Help elected state representatives understand their responsibility to adequately and equitably fund public schools.
4. Catalyze local grassroots organizing and effective public information campaigns to help school district leaders build informed consent for potentially contentious school budget votes.

Analysis/Planning: For the campaign to be successful, the planning team knew events had to be “big” and well-attended, and that our efforts had to move beyond explaining/informing to include a clear, precise “call to action” that would resonate with, and empower, our audiences. The team identified three major “asks”: elimination of the GEA, adequate and equitable funding for schools and meaningful mandate relief to help districts deal with the tax cap. Every step of the campaign echoed this call to action, giving people a way to channel their frustration into constructive efforts to influence those who could affect change.

Planning for the first major event, the January 31st forum Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options, began in Fall 2012. Meeting at least three times a month, the team created a timeline and master to-do list and developed subcommittees, as needed, to handle outreach, publicity and media, production and branding of print materials, videos and other resources, social media efforts and myriad technology and event logistics. In January 2013, the team began planning the February 11 follow-up event to build on the impact of the first forum and mobilize attendees to reach out to elected officials. Dubbed A Call to Action, the event provided hands-on advocacy training and offered participants an advocacy toolkit and other resources and ideas for implementing advocacy programs in their home districts.

Communication/Implementation

- Developed campaign branding—event title, logo, programs and banner—for use at the events and by participating districts via their own communication channels.
- Developed data-driven advocacy materials, fact sheets, press releases, stakeholder invitations and sample letters to state and federal legislators.
- Created an advocacy toolkit for stakeholders, providing ideas and templates to guide implementation of individual and district-based advocacy campaigns.
- Produced a series of videos to illustrate the challenges facing our schools and the impacts on students.
- Implemented a robust social media campaign (including live event tweeting) around the hashtag #NYSchoolsInPeril and via EducationSpeaks.org, an educational issues blog sponsored by the BOCES.
 Created Web/newsletter articles and Facebook cover photos and posts for participating districts to use.

 Implemented regional outreach efforts by identifying key stakeholders, creating invitation templates, and coordinating telephone campaigns to bolster public, media and legislator attendance at events.

 Secured and coached keynote speakers including the director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, local superintendents and leaders of other statewide education organizations.

 Handled publicity and outreach to television and print media outlets.

 Handled all event logistics including technology needs to offer a live video feed of the Jan. 31 event to an overflow room at the event location and live web stream coverage for viewers at home.

 Evaluation

 Objectives 1 and 2: Inform and energize influential stakeholders from the 47 school districts in our region and draw region-wide attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools. More than 1,300 people from across our region attended the January 31 event, with 300 more watching the live stream via EducationSpeaks.org. It was the lead story on all television news outlets in New York’s Capital Region and was covered in more than 100 print and web media stories in the days and weeks following the event. The second event was attended by close to 500 people and was again the lead news story on most major print and television news outlets.

 We saw our Twitter followers and Facebook likes double in the days following the January 31 event. They increased again by about 50 percent in the days following the February 11 event. E-mail subscribers to EducationSpeaks.org quadrupled in this same timeframe. The videos created for the campaign have nearly 10,000 views to date. The video focusing on the GEA was so popular that we responded to calls from around the state to create a second version using statewide data, instead of data specific to the Capital Region.

 Objective 3: Help our elected state representatives understand their responsibility to act with urgency to adequately and equitably fund public schools. More than half of the state legislators invited to the January event attended, and three attended the follow-up event, without any formal invitation. Two Capital Region legislators, a senator and an assembly member, requested a copy of the video shown at the January 31st event to share with their democratic conference. The GEA and tax cap videos were retweeted by legislators as well.

 On February 20, a group of New York State legislators held a news conference calling for significant changes to the fiscal year 2014 state budget proposed by the Governor, including a reduction in the GEA and changing the state aid formula to address funding inequities. Many of the legislators’ remarks (and press materials) at the press conference mirrored the key message points of our campaign.

 The final state budget adopted in March included nearly $20 million more in aid to the 47 participating districts than the original executive budget (release before the campaign) had proposed. In the executive budget proposal, only 12 of the 47 districts were receiving an aid increase that was better than the state average; in the final budget, all but 4 of the 47 received above average increases.

 Objective 4: Catalyze local grassroots organizing and effective public information campaigns to help school district leaders build informed consent for potentially contentious school budget votes. Our campaign caught fire and captured the attention of districts and BOCES around the state, many of whom reached out to us with requests to help with local events. Districts capitalized on the energy this campaign created around school funding issues to bolster their own grassroots efforts, including PTA-sponsored letter writing nights, participation in school funding rallies held by other NY educational organizations, and increased community involvement in participating districts’ local budget development processes. In addition, local legislators reported an increase in calls, letters and visits pertaining to education issues this year. Other statewide organizations promoted our advocacy campaign as a model around the state, including the New York State PTA and the New York State School Boards Association, which asked members of the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service to speak at its Capital Convention about our advocacy strategies and successes.
Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options

Supporting Documentation for NSPRA Gold Medallion

SECTION A: Event materials and resources created

- January 31st event
  - agenda
  - program
  - advocacy checklist
  - banner
  - web logo
  - Sample web story pre-January 31st
  - Sample web story - January 31st
  - Sample web story follow-up - January 31st and info on 2/11 Call to Action
- Follow-up advocacy event, February 11
  - Sample web story follow-up - January 31st and info on 2/11 Call to Action
  - Advocacy toolkit
  - Legislative guide: list of legislators by school district for each BOCES
  - A Call to Action flyer

Section B: Videos produced to support and enhance campaign

- Video shown at January 31st event: http://vimeo.com/58634622
- GEA video (Capital Region): http://youtu.be/aifI1qoDK0
- GEA video (statewide): http://youtu.be/MbOCD8gZDgA
- Tax cap video: http://youtu.be/N-Eah8115B0
- BOCES produced video recap of January 31st event: http://youtu.be/3K77R1Na4dw
- Video of live stream of January 31st event: http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T02155&video=143129

Section C: Social media activities

- Social Media advocacy plan
- Legislators carrying our message through social media
- #NYSchoolsInPeril hashtag sampling
- Facebook Cover photo created for February 11th event
- Videos shared through social media
  - Local superintendent talks about why January 31st event is important: http://youtu.be/XF2-vZRNGTQ
  - Community advocate talks about why she attended February 11th event: http://youtu.be/hTkw4eSVPUo
Section D: Media and publicity

- January 31st media plan
- January 31st press advisory
- January 31st press release
- Sample script for media calls
- A Call to Action fact sheet
- A Call to Action media advisory
- “Schools raise uproar for help”
- “Legislators call for action to save schools”
- “All children - rich and poor - should benefit from the tree of knowledge”
- “#NYSchoolsInPeril – coverage of February 11”
- “#NYSchoolsInPeril – Message continues to carry”
- Additional summary of media and print coverage of both events
- Photos from 1/31 are available at http://goo.gl/xtE3u
- Photos from 2/11 are available http://goo.gl/zsVaE.

Section E: Planning materials

- January 31st master to-do list
- Planning and invitations
  - Superintendent checklist
  - Stakeholder worksheet for superintendents
  - Sample invite for stakeholders
  - Sample invite for legislators
  - Sample invite for business leaders
  - Important reminder and parking information for legislators and special guests
  - District Superintendent thank you email to 47 superintendents of schools
  - District Superintendent email to superintendents about February 11
Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options
Supporting Documentation for NSPRA Gold Medallion

SECTION A: Event materials and resources created
Your public schools in fiscal peril –

Running Out of Time & Options

Thursday, January 31
Columbia High School Auditorium
962 Luther Road
East Greenbush, New York

6:30 p.m. Welcome/Introductions
Dr. Angela M. Nagle, Superintendent, East Greenbush Central School District

6:40 p.m. Featured Speaker
Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director, Statewide School Finance Consortium

7:25 p.m. Student Focused District Perspectives
Three perspectives from rural, suburban and city school district superintendents about the impact on students in their districts.

- Dr. Larry Spring, Superintendent, Schenectady City Schools
- Bob Horan, Superintendent, Schodack Central School District
- Dr. Marie Wiles, Superintendent, Guilderland Central School District

7:55 p.m. Recap from Dr. Rick Timbs

8 p.m. Closing Video Presentation
Robert Libby, Superintendent, Cohoes City School District

8:15 p.m. Reception/Casual Q&A
Your public schools in fiscal peril

Running out of time and options

Sponsored by the Questar III and Capital Region BOCES Superintendents’ Legislative Committees
Welcome and thank you for attending tonight’s regional educational forum “Your Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time & Options.”

Did you know that in many public schools across New York State there is a genuine concern that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that school districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future? It’s true. A lack of state leadership on equitable school funding and mandate relief will shortchange a whole generation of school children and unravel hard-won gains in academic achievement if something is not done immediately to stop it. Whether you live in a rural, urban or suburban school setting, your district leadership is bracing for yet another year of unpopular to untenable budget cuts, which will further diminish programs and services for the children and communities they serve.

Tonight, you will find out what you can do to help — before it’s too late!

Look around the school auditorium and you will see hundreds of influential stakeholders like yourself, representing 47 school districts served by the Questar III and Capital Region BOCES. You were invited here tonight to help our school leaders draw region-wide attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools, and to get informed about another round of state aid cuts that will affect all of our school budgets. It’s imperative that our elected state representatives, many of whom are here with us tonight, understand their responsibility to act with urgency to adequately and equitably fund public schools and deliver on the promise of mandate relief.

To help us in this endeavor, we are issuing a Call to Action, asking for your commitment in implementing change by joining us for a second forum on Monday, February 11, 7 p.m., at Niskayuna High School. At this event we will discuss and demonstrate effective strategies and techniques for advocating with your elected leaders. Your program insert has more information on this important process.
Welcome/Introductions
Dr. Angela M. Nagle, Superintendent, East Greenbush Central School District

Featured Speaker
Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director, Statewide School Finance Consortium (bio on back panel)
http://www.statewideonline.org/
Dr. Timbs will illustrate the magnitude of the crisis facing our schools unless the following action is taken during the 2013 state legislative session: Eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), provide adequate and equitable aid to education, and provide a meaningful measure of mandate relief for school districts.

Student Focused District Perspectives
Three perspectives from rural, suburban and city school district superintendents about the impact on students in their districts.
Bob Horan, Superintendent, Schodack Central School District
Dr. Marie Wiles, Superintendent, Guilderland Central School District
Larry Spring, Superintendent, Schenectady City School District

Call to Action
Dr. Rick Timbs

Closing Remarks
Robert Libby, Superintendent, Cohoes City School District

Closing Video Presentation

Reception
Please join us for refreshments and conversation in the school cafeteria. Thank you to the Capital District School Boards Association (CAPSBA), President Jeanne Sosnow, and to the East Greenbush Price Chopper for their generous donations in support of this evening’s event.

Tonight’s Program

Running out of time and options
Advocate with your elected representatives

✓ Write a personal letter to your elected representatives in Albany.
✓ Send an e-mail to your assemblyman/woman, your state senator, the governor.
✓ Call your elected representatives in Albany and schedule a face-to-face meeting at their home office.
✓ Establish a relationship with the staff in the local offices of your elected representatives.
✓ Attend and ask questions at town hall meetings hosted by your local legislators.
✓ Invite your local legislators to visit your school for a special event.
✓ Ask your elected representatives to agree to take a leadership role on your selected issue.

Advocate through the media

✓ Write a letter to the editor and send your published letter to your local elected representatives.
✓ Copy editorials or newspaper articles about your selected issue and send them to your elected representatives.

Advocate in your community

✓ Host a discussion about your selected issue at a local business in your community.
✓ Organize a letter-writing campaign.
✓ Team up with a school leader to speak to a local community group.
✓ Participate in a community forum about your selected issue.
✓ Use social media to spread the word about what you are advocating for:
  ■ Update your Facebook or Twitter status with a key point from your “laser talk.”
  ■ Share links to relevant news articles or information from your school district’s website.
  ■ Invite people to participate in events in your community or online (virtual meetings) that are organized by you, the school district or another advocate.
  ■ Follow legislators’ social media accounts and feel free to reach out to them using communication tools like Facebook and Twitter.
Dr. Richard G. Timbs (Rick) is a frequent presenter at workshops and conferences and has written numerous articles and/or professionally presented statewide and nationally on the topics of educational development, use of data to improve instruction, educational finance, leadership and governance.

Dr. Timbs is the President and CEO of R.G. Timbs Advisory Group, Inc., Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, and consultant to Bernard P. Donegan, Inc. as an educational finance expert. Additionally, Dr. Timbs participates with various higher education and educational finance entities through a variety of research studies, development projects, strategic planning initiatives and mentorship roles across the state.

Dr. Timbs is the retired District Superintendent of the Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES located in Western New York serving 27 school districts and almost 48,000 students. He served as the superintendent of the 4,500 student Spencerport Central School District in Monroe County and the 820 student Oriskany Central School District in Oneida County. He earned educational degrees from Niagara County Community College, SUNY Geneseo, and Brockport; he earned his doctorate from Syracuse University.

A special thank you to all our elected representatives and special guests for joining us here this evening.
Advocacy Checklist

Why should YOU advocate?

Because your schools …

☑ educate your children
☑ employ your neighbors
☑ are funded by your tax dollars
☑ influence your property values and help attract property owners to your community

Without your help, your schools will face more reductions to programs and services for students. Becoming an advocate for education is not as hard as you might think. The only prerequisite is a strong desire to stand up for our students and our schools.

Effective advocates are prepared. They understand the issues and plan their communication. Most of all, they are passionate and persistent in advancing their cause.

Complete one or more of the items on our Advocacy Checklist. Then encourage friends and family to do the same. It’s that simple.

Empower yourself

☑ Attend the upcoming Advocacy Workshop at 7 p.m. on Monday, February 11 at Niskayuna High School to learn more about effective advocacy strategies and the complex issues shaping this year’s school budget development. Robert Lowry and Kyle Belokopitsky from The Council of School Superintendents will be our featured speakers. Bring a friend!

☑ Choose one issue affecting your school district and learn about it. To get started, attend a school board meeting, read local and statewide education publications, or review information posted on your school district’s website or education blogs, like EdSpeaks (http://educationspeaks.org/).

☑ Develop and be able to deliver a “laser talk”—a short, focused message—about the issue you choose. Be sure to identify the problem, present a solution, and issue a call to action. The “laser talk” is useful when you have limited time to make a point. Make it personal.

“You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing there will be no result.”  
– Mahatma Gandhi

continued >
Advocate with your elected representatives

✓ Write a personal letter to your elected representatives in Albany.
✓ Send an e-mail to your assemblyman/woman, your state senator, the governor.
✓ Call your elected representatives in Albany and schedule a face-to-face meeting at their home office.
✓ Establish a relationship with the staff in the local offices of your elected representatives.
✓ Attend and ask questions at town hall meetings hosted by your local legislators.
✓ Invite your local legislators to visit your school for a special event.
✓ Ask your elected representatives to agree to take a leadership role on your selected issue.

Advocate through the media

✓ Write a letter to the editor and send your published letter to your local elected representatives.
✓ Copy editorials or newspaper articles about your selected issue and send them to your elected representatives.

Advocate in your community

✓ Host a discussion about your selected issue at a local business in your community.
✓ Organize a letter-writing campaign.
✓ Team up with a school leader to speak to a local community group.
✓ Participate in a community forum about your selected issue.
✓ Use social media to spread the word about what you are advocating for:
  - Update your Facebook or Twitter status with a key point from your “laser talk.”
  - Share links to relevant news articles or information from your school district’s website.
  - Invite people to participate in events in your community or online (virtual meetings) that are organized by you, the school district or another advocate.
  - Follow legislators’ social media accounts and feel free to reach out to them using communication tools like Facebook and Twitter.
Banner designed for campaign. Later utilized as Facebook cover photo graphic.

Your public schools in fiscal peril
Running out of time and options
Logo designed for campaign
With another year of significant state revenue reductions looming for New York State’s public school districts in 2013-14 and more difficult educational decisions to be made, (YOUR DISTRICT) stakeholders are participating in an important event this month to help draw region-wide attention to the fiscal crisis facing all public schools.

(YOUR DISTRICT) leaders, educators, parents and community members are joining representatives from 47 area school districts on Thursday, January 31, (snow date is February 7) for a forum entitled, “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time & Options.” The event, to be held at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Columbia High School, East Greenbush, will illustrate the magnitude of the crisis collectively facing all schools unless significant action is taken during the 2013 New York State legislative session. To join our district team, please contact (ENTER CONTACT INFORMATION).

ENTER POSSIBLE QUOTE FROM YOUR SUPERINTENDENT OR BUSINESS OFFICIAL

Joining forces

Since YOUR DISTRICT’s neighbors face a similarly dire financial scenario, the purpose of joining together as one on January 31 is to:

- Draw regional attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools and warn of another round of unpopular to untenable school budget cuts forecast for 2013-14.

- Help our elected state representatives understand their responsibility to act with urgency to adequately and equitably fund public schools and deliver on the promise of mandate relief.

- Inform and energize influential stakeholder teams in the 47 school districts served by Questar III and Capital Region BOCES, and catalyze grassroots advocacy in communities all around the region.

Headlining the forum is Dr. Rick Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, who will discuss the importance this legislative session of eliminating the GEA, providing adequate and equitable aid to education, and providing a meaningful measure of mandate relief to school districts.

Following Timbs’ presentation, leaders from three vastly different geographical school districts – suburban Guilderland (Superintendent Dr. Marie Wiles), Schenectady City (Superintendent Larry Spring) and rural Schodack (Superintendent Bob Horan), will offer their personal perspectives on how failure to act in Albany will continue to harmfully impact their students next school year, and for years to come.

The stark reality

The stark reality is that due to these economic circumstances, students who graduated in the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that most school districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. With the erosion of state aid across the state, staff has been cut and numerous student programs have been reduced and eliminated. Meaningful mandate relief from Albany, while promised by the governor, has not materialized.
As such, the 47 school districts joining force on January 31, representing more than 112,000 students in two counties, have lost over $110 million in state funding this school year alone due to the state’s Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA).

What’s next?

Following the January 31 forum, district stakeholders from across the region will be asked to take the next step and mobilize by the hundreds (perhaps thousands) by advocating for change with the elected leaders serving their communities. To help them in that process, the Niskayuna Central School District will host a second forum on the evening of Monday, February 11, to teach effective advocacy strategies and techniques. Joining us will be Robert N. Lowry, Jr., Deputy Director for Advocacy Research & Communications, for the NYS Council of School Superintendents (NYCSS). More details will follow but, in the meantime, please save the date.

MIGHT WANT TO ADD SOME INFORMATION HERE ABOUT PREPARATION OF YOUR DISTRICT BUDGET FOR 2013-14, WHERE YOU ARE AT IN THE PROCESS AND SOME UPCOMING BUDGET WORK SESSIONS, BOARD MEETINGS, ETC. TO WRAP STORY UP
As you may know, (YOUR DISTRICT) leaders, educators, parents and community members are joining almost 800 representatives from 47 area school districts on Thursday, January 31, for a forum entitled, “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time & Options.” The event, to be held at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Columbia High School, East Greenbush, will illustrate the magnitude of the crisis collectively facing all schools unless significant action is taken during the 2013 New York State legislative session. It’s not too late to join our district team. If you’d like to attend the event, please contact (ENTER CONTACT INFORMATION).

The forum will be streamed live for viewers around the state who want to learn more about the magnitude of the crisis collectively facing all schools unless significant action is taken during the 2013 New York State legislative session.

If you are unable to be there in person, you can watch it live at Education Speaks. (educationspeaks.org) The event will also be live-tweeted by Education Speaks editorial board members. If you’re on Twitter, follow @edspeaksny (https://twitter.com/edspeaksNY) and #NYSchoolsInPeril to get the live scoop that night! You can also get updates through the Education Speaks Facebook page. (https://www.facebook.com/EdSpeaks)

(YOU MAY WANT TO ADD IN INFO HERE IF YOU ARE PLANNING ON HAVING INFO THROUGHOUT THE EVENT ON YOUR OWN SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES)
School district stakeholders play key role at regional advocacy event

**** (fill in your district’s name) School District’s parents, students, educators and board members joined together with more than 1,000 community members from all 47 school districts in the Capital Region on Jan. 31 to learn about the fiscal crisis facing their schools and find out what they can do to help.

Parents, students, educators, community and civic leaders, and state legislators – representing seven counties – filled Columbia High School’s auditorium for the rally titled “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time & Options”.

Featured speaker Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, pointed to three major causes of the fiscal crisis facing school districts: cuts in state aid through the Gap Elimination Adjustment, inequities in how the state distributes school aid to school districts, and a lack of meaningful relief from state mandates that drive up the cost of education.

Dr. Timbs, a retired educator, explained that the Gap Elimination Adjustment is a cut in state education aid that Gov. David Paterson proposed as a one-time fix to help the state’s budget deficit. But the state has used it the past three years, costing Capital Region schools a total of $305 million in state aid they otherwise would have received. It is included in Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s executive budget for a fourth straight year.

Dr. Timbs also pointed to the state aid formula New York uses to distribute school aid. Using the state’s own budget figures, Dr. Timbs illustrated how upstate school districts are not getting their fair share of state aid. As a result, upstate schools are faced with cutting programs they and their communities value while the cost of education is increasingly being shifted to local property taxes.

“The truth is all kids should be treated fairly, no matter where they live. Shouldn’t everyone have a fair shot at an education, no matter their zip code?” said Dr. Timbs. “The reality is that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education for the foreseeable future.”

To help illustrate the deep concerns of rural, suburban and urban school districts, superintendents from three area districts spoke about the impact the Gap Elimination Adjustment, inequity of school aid and lack of mandate relief have had on student opportunities.

Schodack CSD Superintendent Bob Horan explained how worried he and other educators from rural school districts are. He explained how his district has done everything the state has asked, including studying a merger with a neighboring school district, applying for state and private grants, cutting its budget three of the past four years and draining its reserves. But despite their efforts, the district still faces steep cuts with little else to eliminate but student opportunities.

“I’m incredibly proud of our students. Our graduation rate and attendance rate is in the 90s. When we ask our students to do one thing, they’ve always done three. They always go above and beyond,” said Mr. Horan. “We’ve always made them a promise that if they work hard, they’ll be rewarded. Now we’re at a point where I’m afraid they won’t be able to compete against students in other school districts as they apply for college.”

Guilderland CSD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marie Wiles spoke on behalf of the many suburban districts represented at the event, dispelling the myth that suburban schools are not affected by the inadequacy of state aid. “From the outside looking in, it might appear that suburban schools have endless resources,” she said, “when in fact our resources are just as finite as those of our friends and colleagues in rural and urban school districts.”
Dr. Wiles noted that Guilderland has lost $12.3 million over the past three years due to the Gap Elimination Adjustment. As a result, the district has eliminated 125 full-time equivalent positions, leading to increased class sizes at all levels and fewer supports for faculty, staff and students who are struggling.

“Despite the rhetoric that suggests that state aid has been increased to school districts, the reality is that the resources needed to fund our programs are being whittled away,” said Dr. Wiles. “In the absence of adequate state aid and any meaningful relief from costly mandates, the financial and educational insolvency of our school districts is not a function of ‘if’ it will happen, but rather ‘when’ it will happen.”

Schenectady City Schools Superintendent Larry Spring described both the proud tradition of his district – from its innovative programs to its outstanding performing arts – as well as the challenges of an urban school district.

Schenectady has the 13th highest rate of childhood poverty in the nation, Mr. Spring explained. As a result, students often need the support of social workers and others to help them with the trauma they experience daily. Yet, due to a lack of sufficient state funding, the district is forced to cut services that those students need.

“Mental health services are not mandated but PE minutes are. Reading is not mandated but PE minutes are,” Mr. Spring said. “Schenectady is shorted $62 million a year. If we received the funding we are supposed to receive, we could wipe out these problems.”

East Greenbush CSD Superintendent Dr. Angela Nagle ended the evening by stressing to the audience that they have the power to help. She urged them to learn more and contact their state legislators to ensure they understood their concerns about the future of their schools. She also urged community members to attend a Feb. 11 event at Niskayuna High School at 6:30 p.m. where they can learn how to advocate for their schools.

“Although there are great challenges confronting us as we gather today, we can work together using the strength of our numbers to bring about change, and ensure our children an opportunity to achieve their dreams,” said Dr. Nagle.
Join us Monday night for “A Call to Action” and learn how to advocate for your schools
Event to be held Feb. 11, 7 p.m., at Niskayuna High School

With the Capital Region still buzzing from last week’s unprecedented regional rally to avert
the fiscal crisis facing public schools, educational stakeholders representing 47 school districts
will reconvene Monday night to learn what they can personally do to advocate for change.

The Niskayuna Central School District will be the host this time for “A Call to Action,” part
two of the landmark program, “Your Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time & Options,”
which drew an overflow crowd of 1,500 school administrators, teachers, students, community
members, and more than a dozen state legislators to Columbia High School on January 31.

Following this memorable kick off event, hundreds pledged to do more than just listen about
how years of state aid cuts are crippling our schools. By filling out the blue comment cards in
that night’s program, they made a pledge to speak out for change by contacting their elected
state representatives as they meet in Albany in the coming weeks to discuss public school
funding for the 2013-14 year.

That’s what “A Call to Action” is all about. It’s a 90-minute follow-up workshop to be held at
7 p.m., February 11, in the auditorium of Niskayuna High School, Balltown Road, offering
effective “how-to” strategies and techniques for helping parents, teachers and taxpayers like
you reach out to lawmakers and take that important step in advocating for educational change.

Area education leaders hope Monday’s advocacy “how-to” program sequel will be every bit as
powerful as the January 31 forum in terms of public support as they brace for yet another year
of unpopular to untenable budget cuts that will affect urban, suburban and rural school districts
alike.

Insert quote from your district. Sample quote below:

“Our goal is to feed off the energy and continue the momentum of what was started at
Columbia High School just a few days ago,” said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner, who
was joined by 75 South Colonie stakeholders at the first forum. “It’s time to come
together as communities and take a stand before we shortchange a whole generation of
school children and unravel the hard-won gains in academic achievement our district has
made.”

Monday’s featured speakers will be Robert Lowry and Kyle Belokopitsky from New York
State Council of School Superintendents. Their presentations will be followed by an audience
question and answer session, then refreshments and conversation in the school cafeteria.

[You District Name] stakeholders are asked to join in this important advocacy effort and do
what they can to make a difference. Time is running out. Call [add you contact information
here] today to confirm your attendance at the February 11 event. Bring your spouse, your
student, a neighbor or a friend.
Why should you take the time to advocate?

Think about this …

In many public schools there is a genuine concern that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that school districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. Add to that predictions that a significant number of school districts will be facing fiscal or educational insolvency over the next few years due to improper financial support from New York State, an inequity in funding statewide, and no significant relief from costly state mandates.

Finally, it is important to advocate because you schools educate your children, employ your neighbors, are funded by your tax dollars and influence property values and help attract property owners to your community.

Without your help, your schools will face more reductions to programs and services for students.

**Suggestion:** Add here specific budget cut information about your schools district and/or what you are facing in this year’s budget preparation. Sample below:

Cumulatively, South Colonie has lost about $11.5 million in state aid since 2009-10 through state aid formula reductions, causing significant fiscal distress. Moving forward, the district will need to reduce the base budget next school year and increase the local levy to some extent to adjust for what appears to be a permanent reduction in state support. In the upcoming months, the district will host budget work sessions to discuss options and develop plans for the 2013-14 school year.

“We are working to try to maintain excellence and opportunities for our students while adjusting to a massive loss of state funding,” Superintendent Buhner said. “While the state has balanced its budget almost instantly by removing $3 billion in aid from public schools, it has created significant problems which local communities are forced to deal with.”

**Becoming an advocate is easier than you think**

Becoming an advocate for education is not as hard as you might think. The only prerequisite is a strong desire to stand up for our students and our schools, and be passionate and persistent in advancing the cause.

But understand this: effective advocates are prepared. They know the issues and plan their communications.

Join us Monday night for this 90-minute program and find out how!
School districts throughout New York are facing a fiscal crisis. The downturn of the national economy—coupled with inadequate and inequitable state aid, costly mandates and the state’s tax levy limit—has challenged public schools to continue to provide a high-quality education to all students with significantly fewer resources. As a result, districts are making devastating cuts to educational programs as they adjust to rising costs that are outpacing revenue.

District leaders throughout our area have been working with staff and community members to find creative ways to weather the economic storm without sacrificing the integrity of their educational programs. Yet without meaningful and timely relief from our government leaders, students and parents throughout the state risk losing the high level of public education that they have come to know and value throughout the years. In fact, the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future.

The time for change is now. The voices of school leaders and lobbyists for state-level education groups simply are not enough, as recent legislative sessions have shown. Elected officials need to hear from you, their constituents. They need to hear from the people who are most directly impacted by their decisions (or indecisions) year after year—the students, parents, employees, residents, community groups and business owners of New York.
But what can I do?

Advocacy takes many forms. It could be a note to an elected official, a comment made during a public forum, a letter to a newspaper editor or formal testimony at public hearings. It could be as simple as chatting with neighbors to clear up misunderstandings about education issues or sharing education-related stories with a local civic organization during monthly meetings.

Becoming an advocate for education is not as hard as you might think. Anyone can become involved, at any level they choose. The only prerequisite necessary is a desire to fight for our students and our community schools.

Effective advocates do their homework. They know the issues and plan their communication. Most of all, they give their time to advance their cause.

Enclosed in this packet you will find several tools to help you become an advocate for education. Thank you for taking the time to advocate on behalf of our children and for helping to ensure that they receive the high-quality education they deserve.

Advocacy checklist

Concerned citizens at community forums and public meetings often wonder what they can do to help our students.

The answer: Complete one or more of the items on the advocacy checklist below. Then encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same!

Empower yourself

- Choose an issue affecting your schools and learn about that issue. Attend a school board meeting, read local and statewide education publications, or visit your school district’s website to get started.
- Develop and hone a “laser talk”—a short, focused message—about the issue you chose. A “laser talk” should briefly identify a problem, present a solution, and issue a call to action. It is a very useful tool when you have only a minute or two of someone’s attention and you want to get a point across.

Advocate with your elected representatives

- Send a letter or email to local legislators.
- Call local legislators and schedule face-to-face meetings.
- Establish a relationship with the aides in legislators’ local offices.
- Attend and ask questions at town hall meetings hosted by local legislators.
- Invite a local legislator to be your guest at a special event at your school.
- Ask local legislators to agree to take a leadership role on your selected issue.

Advocate through the media

- Write a letter to a newspaper editor and send your published letter to local legislators.
- Copy editorials or newspaper articles about your selected issue and send them to local legislators with a personal note.

Advocate in the community

Use social media to spread the word about what you are advocating for:

- Update your Facebook or Twitter status with a key point from your “laser talk.”
- Share links to relevant news articles or information from your school districts’ website or from www.educationspeaks.org
- Invite people to participate in events in your community or online (virtual meetings) that are organized by you, the school district or another advocate.
- Follow legislators’ social media accounts and feel free to reach out to them using these communication tools.
- Host a discussion about your selected issue at a local business in your community.

Some more traditional ways to get the word out:

- Organize a letter-writing campaign.
- Team up with a school leader to speak to a local community group.
- Participate in a community forum about your selected issue.

Resources available at educationspeaks.org:

- List of legislators by school district
- Social media directory for local legislators
- Links to statewide educational organizations advocacy resources, and legislative position information.
- More to come!
What does effective advocacy look like?

Personal contact with legislators helps build relationships and establish lines of communication that ensure that the district’s story is being heard. Whether you choose to contact your representatives by phone, email or in-person, please keep in mind the following tips to help you convey your message in the most effective way possible:

- **Be brief.** Stick to your key points and be mindful that legislators are often very busy and face a variety of special interest groups that compete for their time and attention.
- **Be respectful.** Even if you disagree on a position, be respectful in your dialogue and stick to the facts. When appropriate be passionate, not emotional.
- **Be clear and specific.** Let legislators know exactly what you want them to do (i.e., vote in favor of a bill, pass legislation) in a way that requires a “yes” or “no” response. Ask them how they will vote, follow-up on your conversation, and hold them accountable.
- **Be a reliable source of information.** Research your issue and know the facts so that you can provide information to legislators and answer their questions. Do not assume that legislators know specifics about the school district or education issues in general. Be prepared to follow-up with answers to any questions you may not know on the spot.
- **Be honest about your concerns.** Paint the real picture of your situation, even if it is scary. Share the ramifications for your community’s schools and children. Use personal or compelling stories coupled with facts and data.
- **Be timely and persistent.** If an issue has a deadline, such as the passage of the state budget, make sure you give legislators enough time to respond to the issue. Frequent, regular reminders about the importance of the issue, particularly from multiple advocates, can increase the likelihood that legislators will pay attention to the cause.

Let legislators know exactly what you want them to do (i.e., vote in favor of a bill, pass legislation)...

Tips for effective written correspondence

Some forms of written communication are more effective than others. While emails and form letters are fine, personal letters (perhaps even hand-written) convey a stronger message. They demonstrate the importance of your concerns by showing you went out of your way to make them known. Writing a letter and making a follow-up phone call takes a few minutes, but those steps ensure that your legislator knows just how you want to be represented.

When writing a letter, you should:

- Keep your letter short; a single page is best.
- Be concise and specific, but add personal touches on how your selected issue impacts you and your family.

The letter should include the following parts:

- Introduction
- Problem statement
- Proposed solution
- Conclusion and call to action
- Be sure to include all of your contact information (e.g., home address, phone number, email address), so your legislator can reply to you.
- Be sure to identify yourself as a constituent and an active voter.
# Tips for effective in-person meetings

A face-to-face meeting with your legislator is a great way to personalize an issue, and to make sure that your feedback is heard. It is also a great opportunity to educate your representatives about a particular issue and to answer any questions they may have on the topic. Community members can choose to meet with legislators on an individual basis, or go in as a small group (no more than two to three people).

## Before the meeting
- Make an appointment
- Prepare for the meeting
  - Define your goals
  - Gather the facts
  - Gather data
- Practice your talking points
- Reconfirm the meeting by phone a few days before your appointment

## During the meeting
- Be on time
- Introduce yourself
- Be polite
- Stay on topic
- Tell the legislator why you are there
  - Give background on your issue
  - Tell your story and explain the impact of any action/inaction
  - Make your recommendation or request for action
- Get a commitment
- Allow time for questions
- Respect the legislator’s schedule and end the meeting on time
- Leave your contact information and any supporting materials

## After the meeting
- Send a thank you note
- Follow-up on action items
- Sustain the relationship

## GENERAL “DO’S AND DON’TS” FOR TALKING WITH LEGISLATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DO</strong></th>
<th><strong>DON’T</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduce yourself and identify which cause you are associated with</td>
<td>Overwhelm legislators with excessive facts, figures, or jargon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank them for their service to the community and for their time to meet with you and/or read your letter</td>
<td>Lecture your legislator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember that you are a constituent and have every right to express your opinions, ideas, and concerns</td>
<td>Be rude or intimidating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stick to a few key points (“laser talk”) when communicating with legislators</td>
<td>Get into a lengthy conversation that strays from the original topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get back to legislators with answers to questions they may have</td>
<td>Overstay your allotted meeting time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ask for some sort of action from the legislator, and follow-up to be sure that action was taken</td>
<td>Be afraid to admit when you do not know the answer to a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a relationship with the aides in your legislator’s office</td>
<td>Expect the legislators to be experts on the issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain your relationship with legislators throughout the year</td>
<td>Underestimate your influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


# Key New York State elected officials to contact for education-related issues

## CAPITAL REGION BOCES

**Albany**

- **Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy**  
  LOB 452  
  Albany, NY 12248  
  518-455-4178  
  FahyP@assembly.state.ny.us  
  Facebook.com/AssemblymemberPatriciaFahy  
  Twitter: @PatriciaFahy109

- **Senator Neil Breslin**  
  172 State Street Room 413, Capitol  
  Albany, NY 12247  
  518-455-2225  
  breslin@senate.state.ny.us  
  Facebook.com/pages/Senator-Neil-D-Breslin/168918816484213

## Berne-Knox-Westerlo

- **Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara**  
  LOB 829A  
  Albany, NY 12248  
  518-455-5197  
  SantabarbaraA@assembly.state.ny.us  
  Facebook.com/angelosantabarbara  
  Twitter: @ASantabarbara

- **Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk**  
  LOB 311  
  Albany, NY 12247  
  518-455-2470  
  tkaczyk@nysenate.gov  
  Facebook.com/pages/Senator-CeciliaTkaczyk/29656983798700  
  Twitter: @SenTkaczyk

## Bethlehem

- **Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy**  
  LOB 452  
  Albany, NY 12248  
  518-455-4178  
  FahyP@assembly.state.ny.us  
  Facebook.com/AssemblymemberPatriciaFahy  
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  breslin@senate.state.ny.us  
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## Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

- **Assemblyman James Tedisco**  
  LOB 404  
  Albany, NY 12248  
  518-455-5772  
  tediscoj@assembly.state.ny.us  
  Facebook.com/JamesTedisco  
  Twitter: @JamesTedisco

- **Senator Hugh Farley**  
  188 State Street Room 711, LOB  
  Albany, NY 12247  
  518-455-2181  
  Farley@nysenate.gov  
  Facebook.com/hugh.farley.5

## Cohoes

- **Assemblyman John McDonald**  
  LOB 417  
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  518-455-4474  
  McDonaldJ@assembly.state.ny.us  
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## Cobleskill/Richmondville

- **Assemblyman Peter Lopez**  
  LOB 402  
  Albany, NY 12248  
  518-455-5363  
  LopezP@assembly.state.ny.us

- **Senator James Seward**  
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  sewer@nysenate.gov  
  Facebook.com/senatorjimseward

- **Senator Neil Breslin**  
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Advocacy Toolkit

Menands
- **Assemblyman Phil Steck**
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• Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk
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  breslin@senate.state.ny.us
  Facebook.com/pages/Senator-Neil-D-Breslin/168918816484213

**PLEASE NOTE:**
Because legislative boundaries and school district boundaries don’t match, multiple legislators will represent single school districts. The legislators listed for each district is based on the district’s official address.
"A Call to Action" is a follow-up to the January 31 landmark forum, “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time & Options,” which drew an audience of 1,500 school leaders, teachers, parents, students and community members—as well as more than a dozen state legislators—to Columbia High School. During this event, Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, described in detail the fiscal crisis our school districts are facing now and will continue to face in the years to come without significant change in the way New York funds its public schools.

Now it’s time to ACT! The 90-minute “A Call to Action” workshop builds on the momentum of the January 31 event. Join experts in the field of education advocacy Robert Lowry and Kyle Belokopitsky of the New York State Council of School Superintendents who will share effective “how-to” strategies and techniques that will help regular citizens—like you—reach out to lawmakers and take that important step to personally advocate for changes that will result in a more fair and equitable funding stream for schools.

Think about this …

Education leaders from the Capital Region’s urban, suburban and rural school districts alike are bracing for yet another year of unpopular to untenable budget cuts. There is a genuine concern that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education school districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. Add to that predictions by education funding experts that within one or two years, some school districts will actually become financially insolvent and unable to function.

Why should you take the time to advocate? Because your schools …

➢ educate your children;
➢ employ your neighbors; and
➢ are funded by your tax dollars.
➢ The quality of your schools influence property values and
➢ help attract property owners to your community.

Without your help, your schools will face more reductions to programs and services for students.

The time for change is now! The voices of school leaders and lobbyists for state-level education groups simply are not enough! Elected officials need to hear from you, their constituents. They need to hear from those who are most directly impacted by their decisions (or indecision) year after year—the students, parents, employees, residents, community groups, business owners and taxpayers.

Becoming an advocate for education is not as hard as you might think. All it takes is a strong desire to stand up for our students and our schools, and be passionate and persistent in advancing the cause.

The most effective advocates are prepared; they know the issues and plan their communications. Join us Monday night and leave prepared to speak up, speak out and effect REAL change for your schools!

Who: Parents, teachers, support staff, students, community members, taxpayers
What: “A Call to Action” 90-minute advocacy workshop
When: 7 p.m., Monday, February 11
Where: Niskayuna High School, 1626 Balltown Road, Niskayuna
Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options  
Supporting Documentation for NSPRA Gold Medallion

SECTION B: Videos Produced by Capital Region BOCES to support and enhance campaign

- Video shown at January 31st event: http://vimeo.com/58634622
- GEA video (Capital Region): http://youtu.be/aiflE1qoDK0
- GEA video (statewide): http://youtu.be/MbOCD8gZDga
- Tax cap video: http://youtu.be/N-Eah8115B0
- BOCES produced video recap of January 31st event: http://youtu.be/3K77R1Na4dw
- Video of live stream of January 31st event:  
  http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T02155&video=143129
Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options
Supporting Documentation for NSPRA Gold Medallion

SECTION C: Social Media Activities
2013 Education Speaks Advocacy: Social Media Campaign

1. Campaign Outline
2. Staffing and Roles
3. Tactics and Tools
4. Implementation
5. Measurement
### 1. Campaign Outline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>Draw region-wide attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools – and warn of another round of unpopular to untenable school budget cuts straight ahead.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Catalyze local grassroots activists to implement an easy and effective public information campaign to:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Influence state policy makers who hold the keys to making the significant changes schools need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Help school district leaders build informed consent for potentially contentious and controversial school budget votes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Audience</strong></td>
<td>The main target audience of the social media campaign is parents and supportive community members who want to speak out on behalf of their public schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary audiences are legislators, state leaders and non-supporters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core message</strong></td>
<td>The focus of our “ask” to legislators and the public – beyond ISSUES LEARNING from an engaging statewide speaker, is threefold:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.) Eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2.) Provide adequate and equitable aid to education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.) Provide more meaningful mandate relief</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Schedule</strong></td>
<td>The campaign will kick off following the January 31st advocacy forum, and continue through the end of the legislative session in June 2013.</td>
</tr>
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<td>See enhanced timeline of content creation and posting schedule on following pages.</td>
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</table>
## Tools

All information will be shared out through the Education Speaks blog and social media tools. We hope to activate our network of component schools districts, and like-minded professional organizations (NYSCOSS, NYSSBA, NYSUT, AQE, SSFC), as well as parents and concerned community members to further share out our information.

## Measurement

**Tangible metrics:**
- Facebook Likes (both page and post) shares and comments,
- Twitter retweets and mentions (And new followers)
- Number of posts/tweets/status updates
- Blog page views and subscriptions

**Intangible metrics:**
- increased awareness about school funding issues
- school district credibility
- OTHERS?
## 2. Staffing and Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Member</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</table>
| Social Media and Engagement Manager | Jill/Steve | - Schedule and post tweets, Facebook posts  
- Manage all other components and members of the social media campaign  
- Engage with fans/followers and respond to questions and comments |
| News Director                       | Jill/Steve | - Provide content from local and national news stories that are relevant to the campaign  
- Refine messaging and craft tweets |
| Online Editor                       | Jill/Steve | - Update website with relevant content  
- Post content to blogs  
- Monitor and report on web traffic |
3. Tactics and Tools

Content: (following schedule we may need to have more than one post a day)
- Data points from video research and links to relevant reports
- Polls appearing on Monday that use the data we explain on “Talk it up Tuesday”
- “Talk it up Tuesday” a quick factoid that we ask people to talk to their friends and family about
- Videos: “Watch it Wednesday”
  - Video from event
  - Man on the street interviews from event
  - Aaron’s news piece from event
  - Short clips from the evening (to be created by Denise from the Schopeg video of event.) could be pull outs of certain things Rick says, or each superintendent’s section
  - Short video series we have discussed with jess (tale of two districts/GEA, etc)
- Kids Speak week content (April)- NEED TO TALK ABOUT WHEN TO START THIS!
- Stories from our schools
- Points of View pieces
- Relevant news articles
- Legislative and advocacy information from like-minded organizations
  - Pull out advocacy tips – 1 day a week is advocacy tip day NEED A NAME
- Advocacy quotes for twitter/fb
  - https://www.google.com/search?q=advocacy+quotes&rlz=1C1CHFX_enUS513US513&oq=advocacy+quotes&aqs=chrome.0.57j5j60j0l2j60.9150&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
4. Implementation

During the implementation phase, we should be executing each step, tracking the engagement, reacting, and monitoring.

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<tr>
<td>Week 1: 2/4-2/8</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Poll on Talk it up Tuesday data</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>“Talk it up Tuesday”:</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“…New York continues to operate one of the nation’s least equitable school funding formulas…”</td>
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<td>Report: “Causes of stealth inequities in state aid systems” from the Center for American Progress, September 2012, (1st quote page 34, 2nd quote page 40)</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>“Watch it Wednesday”</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Advocacy Action Tip #1:</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learn about the issues affecting your district.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Weekly Rundown</td>
<td>Blog</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Follow Friday NYSCOSS @NYSchoolSupts State Aid Planning @QIIISAP</td>
<td>Follow Friday: (T)</td>
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<td>Questar III's State Aid and Financial Planning Service helps NYS school districts</td>
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negotiate their way through the complex world of school finance.

**NY School Boards** @nyschoolboards

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<td>Week 2: 2/11-2/15</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
<td>Poll on Talk it up Tuesday data</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>“Talk it up Tuesday”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Headline:</strong> New York ranked # 3 by Education Week, Business Review, 1/14/13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>“Watch it Wednesday”</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Advocacy Tip #2: How can I have a good discussion with a legislator?</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>Weekly Rundown</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Follow Friday <strong>AQE New York</strong> @AQE_NY</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bruce Baker @SchlFinance101</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professor at Rutgers University specializing in school finance, education policy &amp; quantitative analysis.</td>
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<td>Week 3 2/18-2/22</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>“Talk it up Tuesday”:</td>
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<td><strong>Data Point:</strong> A recent report, Building a Grad Nation, Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic, found that New York is one of only two states in the country</td>
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to have increased graduation rates by double digits between 2002 and 2009.


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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>“Talk it up Tuesday”</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Data Point:</strong> A 2012 CNBC study looking at traditional measures of K-12 education including test scores, class size and spending and looking at the number of higher education institutions in each state ranks New York’s education system <strong>first</strong> in the nation for providing what business needs.</td>
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<td>o <a href="http://www.cnbc.com/id/100013810">http://www.cnbc.com/id/100013810</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>“Watch it Wednesday”</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Advocacy tip # 4: Write letters to your legislators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Weekly Rundown</td>
<td>Blog Follow Friday: (T)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Follow Friday <a href="@JohnKingNYSED">JohnKingNYSED</a>, <a href="@KenSlentz">Ken Slentz</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deputy Commissioner P-12 Education NYSED</td>
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**DATE** | **POST** | **SOCIAL NETWORK(S)**

**Week 4: 2/25-3/1**

**Monday**

**Tuesday**

**Data Point:** A 2012 CNBC study looking at traditional measures of K-12 education including test scores, class size and spending and looking at the number of higher education institutions in each state ranks New York’s education system **first** in the nation for providing what business needs.

- [http://www.cnbc.com/id/100013810](http://www.cnbc.com/id/100013810)

**Wednesday**

“Watch it Wednesday”

**Thursday**

Advocacy tip # 4: Write letters to your legislators

**Friday**

Weekly Rundown

Follow Friday [Larry Spring](@SchnctdySuper)
### Richard Hughes @OVsuptHughes
### Scott Osborne @LionSupt139
### Charles S. Dedrick @csdedrick

District Superintendent & CEO of Capital Region BOCES, Albany, New York & NYS

### Michael James Mugits @mmugits

I am the leader of a small learning community with BIG ideas in Green Island, New York. We nurture the dreams and sustain the hopes of learners.

Representative to AASA.

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<th>SOCIAL NETWORK(S)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5: 3/4-3/8</td>
<td>Monday: Advocacy tip # 5 Develop a relationship with the aides in your legislators’ offices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>“Talk it up Tuesday”</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<td><strong>Data Point:</strong> Education Week’s Diploma Counts report ranked New York’s graduation rate as tenth in the nation. The report further found that from 1999-2009, the graduation rate nationally increased by 6.7%; in New York State, it increased by 19.9%, the second biggest jump in the country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>“Watch it Wednesday”</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day</td>
<td>Post</td>
<td>Social Network(S)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Advocacy tip # 5 Develop a relationship with the aides in your legislators’ offices.</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
<td>Weekly Rundown Follow Friday</td>
<td>Follow Friday: (T)</td>
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<td><strong>DATE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL NETWORK(S)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6: 3/11-2/15</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monday</strong> Advocacy tip # 6: Advocacy Action Step #5 Meet face to face with your legislators.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Tuesday** | “Talk it up Tuesday”  
**Data Point:** Over a third of the 300 Intel Science Talent Search semifinalists are from NY. | Blog /Twitter/ FB |
|           | http://www.societyforscience.org/document.doc?id=442                  |                   |
| **Wednesday** | “Watch it Wednesday”                                                  | Blog /Twitter/ FB |
| **Thursday** |                                                                    |                   |
| **Friday** | Weekly Rundown Follow Friday                                         | Follow Friday: (T) |
| **DATE**  | **POST**                                                             | **SOCIAL NETWORK(S)** |
| **Week 7: 3/18-3/22** | **Monday**                                                            |                   |
| **Tuesday** | “Talk it up Tuesday”  
**Data Point:** New York placed second in the nation in the The 8th Annual AP Report to the Nation (2012) for the percentage of its graduates (26.5 percent) participating in AP and scoring a 3 or higher on an AP Exam. | Blog /Twitter/ FB |
<p>|           | <a href="http://press.collegeboard.org/releases/2012/advanced-placement-results-class-2011-announced">http://press.collegeboard.org/releases/2012/advanced-placement-results-class-2011-announced</a> |                   |
| <strong>Wednesday</strong> | “Watch it Wednesday”                                                  | Blog /Twitter/ FB |</p>
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<th>SOCIAL NETWORK(S)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: 3/25-3/29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>“Talk it up Tuesday”</td>
<td>Blog /Twitter/ FB</td>
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| Tuesday | • High schools spend $947 more per pupil on Advanced Placement courses compared to remedial courses – courses most often taken by students with high needs or those living in poverty.  
  • This same report showed teachers are paid considerably more to teach students at wealthier schools (the average salary is $11,008 more in wealthier districts).  
  o Both of these from: School Finance for High Achievement: Improving Student Performance in Tough Times, New York State Education Department, September 2011  
| Wednesday | “Watch it Wednesday” | Blog /Twitter/ FB |
| Thursday | | |
Legislators carrying our message on social media

**Assembly**

- John McDonald (attended, tweeted from the 1/31 event)

- Peter Lopez (issued and tweeted a [media advisory on 1/25](#) about his attendance)
- Patricia Fahy (attended, tweeted about 1/31 event, posted to Facebook)

---

_Last night, I attended a powerful, yet sobering forum on the crisis affecting public education. I was very... [fb.me/2rPm8CECG](#)_

_Last night, I attended a powerful, yet sobering forum on the crisis affecting public education. I was very encouraged to see our Upstate regional school districts mobilized together, presenting a united front on the need to support public education funding._

_(photo credit: Times Union / Cindy Schultz)_
Senate

- Cecilia Tkacyzk (tweeted about 1/31 event, attended/spoke at 2/11 forum)

Congress

- Paul Tonko (attended 1/31 event) and posted to his facebook account about his attendance.
Results for #nyschoolsinperil

Tweets Top / All

Deborah Bush-Sufiita @dbushsuf 21 Mar
Canajoharie CSD residents rally for equity in public school funding. @edspeaksny; #NYSchoolsInPeril shar.es/efYOn via @sharethis
Expand

AQE New York @AQE_NY 14 Mar
RT @BetsyS48: "Very preliminary" Vestal schools budget looks at elementary-level cuts pressconnects.com/article/201303...
#nyschoolsinperil #educateNYnow
View summary

Betsy S @BetsyS48 14 Mar
Here's more on Genesee rally to #educateNYnow because
#nyschoolsinperil woxinews.org/post/rural-sch...
Expand

Matt Nolin @mnolin 6 Mar
First budget workshop of the season, where do we start with the axe? #NYSchoolsInPeril @CohoesSchools @edspeaksNY pic.twitter.com/qKFStrpWNn
View photo

Education Speaks @edspeaksNY 20 Feb
@SenTkaczynski's press conference is getting underway! Working to put an end to the GEA. #NYSchoolsInPeril pic.twitter.com/EXgG66at
View photo

Betsy S @BetsyS48 14 Feb
The faces of BOCES lobby day, explaining why NY state should #educateNYnow flickr.com/photos/nysut/s... #nyschoolsinperil
View summary

AQE New York @AQE_NY 13 Feb
"down to bare bones" RT @BetsyS48: Reports of school cuts for Glens Falls area poststar.com/news/local/sch... #educateNYnow #NYSchoolsinperil
Expand

Education Speaks @edspeaksNY 11 Feb
Starting a #NYSchoolsInPeril social media campaign: Share it with two of your friends, and they'll share it with two of their friends...
Expand

Education Speaks @edspeaksNY 11 Feb
...But, a form letter is better than nothing. Look for resources @ nyscoss.org #NYSchoolsinPeril
Expand

Broadalbin-Perth CSD @BPpatriots 11 Feb
Residents can look up schools' fiscal info - good tool for advocacy! @ at nyscoss.org nyscoss.org/img/uploads/fl.... #NYSchoolsInPeril
Deborah Bush-Suftlit@dbushsuf  11 Feb
New tool on nyscoss.org shows cumulative effect of GEA on individual
districts. This is not an aid increase! #NYSchoolsInPeril
Expand

Matt Nolin@mnnoln  11 Feb
Call 2 action for schools in fiscal peril (all of them) to avoid cutting all
non-mandated programs #NYSchoolsinPeril
pic.twitter.com/uN9qXdc0
View photo

Capital Region BOCES@CapRegionBOCES  11 Feb
Things are getting underway here at Niskayuna High School! Follow
along at home: educationspeaks.org #NYSchoolsInPeril
Expand

Education Speaks@edspeaksNY  7 Feb
#NYSchoolsInPeril: Advocacy through social media - Something we
like to do here at Ed Speaks is to use social media ... ow.ly/2uKeHD
Expand

Danielle Sanzone@daniellsanzone  1 Feb
My article/video in today’s @troyrecord on last night’s
#NYSchoolsInPeril meeting. troyrecord.com/articles/2013/...
Expand

Leadership360@Myers_Berkowicz  1 Feb
sorry for the error in previous tweet @csdedrick Thanks for all the
tweets last night about educationspeaks.org #nysschoolsinperil
Expand

Marco Zumbolo@mzoom33  1 Feb
This is a 7+ minute video, but worth the watch for anyone concerned
about the future of our schools #NYSchoolsinPeril
vimeo.com/58634622
View media

Capital Region BOCES@CapRegionBOCES  31 Jan
Timbs talks about Bruce Baker from
schoolfinance101.wordpress.com
Not related to NY but has found our funding formula wildly unfair.
#NYSchoolsInPeril
Expand

School Finance 101
Data and thoughts on public and private school funding in the U.S.
WordPress.com @wordpressdotcom - Follow

Capital Region BOCES@CapRegionBOCES  31 Jan
Timbs’ powerpoint will be available on educationspeaks.org tomorrow
morning. #NYSchoolsInPeril
Expand

Deborah Bush-Suftlit@dbushsuf  31 Jan
#NYSchoolsInPeril 1000+ advocates for public schools pack the
auditorium at Columbia HS. Democracy works!
pic.twitter.com/id1UNL7W
Expand
Bethlehem Schools @BethlehemCSD
Don't know Dr. Rick Timbs? Visit edspeaks.org and watch some of his videos. #NYSchoolsInPeril
Expand

Brady O'Donnell @BradyFreund
Congressman @paultonko attends #NYSchoolsInPeril event “Running Out of Time and Options” pic.twitter.com/byYCRQNa
Expand

Capital Region BOCES @CapRegionBOCES
Remember you can follow along with the regional advocacy forum at educationspeaks.org
#NYSchoolsInPeril
Expand

Capital Region BOCES @CapRegionBOCES
Overflow room is filling up fast here at regional advocacy forum! #NYSchoolsInPeril pic.twitter.com/nLUC52Fi
View photo
You've reached the end of the Top Tweets for nyschoolsinperil.

View all Tweets.
Facebook Cover Photo created and shared around the region for February 11 event.
• Videos shared through social media
  o Local superintendent talks about why January 31\textsuperscript{st} event is important: [http://youtu.be/XF2-vZRNGTQ](http://youtu.be/XF2-vZRNGTQ)
  o Community advocate talks about why she attended February 11\textsuperscript{th} event: [http://youtu.be/hTkw4eSVPUo](http://youtu.be/hTkw4eSVPUo)
Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options
Supporting Documentation for NSPRA Gold Medallion

SECTION D: Media and publicity
Media Plan for “Running Out of Time & Options”

Save the Date Media Advisory

- Will be sent out Jan. 22 after committee reviews it

Media Advisory

- Will be sent out morning of Jan. 30 and Jan. 31

Morning Media Calls

- Questar III Communications Team will contact media
- Superintendents, BOE members and parents of various districts will also contact media
  - Talking points will be provided for those that need them
  - Need to create a list and assign them media to contact

Press Conference at 3:30 p.m.

- Featuring Rick Timbs, Laurence Spring, Bob Horan and Dr. Marie Wiles (if available)
- Purpose is to provide media an opportunity to interview speakers in advance of the event for the evening newscasts
- Press conference will be held in Columbia High School auditorium

Handling Media for Event

- Media table with materials for reporters will be staffed by Jason and Dan (with Questar III Communications Team providing support when necessary)
- Press kit will feature Press Release and Fact Sheet

Press Release

- Press release will be written in advance by Jason with summary of event and quotes from each speaker
- It will be sent out to media after event is over

Next Day Follow Up

- E-mail from Chuck/Jim thanking superintendents for their participation and links to press coverage
- E-mail will also include a story for districts’ websites – press release will be repurposed by Jason

Other Media Plans to Keep Momentum Going

- Story in On Board – Dan Sherman will pitch
- Story in Business Review – Bob Horan will pitch
- Op-Eds in Local Newspapers
  - Superintendents, BOE presidents and community members will be encouraged to write Op-Ed pieces to their local newspapers to keep the issue in the forefront
CONTACT: Communications Specialist Jason McCord, 937-6456 (cell)
For Immediate Release: Monday, January 28, 2013
Follow On Twitter: #NYSchoolsInPeril

*** Media Advisory ***

Capital District School Communities Join Together for “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time and Options”

Hundreds of residents from all 47 local school districts will learn about fiscal crisis facing their schools and how they can help

When: Thursday, January 31 from 6:30 to 8:15 p.m. (a reception with the public will be held immediately afterwards.)

What: A broad coalition of parents, educators, school board members and business/civic members – representing all 47 public school districts from seven Capital Region counties – will gather for an unprecedented advocacy rally titled “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril - Running Out of Time and Options.” This will be the largest (and first) advocacy forum of its kind in the region.

Where: Columbia High School Auditorium (East Greenbush CSD), 962 Luther Road, East Greenbush

Who: Featured Speaker:
• Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director, Statewide School Finance Consortium

Superintendent speakers representing rural, suburban and urban school districts:
• Bob Horan, Superintendent, Schodack Central School District
• Dr. Marie Wiles, Superintendent, Guilderland Central School District
• Larry Spring, Superintendent, Schenectady City Schools

Parents, board members, educators, business/civic leaders and elected officials

Details: The evening event will include a presentation by Dr. Rick Timbs, a widely-recognized voice on school finance reform, and leaders of three area school districts, who will illustrate the magnitude of the fiscal crisis facing suburban, rural and urban school districts alike unless meaningful action is taken during the 2013 legislative session. Dr. Timbs will provide analysis of Governor Cuomo’s executive budget and local school superintendents will discuss what it means for their schools.

Attendees will also learn what they, as citizen advocates, can do to help address the lack of equitable funding and mandate relief that stands to shortchange a whole generation of school children and unravel hard-won gains in academic achievement.

The 47 districts – representing 112,336 students – have lost more than $110 million in state funding this year through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). State aid has also eroded over the past four years, leading to numerous program reductions/eliminations and staffing cuts.

There also will be press availability with speaker Rick Timbs before the event from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Call Communications Specialist Jason McCord at 937-6456 to schedule interview.
EAST GREENBUSH - More than 1,000 community members from all 47 school districts in the Capital Region came together on Jan. 31 to learn about the fiscal crisis facing their schools and find out what they can do to help.

Parents, students, educators, community and civic leaders, and state legislators – representing seven counties – filled Columbia High School’s auditorium for the rally titled “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time & Options”.

Featured speaker Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, pointed to three major causes of the fiscal crisis facing school districts: cuts in state aid through the Gap Elimination Adjustment, inequities in how the state distributes school aid to school districts, and a lack of meaningful relief from state mandates that drive up the cost of education.

Dr. Timbs, a retired educator, explained that the Gap Elimination Adjustment is a cut in state education aid that Gov. David Paterson proposed as a one-time fix to help the state’s budget deficit. But the state has used it the past three years, costing Capital Region schools a total of $305 million in state aid they otherwise would have received. It is included in Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s executive budget for a fourth straight year.

Dr. Timbs also pointed to the state aid formula New York uses to distribute school aid. Using the state’s own budget figures, Dr. Timbs illustrated how upstate school districts are not getting their fair share of state aid. As a result, upstate schools are faced with cutting programs they and their communities value while the cost of education is increasingly being shifted to local property taxes.

“The truth is all kids should be treated fairly, no matter where they live. Shouldn’t everyone have a fair shot at an education, no matter their zip code?” said Dr. Timbs. “The reality is that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education for the foreseeable future.”

To help illustrate the deep concerns of rural, suburban and urban school districts, superintendents from three area districts spoke about the impact the Gap Elimination Adjustment, inequity of school aid and lack of mandate relief have had on student opportunities.

Schodack CSD Superintendent Bob Horan explained how worried he and other educators from rural school districts are. He explained how his district has done everything the state has asked, including studying a merger with a neighboring school district, applying for state and private grants, cutting its budget three of the past four years and draining its reserves. But despite their efforts, the district still faces steep cuts with little else to eliminate but student opportunities.

“I’m incredibly proud of our students. Our graduation rate and attendance rate is in the 90s. When we ask our students to do one thing, they’ve always done three. They always go above and beyond,” said Mr. Horan. “We’ve always made them a promise that if they work hard, they’ll be rewarded. Now we’re at a point where I’m afraid they won’t be able to compete against students in other school districts as they apply for college.”

Guilderland CSD Superintendent of Schools Dr. Marie Wiles spoke on behalf of the many suburban districts represented at the event, dispelling the myth that suburban schools are not affected by the inadequacy of state aid. “From the outside looking in, it might appear that suburban schools have endless
resources,” she said, “when in fact our resources are just as finite as those of our friends and colleagues in rural and urban school districts.”

Dr. Wiles noted that Guilderland has lost $12.3 million over the past three years due to the Gap Elimination Adjustment. As a result, the district has eliminated 125 full-time equivalent positions, leading to increased class sizes at all levels and fewer supports for faculty, staff and students who are struggling.

“Despite the rhetoric that suggests that state aid has been increased to school districts, the reality is that the resources needed to fund our programs are being whittled away,” said Dr. Wiles. “In the absence of adequate state aid and any meaningful relief from costly mandates, the financial and educational insolvency of our school districts is not a function of ‘if’ it will happen, but rather ‘when’ it will happen.”

Schenectady City Schools Superintendent Larry Spring described both the proud tradition of his district – from its innovative programs to its outstanding performing arts – as well as the challenges of an urban school district.

Schenectady has the 13th highest rate of childhood poverty in the nation, Mr. Spring explained. As a result, students often need the support of social workers and others to help them with the trauma they experience daily. Yet, due to a lack of sufficient state funding, the district is forced to cut services that those students need.

“Mental health services are not mandated but PE minutes are. Reading is not mandated but PE minutes are,” Mr. Spring said. “Schenectady is shorted $62 million a year. If we received the funding we are supposed to receive, we could wipe out these problems.”

East Greenbush CSD Superintendent Dr. Angela Nagle ended the evening by stressing to the audience that they have the power to help. She urged them to learn more and contact their state legislators to ensure they understood their concerns about the future of their schools. She also urged community members to attend a Feb. 11 event at Niskayuna High School at 6:30 p.m. where they can learn how to advocate for their schools.

“Although there are great challenges confronting us as we gather today, we can work together using the strength of our numbers to bring about change, and ensure our children an opportunity to achieve their dreams,” said Dr. Nagle.
Sample Script for Media Calls

- Contact a media station or newspaper (from the numbers below) and ask to speak with an assignment editor
  - WRGB Channel 6 – 381-4988
  - YNN Channel 9 – 641-6397
  - WTEN Channel 10 – 436-4822, ext. 1
  - WNYT Channel 13 – 434-0659
  - WXXA Channel 23 – 862-0995
  - Times Union – 454-5694
  - Daily Gazette – 395-3140
  - Troy Record – 270-1277
  - Business Review – 640-6800

- Below is a sample script. You don't have to recite it; it's just to provide some guidance.

My name is ******* and I am a (parent, Board of Education member, Superintendent, etc.) in the (Name of School District).

I'm calling to make sure you're aware of the “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril” rally at Columbia High School on Thursday, January 31 at 6:30 p.m.

We will have hundreds of community members from every school district in the Capital Region attending to learn about the fiscal crisis facing schools.

This is a critical issue facing our communities and it is important that you attend. Thank you.
“A Call to Action” builds on the momentum from the Jan. 31 education rally at Columbia High School where more than a 1,000 community members from 47 school districts in the Capital Region came together to learn about the budget crisis facing their schools.

“A Call to Action” is a follow-up event intended to teach parents, students and other concerned community members how to advocate for their schools. Participants learned strategies and techniques to reach their state representatives, so they can tell them how concerned they are about lost student opportunities due to another year of budget cuts.

The featured speakers at “A Call to Action” were Robert Lowry and Kyle Belokopitsky from the New York State Council of School Superintendents.

Anyone interested in learning more is encouraged to visit www.educationspeaks.org where free advocacy materials are available.

School districts are asking New York State for three things to help them avoid cuts to programs:

- Eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment
- Fix the state aid formula so it provides equitable funding to all school districts
- Provide meaningful mandate relief so school districts can reduce their costs

The Gap Elimination Adjustment was proposed by Governor David Paterson as a one-time cut to school aid to reduce the state’s budget deficit. However, the state has continued to use it the past three years to cut school districts’ share of school aid to balance the state’s budget.

The Gap Elimination Adjustment has cost Capital Region school districts a combined $305 million in funding over the past three years.

While Governor Cuomo has proposed increasing total spending on education by 4% next year, many school districts would receive less than that or have their state aid cut from the previous year. This is largely a result of how state aid is distributed to school districts through New York’s state aid formula.

Most school districts have cut their budgets the past few years in response to cuts to state aid. Many school districts are quickly reaching – or have reached – a point where further cuts will mean reductions to critical programs that impact students.

The biggest cost driver of school budgets is exploding pension costs. Because New York State runs both public pension systems that school employees use, school districts are unable to reduce these costs except to eliminate staff which impacts student opportunities.
*** Media Advisory ***

Capital District School Communities Join Together for “A Call to Action”

Follow-up event to Columbia High School rally will teach community members from Capital Region school districts how to advocate for their schools

When: Monday, February 11 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. (a reception with the public will be held immediately afterwards.)

What: Building on the momentum from the recent education rally at Columbia High School, a follow-up event titled “A Call to Action” will invite parents, students and other concerned community members from all Capital Region schools to learn how to advocate for their schools.

Where: Niskayuna High School Auditorium, 1626 Balltown Road, Niskayuna

Who: Featured Speakers:
- Robert Lowry and Kyle Belokopitsky from the New York State Council of School Superintendents

Parents, students, educators and community members concerned about the fiscal peril facing their schools.

Details: This follow-up event to the Jan. 31 Columbia High School rally “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time & Options” will offer effective strategies and techniques to help parents, students, educators and community members concerned about the fiscal future of their schools contact their state representatives to advocate for change.

On Jan. 31, community members joined together to learn how the 47 school districts in the Capital Region – representing 112,336 students – have lost more than $305 million in funding the past three years through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). This loss in funding, along with an inequitable school aid formula and lack of significant mandate relief, has led to numerous program reductions/eliminations and staffing cuts.

On Feb. 11, “A Call to Action” will help community members learn how to voice their concerns with their state legislators in the face of the executive budget proposal which continues the GEA, does not address the inequitable school aid formula and fails to provide meaningful mandate relief.

There also will be press availability with concerned parents before the event from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Call Communications Specialist Jason McCord at 937-6456 to schedule interviews.
Schools raise uproar for help

Educators at forum say their backs are against the wall, but Cuomo says they still have ways to cut

By Scott Waldman

Updated 6:55 am, Friday, February 1, 2013

EAST GREENBUSH — More than 1,000 people packed the Columbia High School auditorium, filling it with catcalls and gasps of affirmation over something that's usually more likely to cause sleep than fervor: school aid formulas.

School board members, parents, superintendents, students and others converged on the East Greenbush school Thursday night to hear a talk entitled "Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril — Running Out of Time & Options." They represented 47 upstate school districts and came in such droves that a line of cars stretched more than a mile from the school to the highway exit.

The headliner was Rick Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, an advocacy group that calls more equitable aid distribution. Timbs fired up the crowd of school advocates and budget wonks with a PowerPoint presentation that showed the dire state of funding in New York's public schools, which have cut thousands of teachers and programs in the last few years and will have to do so again next year.

"I can't cut the same person more than once, I can't cut the same program more than once," Timbs said. "We are running out of options."

School leaders have complained about funding shortfalls for years as they slashed programs and education jobs, some 30,000 by teachers' union estimates. But something profound has changed this year, with a growing number of superintendents warning that they are now in a state of crisis and will be unable to offer a quality education to their students in the next year or two.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has said the state already spends billions on education, more than virtually every area of the budget, and cannot afford to give more than a 4 percent aid increase.

That means schools are at the edge of their own fiscal cliff and more than 100 districts face insolvency in the next two years. Thursday's meeting marked a significant shift for local school leaders, more mass rally than solemn information session. Parents, teachers, principals and others were enlisted to call their state legislators, to press for a different distribution of funding. Guilderland Superintendent Marie Wiles told them to use their anger to bring about change.

But they face significant challenges and a governor who says he has no more left to give.

At a meeting with the Times Union editorial meeting this week, Cuomo said school districts grew accustomed to large annual aid increases in the years before the recession and can no longer calibrate their budgets to those numbers. He said schools continue to sign contracts with their employees that they cannot afford and turn to the state when they can't balance their budget. More districts need to consider consolidation or other significant ways to reduce spending.

"You either have to negotiate a contract you can actually pay or you're going to have to consolidate, but it can't be rates of increase that are not possible," he said. "Schools are getting more money than anybody."

Cuomo said the upstate population of children under age 10 had decreased by 10 percent and schools need to adjust to smaller populations because they will no longer educate the same number of students.

Cuomo also said school officials are calling for mandate relief, but don't have ideas that will save significant money. He said a repeal of the Triborough Amendment, which keeps employee contracts in place during negotiations, is a "political non-starter" and that repealing expensive special education mandates could harm vulnerable children.

Timbs repeated his claim that the Class of 2012 had received the best education New York's schools will likely offer for some time. He said the state needs to fix its funding formula so that it would allow lower wealth districts to provide the same quality education as wealthy areas. He said the current aid formula would actually take away aid to some districts next year and many would not get anywhere near a 4 percent increase. He said the state had underfunded its own formula, costing districts $305 million in the last three years.

Schoadack Superintendent Bob Horan said he had leaking pipes in some buildings because he wanted to put every dollar toward students, not infrastructure. He worried that more cuts would hurt students even after they graduate.

"We've always made them a promise that if they work hard, they'll be rewarded," Horan said. "Now, we're at a point where I'm afraid they won't be able to compete against students in other school districts as they apply for college."

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State Senators and Assemblymembers from the Capital Region today called for increased education aid to save public schools that have been pushed to the edge of insolvency by recent budget cuts.

The elected officials noted public schools have absorbed $2.7 billion in budget cuts in 2010 and 2011. Those cuts were especially devastating for high needs districts, where the cuts per pupil were much higher than for high-wealth districts.
To compensate, schools have already taken drastic measures. A statewide poll conducted by the New York State Council of School Superintendents showed that 87 percent of school districts have cut teachers; more than 1/3 have cut art and music programs; one-quarter have cut back on honors classes and many schools have had to cut both remedial and advanced education programs, as well as sports programs.

State Senator Cecilia Tkaczyk said, “Governor Cuomo has led the way in revitalizing our state’s economy and ensuring a vibrant economic future. A strong, well-funded public education system is absolutely necessary to prepare the next generation of New Yorkers for the high-tech jobs of the future. The proposals we’re making today will provide an investment in our children, without adding to the crushing burden faced by property taxpayers.”

In a letter to Governor Cuomo and the leaders of the five legislative conferences, the Capital Region legislators proposed a number of initiatives to enhance education aid and restore funding that had been eliminated through the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA). The GEA is a cut in state education aid that former-Governor Paterson implemented, and has meant cuts of over $305 million for Capital Region schools in state education aid. The proposals include:

- Distribute the $203 million in Fiscal Stabilization Funding through an equitable restoration of GEA funds that ensures prioritization of high needs and average need school districts in all regions of the state;
- Reallocate the $50 million in management efficiency and performance improvement grant funds to the GEA restoration distribution;
- Ensure that any additional money targeted for bullet aid (more than $41 million in the last two budgets) or any unused funds from the 2012-13 competitive grant allocation go to the GEA restoration distribution;
- Adjust the formulas for GEA restoration and additional foundation aid to maximize equity based upon fiscal capacity and student need, and
- Add $350 million in new school aid funding and prioritize high and average needs districts.

State Senator Neil Breslin said, "It is critical we make the necessary investments in education. Our local school districts simply cannot absorb any more cuts. These cuts have already had a negative impact on our students with numerous educational programs being eliminated. Without additional state aid, our local schools will not be able to provide the top notch education our students deserve."

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy said, "I strongly recommend that the Governor’s proposed $889 million increase in education funding be dedicated to increasing foundation aid and restoration of the Gap Elimination Adjustment. While I am pleased to see an increase in education funding, this increase - even at this size
- will not solve the serious deficits facing school districts and additional aid is needed to cover escalating costs."

Senator Terry Gipson said, “Our schools have already tightened their belts through administrative efficiencies and sacrifices. More than 75 percent have implemented salary freezes or pay cuts for superintendents and more than half have negotiated concessions with local teachers unions and more than 40 percent have reduced central and administrative positions. Any additional cuts will dramatically impact our children's education.”

Assemblyman John McDonald said, "In talking to the nine school districts where the children of the 108th Assembly District reside, each and every school district has taken drastic actions to reduce costs during these times of less-than-expected state aid for education. Hundreds of jobs have been cut, buildings closed, salaries frozen and dozens of additional cost cuts implemented. However, these cuts are not able to outpace the spiraling health care and pension costs, especially in this reduced aid environment. My concern is that this path is not sustainable going forward, especially as fund balances are near empty and options are few and far between. We need to build upon the Governor's proposed increases in his initial budget in order to prevent our education system from falling into deeper despair."

Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara said, "It is our responsibility to provide our children with the tools they need to be successful in the workforce, but right now, our schools are in a state of crisis. Past budgets have forced schools to cut their budgets to the bone. Teachers have been laid off, arts and music programs cut, and class options narrowed. We are asking that hard-hit rural and high-needs, low-wealth schools receive more funding because they have been hit the hardest, and taxpayers in those districts just cannot afford to make up the difference."

Assemblyman Phil Steck said, “I commend the Governor for putting more funding into education, but we certainly want to work with our two former school board members, Cecilia Tkaczyk and Pat Fahy, to have any additional funding used in a manner that will best benefit the school districts of New York State."

Billy Easton, Executive Director of the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) said, "The fact that Capital District and Hudson Valley legislators from both houses and both sides of the aisle are standing together to call for additional school aid targeted to high and average need districts is a reflection of the reality that without additional funding, our school children will lose yet more teachers and programs. The Alliance for Quality Education applauds these legislators and strongly supports their proposal. Without it, our schoolchildren will no doubt endure another round of classroom cuts."

Timothy G. Kremer, Executive Director of the New York State School Boards
Association, said, "New York has to make state aid to schools its number one budget priority. The future health and prosperity of our state depends on the ability of our schools to make students college and career ready. Sadly, the Gap Elimination Adjustment and state aid cap are eroding schools’ ability to do exactly that."

Robert Reidy, Executive Director of New York State Council of School Superintendents, said, "Across New York State, superintendents, board members, educators and families fear that their schools will never again be able to match the opportunities they are providing to students now. Financial and educational insolvency are on the horizon for many districts. We are grateful for the leadership of the Capital Region legislators and their support for more funding to help our students and taxpayers."

Brian Hassett, President & CEO of United Way of the Greater Capital Region said, "United Way believes that the investments that we make in young people today will pay off for years to come. Our State’s economic and social conditions are strongly connected to our capacity to maintain an educated workforce, with skilled employees who provide for their families and participate in the local economy. When one child gains a bright start in life through access to educational opportunities, there’s a good chance he or she will enjoy a productive future. When that happens, everybody benefits."

Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium said, "Our legislators simply ask for the state to make a critically well-timed and long overdue reasonable step to support schools district with the funds they need to achieve their mission. The diminution of adequate state support and the maintenance of our current inequitable support system for struggling public school districts has gone on too long. School communities with few local resources and significant challenges must be saved from fiscal and/or educational insolvency. Obviously, to provide every student, no matter where they live, their chance for a prosperous future, requires the state to provide a desperately needed and appropriate investment. The state’s performance speaks volumes to these children. These forward thinking legislators rightfully call on the state to respond with an adequately funded and equitably distributed state aid plan matched to the newly expanded mission of schools districts, and quickly."

Related information
Senator:
Cecilia Tkaczyk [1]
Authored by Senator
Other information
Wed, 02/20/2013
All children - rich and poor - should benefit from the tree of knowledge

Details
Published on Friday, 22 February 2013 19:38

Funding for public education in New York State is in crisis.

Our front page last week detailed the excruciating problems in each of our local districts. In rural Berne-Knox-Westerlo, which has had trouble passing budgets in recent years, the majority of board members say they want no tax-levy increase.

We're painfully aware of Hilltown residents who say they must leave their homes because they can't afford the taxes. Poor districts face a double whammy: Their state aid has been cut disproportionately, and they are the least likely to be able to remedy that cut by raising more through local property taxes.

While suburban Voorheesville and Guilderland are comparatively wealthier — with fewer than a tenth of their students getting free or reduced-price lunches as opposed to a third of BKW's — they, too, face difficult problems as state aid and property values stagnate and costs for health care and pensions rise.

A rollover budget at Voorheesville would raise property taxes by nearly 8 percent. State law now caps the levy increase at about 2 percent unless 60 percent of the voters approve a greater hike.

“This is a horrible thing school districts are facing, and I'm not saying poorer schools shouldn't get help,” said Voorheesville's business administrator, Gregory Diefenbach, “but how the distribution goes and how it's handed out needs to be looked at.” He's right; it does need to be looked at — and changed.

At Guilderland, which is trying to close a $2.1 million revenue gap in a roughly $90 million budget, students, teachers, and parents last Tuesday lined up at a microphone to plead with the school board not to make cuts, or to restore cuts that took 120 jobs over the last three years.

The board, of course, does not want to make those cuts any more than the administrators recommending them. It is painful to dismantle years
Led by Superintendent Marie Wiles, Guilderland has launched an advocacy campaign, urging residents and students to write the governor, telling him to restore school aid lost through the Gap Elimination Adjustment, which was enacted as a temporary measure to fill the gaping state deficit.

The problem, though, is that the state government is suffering from the same economic downturn that has hurt schools and businesses. As just one example, the faltering stock market has cut the return on pension investments, meaning local schools and municipalities have to make up the difference.

The Chinese word for crisis is composed of two characters — one for perilous and the other for crucial point or pivot.

This fiscal crisis has put New York public education in a perilous place. We must pivot now — quickly and decisively — to save a cornerstone of our democracy.

Two things have to happen — one locally and the other on the state level. Locally, school workers — from administrators and teachers to bus drivers and custodians — have to accept lower wages. Many businesses in our area have made across-the-board cuts in wages to stay afloat and preserve jobs. Most school contracts involve raises in the form of yearly step increases as well as salary increases on top of that.

If workers were to agree, as the Guilderland teachers recently did, to no raises — less than they would have gotten under the Triborough Amendment by not negotiating a new contract at all — many of the lost programs and services could be reinstated.

The second, statewide change must be to restructure how public education is funded in New York. One citizen told the superintendent last week that having students write the governor is sending them on a fool's errand. We don't think that's so. But the change needs to be much bigger than doing away with the Gap Elimination Adjustment.

Governor Andrew Cuomo has said, "There are two education systems in this state — not public and private. One for the rich and one for the poor and they are both public systems."

A decade ago, a group from New York City that saw the inherent unfairness of this, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, sued the state and won. The state's highest court determined that, according to New York's constitution, students were entitled to a "sound basic education." Accordingly, a plan was drafted that would have increased aid across the state while adding aid for the poor districts. As New York found itself in a mounting economic crisis, those plans were redrafted, stretched over more years, and then, finally, scrapped.

This problem of inequity is not a new one. Twenty years ago, the Board of Regents proposed a major reform of the system for distributing state aid. The Regents found that per-pupil spending in districts around the state in 1990-91 ranged from $5,200 to $30,000. The disparity is even greater now.

School districts in poor communities, the Regents found, spend far less per pupil than those in more affluent communities — classes tend to be larger, teachers less experienced, and educational technology less available.

That's not fair. Every child is entitled to an equal chance at a good education. We are all part of the same society.

For over a quarter of a century, we have on this page urged implementing a statewide income tax to fund education. Our system of property-based school taxes is archaic and should be replaced with a progressive statewide income tax divided among districts on a per-pupil basis.

Currently, state aid to local school districts is determined by a complex system of formulas arrived at piecemeal in a political arena. And, despite its broad use, the school property tax is widely seen as imposing unfair burdens on those who can least afford them.

Local property taxes take up a larger percentage of income for poor people than for wealthy people. And, for those with lower incomes, real property is likely to be the only source of wealth.

Aside from helping the elderly and others on low or fixed incomes continue to live in their homes, an income tax would allow small-scale farmers in our rural areas to continue their operations, maintaining open space for all.

Funding formulas should be decided not on the basis of political realities, but rather on the basis of educational needs.

A statewide income tax should be levied to pay for all state-required educational needs at the elementary and secondary levels. It should be distributed on a per-student basis, evenly, across the state, with adjustments made regionally for varying costs of living. In areas where there are high concentrations of poverty, additional state funds should be shifted to those districts since there are increased educational costs there.

Of course, taxpayers in wealthy districts that wanted to offer their students more could always vote to levy increased local taxes upon themselves to provide the extras their students now receive.

Statewide requirements should be paid for by taxes levied statewide. As it is now, locally elected school boards in districts that aren't wealthy have very little say on how locally raised taxes are spent. Within the framework of already existing guidelines, school districts could still decide how monies will be spent.

Only when each child is given the same financial backing, backing that will adequately meet all of his or her educational needs, will each student have the same chance to succeed.

Our democracy depends on a well-educated constituency. Before the chasm between the rich and the poor grows too wide to bridge, we need to see that funding for our public schools is fair. We'll all pay for the consequences.
#NYSchoolsInPeril – Tuesday Rundown

Posted on February 12, 2013

“Advocacy needs to be your year-round, part time job.”

- Kyle Belokopitsky, Assistant Director for Government Relations, NYSCOSS

Who’s ready to be a voice for their school!

Last night’s regional advocacy workshop at Niskayuna High School brought hundreds of school district stakeholders together to learn how to effectively advocate for their schools.

Robert Lowry and Kyle Belokopitsky from the New York State Council of School Superintendents were the featured presenters and offered "how-to" strategies and techniques for helping parents, teachers and taxpayers reach out to lawmakers and take that important step in advocating for educational change.

- View the PDF of the PowerPoint presentation from last night
- Visit the NYSCOSS Advocacy webpage.

Media coverage of the workshop

- Albany Times Union
- The Daily Gazette
- WTEN – News 10
- WNYT – NewsChannel 13
- WXXA – FOX23 News
- WRGB – CBS 6
- YNN

As we mentioned last night (and last week), Education Speaks will be serving as a “homebase” for a new social media advocacy campaign over the coming months. Social media is a tremendous tool for advocacy and can serve as a great source in helping to get the word out about what is happening in our public schools.

You’ll start to see some new items posted during the week on our Facebook and Twitter pages, as well as new segments on the blog, including a weekly advocacy tip, polls, and a video segment called “Watch and Learn”.

educationspeaks.org/2013/02/nyschoolsinperil-tuesday-rundown/
To get you started, we’ve updated our advocacy page on the blog to include the handouts from last night, including the Advocacy Toolkit and information on how to contact your elected officials.

Welcome Aboard

Since last night’s workshop, Education Speaks has added nearly 80 new Likes/Followers to our social media accounts. We’re thrilled to have you with us and hope that our posts continue to spur discussion and help to move the conversation forward.

This entry was posted in Uncategorized by edspeaksny. Bookmark the permalink [http://educationspeaks.org/2013/02/nyschoolsinperil-tuesday-rundown/] .
#NYSchoolsInPeril message continues to carry

Posted on March 14, 2013

Since late January, the #NYSchoolsInPeril message has really gained traction throughout the state of New York.

Earlier this week, 37 rural and low-wealth districts across the Wayne County and Finger Lakes region in Western New York continued to spread that message, gathering together at the Geneseo Central School District Auditorium to advocate for equitable school funding. The event was sponsored by the Genesee Valley Educational Partnership.

Over 500 parents, students, faculty, administrators, community members, local village and town officials as well as local legislators, learned how tax cuts are impacting their schools and learned what voters can do to help change the school tax cap.

Dr. Rick Timbs of the Statewide School Finance Consortium was the featured speaker again, discussing the importance of eliminating the GEA, providing adequate and equitable aid to education, and providing a meaningful measure of mandate relief to school districts.

Local administrators spoke of the devastating effect these cuts are having upon each of their school districts, while students also took to the stage, explaining why they feel the best chances of them getting a good education may have already passed them by.

This is third such event to take place since January. On January 31 in East Greenbush, thousands turned out to learn about equitable school funding, and on February 11 at Niskayuna High School, those same individuals came out to learn how to become better advocates for their schools. You can learn how to be a better advocate for your school by visiting our advocacy page here.
Click on the links below for full media coverage of the event.

- WHEC – News10: Rally for education in Livingston County
- WBOC – CBS 8: Schools Fear Budget Cuts
- YNN: Rally for Education in Geneseo
- Livingston County News: Education rally sounds relentless message to lawmakers
- Batavia Daily News: Rallying for Education
- Messenger Post: Former Bloomfield teacher, Rick Timbs, leads education rally

This entry was posted in education reform, mandate relief, School aid funding, school funding, Tax levy cap by edspeaksny. Bookmark the permalink [http://educationspeaks.org/2013/03/nyschoolsinperil-message-continues-to-carry/] .
“Your public schools in fiscal peril: Running out of time & options” related media

1. Register Star (Hudson) – Representatives of 47 school districts meeting to tackle ‘Fiscal Peril’ (January 30, 2013)
2. The Business Review - Fifty Capital Region schools will push for more money at rally on Thursday (January 30, 2013)
3. The Capital Pressroom – radio show syndicated statewide by WCNY, airs locally on 88.3 FM (January 31, 2013)
4. The Daily Gazette (Schenectady) – Education briefs (January 31, 2013)
   http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2013/01/31&ID=Ar01600&Section=Local_News
5. Greene County News – Educators: School aid increases deceiving (January 31, 2013)
7. Times Union blog – Watch public school fiscal crisis meeting here (January 31, 2013)
8. Channel 6, CBS (January 31, 2013)
   www.cbs6albany.com
9. Channel 9, YNN (January 31, 2013)
   http://capitalregion.ynn.com/content/top_stories/635179/schools-discussing-fiscal-crisis/
10. Channel 10, WTEN (January 31, 2013)
11. Channel 13, WNYT (January 31, 2013)
12. Channel 23, FOX (January 31, 2013)
    http://www.today.com/id/50661577/ns/local_news-albany_ny/#.URRimvJ2Fjs
14. Times Union – Schools raise uproar for help (February 1, 2013)
    http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/School-districts-raise-the-rally-cry-for-more-aid-4240643.php#ixzz2Jb5sTnIt
15. The Daily Gazette (Schenectady) – State aid formula attacked at school finance forum (February 1, 2013)
16. The Record (Troy) – Fiscal peril faced by school districts expected to get worse (February 1, 2013) 
http://www.troyrecord.com/articles/2013/02/01/news/doc510b3a6f69b75179754148.txt

17. Register Star (Hudson) – School officials say districts in dire straits (February 1, 2013) 

18. The Daily Mail (Catskill) – Greene, Columbia schools headed for fiscal disaster (February 1, 2013) 
http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_1b3fec54-6c3c-11e2-b039-001a4bcf887a.html

19. Capital Tonight – State of Politics ‘Here and Now’ morning news round-up (February 1, 2013) 
http://capitaltonightny.ynn.com/2013/02/here-and-now-697/

20. WAMC radio – Running out of time and options (February 1, 2013) 

21. Times Journal - Educators hear: There is no plan for state aid (February 5, 2013) 
http://www.timesjournalonline.com/details.asp?id=79969

22. Register Star (Hudson) – Close to the edge (February 6, 2013 editorial) 
http://www.registerstar.com/opinion/editorials/article_7a0b8fe8-6ff4-11e2-ba6f-001a4bcf887a.html

23. Spotlight Newspapers online – Elementary equations (February 6, 2013) 
http://www.spotlightnews.com/news/2013/feb/06/elementary-equations/?page=1&

24. Bethlehem Spotlight - Elementary equations (February 6, 2013) 
http://www.bethlehemspotlight.com/photos/2013/feb/06/24091/

25. Colonie Spotlight - Elementary equations (February 6, 2013) 

26. Saratoga Spotlight - Elementary equations (February 6, 2013) 

27. Schenectady Spotlight - Elementary equations (February 6, 2013) 

28. Columbia Paper – The formula doesn’t work (February 7, 2013 editorial) 

29. Mountain Eagle -- Increases in education aid may not help local districts (February 7, 2013 editorial) 
http://www.registerstar.com/the_mountain_eagle/news/article_895b5ca2-7130-11e2-bc87-001a4bcf887a.html

30. The Altamont Enterprise – Join the Call to Action to get more funding for public schools (February 7, 2013 letter to the editor) 

31. Greene County News - School districts headed for fiscal disaster (February 7, 2013) 

32. The Express – Hoosic Valley among area schools in attendance at educational forum (February 7, 2013)

33. Business Review - School districts team up to combat fiscal crisis (February 8, 2013)  

34. Times Union – Striving for education, struggling with poverty (February 8, 2013)  

35. Columbia Paper – Administrators get iPads (forum mentioned) (February 9, 2013)  

36. Columbia Paper – Schools hear bad news on future funding (February 10, 2013)  

37. Register Star - School activists gathering again to talk fiscal crisis (February 9, 2013)  

38. On Board (New York State School Boards Association) – Pain prompts political activism (February 11, 2013)  

39. On Board – Institutionalized underfunding (February 11, 2013, President’s message)  

40. Times Union – Tough choices in Niskayuna (February 11, 2013)  

41. Channel 6, WRGB – School superintendents discuss rising costs (February 11, 2013)  

42. Channel 9, YNN – Many gather to discuss fiscal crisis facing schools (February 11, 2013)  
http://capitalregion.ynn.com/content/top_stories/638379/many-gather-to-discuss-fiscal-crisis-facing-schools/

43. Channel 10, WTEN – follow-up event teaser, early morning news (February 11, 2013)

44. Channel 10, WTEN – ‘A Call to Action’ event held to address schools fiscal hardships (February 11, 2013)  
http://www.news10.com/story/21115855/a-call-to-action-event-held-to-address-schools-fiscal-hardships  
http://www.news10.com/search?vendor=ez&qu=A+Call+to+Action%2C+Niskayuna

45. Channel 13, WNYT – A night of advocacy for state funding (February 11, 2013)  

46. Fox 23, WXXA – ‘A Call to Action’ event held to address schools fiscal hardships (February 11, 2013)  
http://www.fox23news.com/news/local/story/A-Call-to-Action-held-to-address-fiscal-crisis/x_Av27bjhU2w2iqGnVlk5g.cspx

47. The Legislative Gazette - Give school districts what is due to them (February 11, 2013 letter to the editor)  
http://www.legislativegazette.com/letters-124587.113122-Give-school-districts-what-is-
48. The Legislative Gazette - Bill would end unfunded mandates (February 11, 2013)

49. Times Union – Schools teeter on the edge of cliff (February 12, 2013)

50. Times Union – A new mission for NY’s schools (February 12, 2013 editorial)
   http://blog.timesunion.com/opinion/a-new-mission-for-ny%E2%80%99s-schools/24068/

51. The Daily Gazette (Schenectady) – At Niskayuna forum, parents urged to speak up for schools (February 12, 2013)
   http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2013/02/12&ID=Ar00900&Section=Local_News

52. Times Journal – Seward, Lopez promise fast action on school aid (February 12, 2013)

53. The Daily Gazette (Schenectady) – Push coming to shove over school aid (February 14, 2013 editorial)
   http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2013/02/14&ID=Ar01101&Section=Opinion

54. The Altamont Enterprise -- Schools grapple with budget demands (February 15, 2013)

55. Register Star (Hudson) - Not fooling anyone (February 16, 2013 letter to the editor)
   http://www.registerstar.com/opinion/letters/article_7fa734a8-7791-11e2-b1d9-0019bb2963f4.html

56. Times Union – Private school bus option is a real money saver (February 16, 2013 letter to the editor)

57. Post-Star (Glens Falls) -- State can’t nickel and dime rural school districts (February 17, 2013 editorial)

58. Post-Star (Glens Falls) -- As funds dwindle, schools could face drastic choices (February 17, 2013)

59. The Observer-Dispatch (Utica) – School imbalance (February 17, 2013 editorial)
   http://www.uticaod.com/opinion/x2082694282/Our-view-SCHOOL-IMBALANCE

60. Post Journal – Upstate senators look to direct money to rural districts (February 18, 2013)
   http://www.post-journal.com/page/content.detail/id/617987/Upstate-Senators--Look-To-Direct-Money-To-Rural-Districts.html?nav=5192

61. Bennington Banner – NY schools begin budgeting for 2013-14 (February 18, 2013)
62. Times Union – Capital Region reps want more school funding (February 20, 2013)
63. Times Union – Schools lose out on $33 million (February 20, 2013)
64. Times Union – NYSUT fights tax cap (February 20, 2013)
65. The Daily Gazette – More aid sought for needy schools (February 20, 2013)
   http://www.dailygazette.com/videos/2013/feb/20/1336/
66. The Daily Gazette – Fix the GEA to help school districts (February 20, 2013)
67. WNYT (Channel 13) – Local legislators, schools advocates call for more money
   (February 20, 2013)
68. YNN (Channel 9) – NYSUT filing lawsuit against state’s two percent tax cap (February
   20, 2013)
   http://capitalregion.ynn.com/content/headlines/640842/nysut-filing-lawsuit-against-state-s-two-percent-tax-cap/
69. The Daily Mail – School aid in dire straits (February 21, 2013)
   http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_0bf76588-7bf5-11e2-a02f-0019bb2963f4.html
70. Register Star (Hudson) – City school officials explain budget woes (February 21, 2013)
   http://www.registerstar.com/news/article_eed03a80-7be4-11e2-a696-001a4bcf887a.html
71. The Daily Freeman – Greene County school administrators think big (February 21, 2013
    editorial)
    http://dailyfreeman.com/articles/2013/02/21/opinion/doc5123e4c04d5af050026198.prt
72. The Advertiser – Schodack CSD superintendent asks for community help (February 21,
    2013)
73. Capital Tonight – Capital Region lawmakers push for more education aid (February 21, 2013)
    http://capitaltonightny.ynn.com/2013/02/capital-region-lawmakers-push-for-more-education-aid/
74. The Columbia Paper – More on school aid (February 21, 2013 editorial)
75. The Post-Standard (Syracuse.com) – Upstate Senators write Gov. Andrew Cuomo about
    school aid inequities (February 22, 2013)
76. The Altamont Enterprise -- All children - rich and poor - should benefit from the tree of
    knowledge (February 22, 2013 editorial)
77. Poughkeepsie Journal – Property-tax cap has holes beyond a lawsuit (February 22,
2013 editorial)  
http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/article/20130222/OPINION01/302210043/Editorial-Property-tax-cap-has-holes-beyond-lawsuit

78. WAMC – news piece that mentioned forums (February 22, 2013)  
79. Times Union -- Tax cap denies a 'sound, basic' education system (February 24, 2013 column) http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Tax-cap-denies-a-sound-basic-education-system-4303262.php


81. The Citizen (Auburn) – State school aid one of Seward’s top priorities (February 24, 2013)  

82. Times Union – City following up on aid meeting (February 25, 2013)  
http://www.timesunion.com/default/article/City-following-up-with-aid-meeting-4304750.php

83. Legislative Gazette – Lawmakers, educators predict more painful classroom cuts (February 25, 2013)  

84. On Board – Time to end schools’ GEA cut, lawmakers say (February 25, 2013)  

85. On Board – The elephant in the classroom: one in five students in poverty (February 25, 2013)  

86. The Daily Freeman – Roundout Valley, Onteora officials say school aid distribution is unfair (February 26, 2013)  
http://www.dailyfreeman.com/articles/2013/02/26/news/doc512c02ff76a35825625325.txt

87. The Spotlight News – NYSUT calls out tax cap (February 26, 2013)  

88. The Daily Mail – School budgets without a net (February 27, 2013 editorial)  
http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/opinion/editorials/article_6aa26c42-80a3-11e2-8ac5-0019bb2963f4.html

89. The Batavian – Budget for 2013-2014, proposed capital project, and a call for legislative action discussed by Batavia Board of Education (February 27, 2013)  

90. The Citizen – Our senior statesman needs to step up for schools (February 28, 2013 editorial)  

91. The Daily Freeman – NY Assemblyman Lopez says quality education must be affordable, sustainable (February 28, 2013)  
92. The Columbia Paper – State funding leaves schools with less (February 28, 2013 op-ed)  

93. Greene County News -- School aid in dire straits (February 28, 2013)  

94. The Ravena News Herald -- School aid in dire straits (February 28, 2013)  

95. Times Union – Someone pays for ‘no new taxes’ (March 1, 2013 letter to the editor)  

96. The Daily Gazette – Schenectady school aid decision expected next week (March 1, 2013)  
http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2013/03/01&ID=Ar00903&Section=Local_News

97. The Altamont Enterprise – We have to redefine public education (March 2, 2013 letter to the editor)  
http://www.altamontenterprise.com/index.php/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/440-we-have-to-redefine-public-education-funding

98. Register Star -- Barrett adds after school program to diner tour (March 2, 2013)  

99. The Daily Freeman – Around the state…guns, schools, spectator safety (March 4, 2013 editorial)  
http://www.dailyfreeman.com/articles/2013/03/04/opinion/doc512e1ce06b1b6272746996.txt

100. Times Union – Letter: Upstate schools need state aid (March 5, 2013 letter to the editor)  

101. The Daily Gazette – Taking to the streets for education aid (March 5, 2013 video)  
http://www.dailygazette.com/videos/2013/mar/05/1358/

102. The Daily Gazette – State aid formulas, class sizes focus of pro-education rally (March 5, 2013)  
http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2013/03/06&ID=Ar00903&Section=Local_News

103. WTEN – Channel 10 – Hundreds participate in parade for equitable funding (March 5, 2013)  

104. WNYT – Channel 13 – Cohoes school marching band leads education rally (March 5, 2013)  
105. WXXA – Channel 23 – NY school marching band leads rally in Albany (March 5, 2013)
106. The Associated Press – NY school marching band leads rally in Albany (March 5, 2013)
107. Public News Service – NY Schools fifth worst in U.S. in school spending fairness (March 5, 2013)
   http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php/?/content/article/31142-1
108. Times Union – Education rally at the Capitol (March 6, 2013)
109. Legislative Gazette – AQE meets with lawmakers over school budget aid (March 6, 2013)
110. Legislative Gazette – Rally showcases programs that will be lost without more education funding (March 6, 2013)
111. Capital Tonight / YNN – Not many options for cash-strapped schools (March 7, 2013)
   http://capitaltonightny.ynn.com/2013/03/not-many-options-for-cash-strapped-schools/
112. Politics on the Hudson blog – What to do about school insolvency? (March 7, 2013)
113. Greene County News – District urges parents, community to advocate for schools (March 7, 2013)
114. Spotlight News – RCS faces $700k budget gap (March 7, 2013)
115. Times Union – Too tough an equation? (March 10, 2013)
   http://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Too-tough-an-equation-4343809.php#ixzz2NE1xE3te
116. NYSSBA’s On Board – Desperate times call for disparate numbers (March 11, 2013)
   http://www.nyssba.org/news/2013/03/07/on-board-online-march-11-2013/desperate-times-call-for-disparate-numbers/
117. Register Star – Legislature OKs increase in school aid (March 12, 2013)
118. Times Union – Different visions, different figures (March 12, 2013)
119. Times Union – Letter: Reform state aid to public schools (March 12, 2013 letter to the editor)
120. The Daily Mail – District urges parents, public to advocate for schools (March 13)
http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_3318ee3e-8b9a-11e2-a27b-0019bb2963f4.html?mode=print
121. The Journal – Schools’ gap elimination adjustment targeted for removal by Assembly and Senate budget proposals (March 13, 2013)
http://www.ogd.com/article/20130313/OGD01/703139791
123. Times Union – $290 million for education, but how much for NYC? (March 14, 2013)
http://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/archives/181825/290-million-for-education-but-how-much-for-nyc/
125. Times Union – Letter: Suburban schools hurt by aid cuts (March 16, 2013)
126. The Daily Mail – C-D students let Albany know their concerns (March 21, 2013)
http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_ab92004a-91e8-11e2-9d0b-001a4bcf887a.html
http://www.dailygazette.net/standard/ShowStoryTemplate.asp?Path=SCH/2013/03/21&ID=Ar01100&Section=Local_News
128. WNYT (Channel 13) – story on school aid increase (March 27, 2013)
129. Times Union – School aid boost to save some jobs (March 28, 2013)
130. Register Star – County schools to get aid boost (March 28, 2013)
131. Register Star – School officials: 5.3 percent tax levy increase could balance HCSD’s budget (March 28, 2013)
132. The Daily Mail – C-D greets aid hike, but says it’s not enough (March 29, 2013)
http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_f9eddb46-9833-11e2-8334-001a4bcf887a.html
133. Newsday – Hudson Valley schools fighting losing battle on finances (April 3, 2013)
Information was also shared by other organizations. A sample of these include:

- Finding Common Ground – Peter DeWitt’s blog on Education Week
  [http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2013/03/equitable_funding_the_money_doesnt_add_up.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-TW&buffer_share=b9e09&utm_source=buffer](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/finding_common_ground/2013/03/equitable_funding_the_money_doesnt_add_up.html?cmp=SOC-SHR-TW&buffer_share=b9e09&utm_source=buffer)
- NYSSBA President wrote a letter to the editor (February 13, 2013)
SECTION E: Planning materials
Planning details for January 31 Event:
Our public schools in fiscal peril: Running out of time and options

**Stakeholder invitations and RSVPs** – Multiple leads

- District template invitations ......................... Done
- District RSVP #s and names of people they are bringing ......................... Due 1/7
  -- DS secretaries keeping records
  -- DS and secretaries follow up calls for those who missed deadline
- Assess numbers participating ......................... Jan. 18
  -- Decide on need for follow up calls to any districts by co-chairs and/or DS
  -- Decide on opening up additional seats to neighboring districts and/or districts that want to send MORE

**Legislator & special guest RSVPs** – Shelly Levings & JoEllen Gardner

- Official invitations .................................. Done
- Template distributed for districts to use to ALSO invite legislators ......................... Done

**Legislator RSVP #s and names**

- JoEllen and Dan are making follow up calls
- Report out to A Team ................................. Jan. 18

**Assess numbers participating ......................... Jan. 18**

- Decide on need for follow up calls to any specific legislators
  * Ask co-chairs to contact superintendents in those districts and ask them to call and report back response(s)
- Get final list to Brian for table that night

**Special Guest RSVP #s and names**

- Ask Shelly or Brian to coordinate with JoEllen and make any follow up calls to those who haven’t responded
- Report out to A Team ................................. Jan. 18
- Get final list to Deb/Shelly for greeting that night
- Get final list to Tasha for seat signs with their names

**Web copy, logo & banner** – John Noetzel, Lead

- Banners designed and off to print ...................... Now
  -- Deliver to Tasha on 1/29 dress rehearsal
- Logo designed ........................................... Done
- Write sample web story and distribute with logo to all CR BOCES PR staff and superintendents. .................................
  -- Send to Dan Sherman for distribution to his PR staff and superintendents
  -- Report back to “A Team” on useage of advance web materials .................................
- Morning after the event, write summary web copy with logo and pictures(?) and distribute to CR BOCES PR staff and superintendents. Include second plug on Feb. 11 event ............ Feb. 1
  -- Send to Dan Sherman for distribution to his PR staff and superintendents

**Advance prep with Rick Timbs** – Shelly Levings and Deb Bush, Lead

- Conference call with Rick .............................. Done
- Report back to “A Team” ................................. Jan. 18
  -- Name for his presentation: *Running out of Time and options*
  -- PDF of his DRAFT powerpoint on Jan. 25 & 2nd conf. call at 3 p.m. to finalize
  -- Will bring PowerPoint on thumbdrive and brings his own laptop as his backup
  -- Yes to a “media availability” for pre-event media interviews; promote as 10 minutes each outlet; Rick will call S. Arbetter and Liz Benjamin to offer to do their show(s) that a.m. and let us know if they bite. Dan: Let’s pitch to Business Review!
  -- Dinner plans for our guest speaker -- Chuck & Jim?
  -- Shelly sending him list of our 47 districts, data she already has, info on purpose of the event and our 3 “asks.” Rick is sending us his bio.
**Social media** – Steve King and Jill Aurora, leads

- Plan for “pre-event” publicity? ..............................
- Recruit district PR staff to share/retweet? ......................
- Promote hashtag in advance and promote in Dan’s press materials ..................
- Share social media plan with A Team ............ Jan. 18

**Media plan** – Dan Sherman & Jason McCord, lead (NOT Tasha...too much on her plate as host)

- Follow up on “pre-event” interviews now that we know Rick is available.
- Pitch feature story in NYSSBA’s OnBoard? ....
- Pitch feature story in Business Review? ........
- Media advisory ASAP: Accurate count on # of participating districts Should Chuck & Jim call any non-participants?
- Press releases written and distributed by: ..... 1/31
- Night of the event plans:
  -- Press table with materials for reporters staffed by Dan and Jason
  -- Keep record of who is there from media
  -- Questar PR staff available to assist reporters if needed (e.g., questions, special area for cameramen/women to set up)
- Summary email (draft in advance?) and ready to go out the next a.m. to all superintendents from Chuck/Jim thanking them for their attendance and including links to all known press coverage
  -- Reminder on Feb. 11 event

**Video** – Amy McGeady & Jill Aurora, leads

- Filming done ..................................................
- Data points finalized ........................................
- Script written ..................................................
- Rough cut preview ...........................................
- Final cut completed & DVD to EG day before dress rehearsal ...................... 1/28
- Night of:
  -- Set up and testing ..........................................
  -- Who cues up and troubleshoots? ..................

**Legislative** – Brian Fesler, lead

- Letters of invitation distributed ..................... Done
- Distribution of template letters so districts will also invite their legislators ....... Done
- Follow up reminders to districts to encourage them to send out their own invitation legislators and CALL .............
- Follow up phone calls to each legislator to ask if they are coming (or an aide) .............
- Official record of who is coming ......................
- JoEllen -- nametags for legislators; bring blanks as well........................................
- Night of the event plans:
  -- Seats reserved in auditorium (ALL or just those who are attending?)
  -- Table set up to welcome legislators → Brian + a DS? Others adults stationed there?
  -- HS student greeters escort legislators to their reserved seats → Student arrival time .........................
  -- Review protocols w/ students ....................
  -- Keep record of which legislators attend
- Thank you letters (recapping our “ask”) written in advance and ready to go out the next morning to:
  -- Legislators who attended .........................
  -- Legislators who sent an aide .....................
  -- Legislators who did NOT attend, recapping what they missed ................
- Thank you email written in advance and ready to go out the next day from legislative co-chairs Bob Libby & Bob Horan thanking them for their participation and outlining next steps (e.g., Feb. 11 event at Nisky to help with issues learning/advocacy in their own districts.)
**Program/handouts**
- Judy Frost & John Noetzel, Leads

- **Program guide**................................. ____
  - Include: logo & cover quote, agenda, bio on Rick, thank you’s, promote Feb. 11 at Nisky, prompt to sign on to banner, cookies & conversation in the cafe.
  - Schedule lay out in graphics....................... ____
  - Copied/collated ........................................... ____
  - Delivered to Tasha Anderson ...................... ____

- **Advocacy checklist** (insert) ...................... ____
  - Generic 2-sided advocacy checklist that fits inside program guide

- **Commitment & feedback form** (insert)
  - fill out & return that night .............................. ____
  - Contact information & home district; check yes or no on attendance at Nisky on Feb. 11
  - Solicit feedback on the event itself
  - Reminder to **also** sign on to one of the 3(?) public wall banners in the lobby, and cafeteria *(Thoughts on what we DO with these?)*
  - Need two clearly marked colored(?) boxes where ____ folks return form before leaving (offer pencils and pens if folks haven’t filled out; students to remind at exits to help boost return rate)

**GUT CHECK:**
**DO WE NEED PAPER WALL BANNERS?**

- **Large paper wall banners with sharpies**
  - Get graphics involved? .............................. ____
    - What kind of paper and adhesive?
    - Include logo and verbage? (e.g., “Thoughts on tonight?” “Count on me to speak out and do something!” “If not me, who?” “See you on February 11th!”
    - Prefill some comments?
  - Order supply of colorful sharpy markers ..... ____
  - Person stationed at each banner .................. ____
    (handout markers; ask folks too sign on)
  - Collect banners/markers at conclusion ...... ____

**Greeters, tables, signage**
- Dan Sherrman and Tasha Anderson, leads

- **Use event name and logo on all signage?**
- **Parking** signs (weather proof?)
- **Enter here** signs (weather proof?) *(i.e., everyone enters for this event through one door?)*
- Signs directing people to auditorium in other areas of the building if someone enters through different doors?
- Signs on where (open?) restrooms are located?
- Signs for each legislator’s seat
- Signs/reserved seats for special statewide guests (get list from who?)
- Signs/reserved seats for superintendents who are speaking: Larry Spring, Marie Wiles, Robert Horan, Robert Libby, Angela Nagle
- Sign/reserved seat for guest speaker Rick Timbs
- **Legislators Sign-in Here!** (Table, 2 chairs & 2 signs)
  - Brian at this table, student escorts
- **Reporters Sign-in Here!** (Table, 2 chairs & 2 signs)
  - Dan at this table, extra helpers?
- **Don’t leave without returning your green card!** (Boxes -- at exit door and each cookie station)
  - Deb will coordinate this one so we include a sample of the card ON the sign

- **Student greeters from Columbia HS**
  - Recruit and review proper dress for the evening
  - Arrival time set in advance (and where they report)
  - Coordinate with Brian on role in greeting legislators/ escorting them to their seats. (How many?)
  - Handout out program guides to each person entering the auditorium (2 at each door? Stationed at doors by when?)
Special guests & superintendent speakers
Shelly Levings & Deb Bush, at doo
Jason McCord & JoEllen Gardner, inside aud.

• Does Angela need to acknowledge “special guests” in her welcome notes? If so, who would this entail?
  -- Legislators and/or aides in attendance
    Requires Brian to get her the list right before she begins...
  -- State organization leaders? (e.g., NYSCOSS, NYSSBA, NYSASBO, NYS PTA, etc.
    Should we have special reserved seats for these people down from with legislators?
• Deb will reach out to both Larry Spring and Marie Wiles (topic, time allowed, arrival time of 6 p.m. that night, etc.)
• Bob Horan will share his notes with Larry and Marie
• Deb & Shelly stand at door to “intercept” special guests as they arrive.
  -- Work with team of students who will escort them to their assigned(?) seats?
• Also “intercept” superintendent speakers when they arrive.
  -- Bring them to Jason & JoEllen inside auditorium, who will:
    * Will show them where to stand to make their remarks, and who follows who.
    -- Tape off in advance an “X” where speakers should stand
    * Bring them to Todd to get mics on
    * Facilitate other introductions
    * Offer a water bottle (Who will supply?)
    * Run through agenda, explain order on when they get up to speak, where they walk to speak, how to turn mic on and off, etc.
  -- Answer any specific questions they may have

Traffic control outside – East Greenbush Police with Angela Nagle or her designee as point person?

• Set up via East Greenbush Superintendent?
• Help directing traffic and facilitating parking in appropriate areas from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
• Per notes? “Operations & Maintenance staff will direct traffic and prepare overflow parking. Will have info on bus parking, likely Genet Elementary.”

Traffic control inside --
Tasha Anderson?

• Who is Pam Elliott? Directing people inside auditorium foyer and answering questions? Does anyone on A team know her? Is she attending dress rehearsal?
• How will we know “Schodack administrators?” Their job was listed as “Directing public to overflow room once auditorium is full.”
  →Suggest one person (decide in advance) makes that call and then s/he needs to know who from Schodack team to mobilize help. Should this be Bob Horan?
• “Auditorium foyer (west lobby) will have 2 sets of 3 long tables with chairs.”
  -- One table for legislators to sign in (Brian & _____?)
  -- One table for media (Dan & Jason)
  -- Note: we don’t need a table for advocacy materials; recommend students stationed at auditorium doors to hand program (with advocacy insert) to each guest as they enter. (Tasha recruit 2 students for each door and arrange for them to know where programs are as they need to replenish?)

Technical support & troubleshooting –
Tom O’Hara, EG Tech Director, Lead with Tasha Anderson as liaison from A Team?

• Overall coordination on technology in both the auditorium and gym
• Liaison/advance coordination with videographer (Thomas), web streaming (Ira)
• Responsible for sound, microphones, lighting
• Help Rick Timbs get Powerpoint loaded/tested that night
• Cues up video?
• Assigns additional needed tech support staff (e.g, person in gym)
**Video taping** – Jack McNerney from SCHOPEG, with Brian Sherman from Leg. Committee

- Jack McNerney will coordinate actual taping of the event.
  -- Can we get contact information (i.e., phone/email)?
- Jack McNerney will burn DVDs
  -- By what date? For whom? Distribute how?
- Arriving between 10 and 11 a.m. on Jan. 31 to set up
  -- Does Tom O’Hara know this, and is he the only person Jack needs to connect with?
  -- Tom O’Hara will fill Jack in on details from “dress rehearsal” meeting. (Jack can’t attend)

**Web streaming** – Ira Goldstein, NERIC plus Tasha and Jill from A Team

- Ira Goldstein will attend Dress Rehearsal
- Ira Goldstein will arrive ___ (time) on Jan. 31
- Jill will set up/promote weblink for streaming on Ed Speaks via email on Jan. 31
to districts (supes & PR staff both) ................. Jan. 31

**Cookies & conversation after the event** – Matt Leon with Tasha Anderson, leads

- Matt coordinates with CAPSPA which has agreed to donate the cookies and beverages
  -- Coordinate with Jeanne Sasnow, president and Nisky board member?
- Know who is ordering the food
- Advise on quantities: 800 small cookies, 300 water bottles and 300 cans of soda. (Seems kind of thin... should we adjust based on final counts?)
- Coordinate with Tasha on location and tables/linens
- Know who is bringing it and when; greet them that night and help with set up as needed
- Will these be “self serve” tables?
- Per notes: “Three beverage and cookie stations, three long tables each. No seating, extra garbage cans.”
  -- No need for advocacy table in cafe.-- they get all we have inside their programs!

**Weather alert** – Angela Nagle

- Two days prior, assess likelihood of snow ..... Jan. 29
  -- Fleshout more detailed communication plans if bad weather is predicted
- Outline cancellation protocols and method for communicating quickly (emails, media release, etc.)

**Presentation logistics/ “dress rehearsal”** – Tasha Anderson & Todd Witherell, leads?

- Tuesday, Jan. 29 at 8:30 a.m. in Columbia HS auditorium. Decide who needs to be there.
- Review: all speakers will be on floor.
- Microphones:
  -- Podium with microphone for superintendents
  -- Rick will have a wireless lapel mic
  -- EG will have 2 people on standby for any microphone related issues.
- Gym will be set up with 400 cushioned chairs, one large-screen for video feed and two smaller screens for PowerPoint feed.
- Outline agenda and direct dress rehearsal

**Miscellaneous logistics** – tbd

- Can someone create a list of cell phone numbers with key contacts/lead people so we can contact each other with quickly (without having to “run” to find each other)?
  -- That said, we probably need “runners” at each key station...
- If people only plan to arrive at 6:30 p.m., recognize we may not be able to START until closer to 6:45 p.m...
- Do we need BRIGHT name badges or armbands to easily identify lead staff helpers that evening?
Planning for February 11 -  
Deb and Shelly, leads

- Advocacy basics (need a title)
- Follow up with Bob Lowry and Kyle B.
- Plan for general session
- Work with Matt Leon to determine best location for general session (auditorium vs. cafeteria)
- Gauge interest in breakout tables -- offer by district stakeholder team in Nisky Cafeteria?
  -- Signage for tables?
- Quality conversations/discussion materials at breakout tables will be the responsibility of the Superintendent with his/her PR support staff.
  -- Recommended: advocacy toolkit and ideas/discussion to determine next steps

Notes:

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Your public schools in fiscal peril –
Running out of time & options

To: Superintendents
From: Robert Libby and Robert Horan, Co-Chairs of the Superintendents’ Legislative Committee
Date: December 13, 2012
Re: Your role in our advocacy event on January 31, 2013

Thank you in advance for your participation in the advocacy event that the Capital Region BOCES and Questar III BOCES Superintendents’ Legislative Committee is planning for 

Thursday, January 31, 6:30 pm at Columbia High School.

It is vital that we have representation from all of the 47 districts in our region. We are relying on you to help us lay the ground work to get our district’s stakeholders in the door that night to this “invitation-only” event. To that end, we have created the checklist below and ask that you complete the activities on the checklist according to the timeline we have provided. Electronic copies of the attached documents will be forwarded to you for personalization.

December Actions:

☐ Identify 12-15 members of your school community who you think are influential key communicators to be a part of your stakeholder team. We are looking for people who will be galvanized by what they hear the night of the 31st and be motivated to go home and share what they have learned and help spur their fellow community members into action in advocating for your district. We’ve included a work sheet (attachment #1) to help you develop your team.

☐ Personalize and send the attached Stakeholder Invite (attachment #2) to the members of your Stakeholder team. We ask that you complete this task by Tuesday, December 18th.

January Actions:

☐ The letter asks that members of your stakeholder team RSVP to you by Monday, January 7. Please RSVP to Rachel Yamin with your full list of attendees by close of business on Wednesday, January 9.

☐ We have will also be providing you with a Legislator Invitation via email for your elected representatives. We ask that you personalize and send this to your representatives from the Assembly and Senate by Friday January 11, 2013.

☐ PLEASE follow-up with a phone call to your representatives to see if the plan to attend.

☐ BONUS POINTS! If you are looking to go above and beyond, it would be helpful if you shared the legislative letter with at least 3 members of your stakeholder team and asked them to personalize it and send to your representatives as well.

Attachments:
1. Stakeholder worksheet
2. Stakeholder invite with tentative agenda
School District:

- Superintendent
- Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
- School Business Official
- Communications Staffer

Faculty (2)

Staff (2)

Administrators (2)

Board of Education (2)

Students (2)

Business Leaders (2)

Civic Organization Reps (1-2)

Senior Citizen Reps (1-2)

Parents (6)
Dear:

I am writing to ask for your participation in an unprecedented regional grassroots advocacy effort that could alter the course of public education in the Capital Region. In public schools across the state including here in <DISTRICT NAME>, there is concern that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. With a lack of leadership in Albany to provide equitable and adequate funding for schools and meaningful mandate relief, districts are running out of time and options. We need your help in delivering this message to state leaders!

As you may know, we have already begun to develop the school district budget for 2013-14. After three consecutive years of <PERSONALIZE HERE> cuts to staff and programs, extracurriculars, sports and more, eroding state aid and increasing mandates threaten even deeper budget cuts in the coming year. An entire generation of children is likely to have compromised educational opportunities unless there is swift and significant change in the way New York State supports public education.

Our district is not alone! On Thursday, January 31, 2013 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., 47 area school districts will join together at Columbia High School at 962 Luther Road in East Greenbush to host “YOUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN FISCAL PERIL: RUNNING OUT OF TIME AND OPTIONS.” (Snow date: February 7, 2013). The event – which will feature an overview of the crisis from fiscal expert Dr. Rick Timbs, Executive Director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium -- is intended to highlight the looming educational crisis in the Capital Region and kick off a season of citizen advocacy to address it. Local media will be invited as well as state legislators representing the region.

In planning the event, each Superintendent has been asked to assemble a group of approximately 20 influential members of their communities who would attend this event and serve as catalysts for carrying this message to colleagues, friends, and neighbors. As a key stakeholder in the <DISTRICT NAME>, I cordially invite you to JOIN ME in attending this event and to become part of our Stakeholder Team as we advocate for a better future for the students of the <DISTRICT NAME>.

With power in numbers, our vision is that you will help facilitate conversation throughout the community, and help empower new citizen advocates to reach out to our elected representatives to remind them of their responsibility in supporting quality public education for our community. To make this as easy as possible, stakeholder team members will be invited to attend a session entitled “Advocacy 101” and will be provided with an Advocacy Tool Kit -- an easy-to-follow guide on how best to engage our elected officials.

On the back of this letter is a tentative agenda for “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options.” Please RSVP by January 7, 2013 to let me know if you will join me in this effort and attend the evening event. You can reach me by phone at <PHONE NUMBER> or email at <EMAIL>.

Sincerely,
January 7, 2013

«AddressBlock»

Dear Assemblymember «Last_Name»:

We are writing to invite you to an important regional event on Thursday, January 31, 2013. Representatives from 47 area school districts and their communities are coming together for “Your public schools in fiscal peril – Running out of time & options.” Our school districts consider you an important partner in educating our students -- the next generation of citizens and leaders. This event will be an opportunity to learn more about the concerns that school leaders, parents, students, teachers, administrators, and business and civic leaders have about the future of education in our state.

The event is scheduled from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Columbia High School, 962 Luther Road in East Greenbush. (A snow date has been set for February 7.) The evening will include a presentation by Dr. Rick Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, and leaders of three area school districts who will illustrate the magnitude of the crisis facing our schools unless action is taken during the 2013 Legislative Session to:

• Eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment;
• Provide adequate and equitable aid to education; and
• Provide a meaningful measure of mandate relief.

We will reserve you a seat in the auditorium. While the timeframe for the formal part of the program won’t allow for additional speakers, the event will be followed by a reception in the school’s cafeteria. This promises to be a good opportunity to talk informally with the constituents and school leaders that you represent. Each district is sending a team of stakeholders from their school community. Participating districts are listed on the back of this letter and an agenda is attached.

It is a sad reality that in public schools across the state, including the ones you represent, the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. State aid has eroded for four years. Programs have been reduced or eliminated. Meaningful mandate relief has not materialized. The 47 districts – 112,336 students – lost more than $110 million in state funding in 2012-13 through the Gap Elimination Adjustment.

Our message to stakeholders on Jan. 31 is that we do have the power to reverse the trend of schools facing insolvency and the tide of lost opportunities. We have to decide – and act – to do so.

In our local communities and at the Capitol, the best decisions result from people listening, working together, and having a clear understanding of what’s at stake. In that spirit, we look forward to seeing you on January 31. Please contact JoEllen Gardner by email at joellen.gardner@neric.org or by phone at (518) 237-0100 x2356 to confirm your attendance.

Sincerely,

Charles S. Dedicke, Ed.D.  
District Superintendent  
Capital Region BOCES

James N. Baldwin, J.D.  Ed.D.  
District Superintendent  
Questar III BOCES

Robert K. Libby  
Superintendent, Cohoes CSD  
Chair, Legislative Committee  
Capital Region BOCES

Robert Horan  
Superintendent, Schodack CSD  
Chair, Legislative Committee  
Questar III BOCES

enclosure
## Participating Capital Region School Districts – January 31, 2013

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<tr>
<th>Albany City Schools</th>
<th>Lansingburgh Central Schools</th>
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<td>Averill Park Central Schools</td>
<td>Menands Union Free Schools</td>
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<td>Berlin Central Schools</td>
<td>Middleburgh Central Schools</td>
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<td>Berne-Knox-Westerlo Central Schools</td>
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<td>Bethlehem Central Schools</td>
<td>Niskayuna Central Schools</td>
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<td>Berkshire Union Free Schools</td>
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<td>Brunswick Central Schools</td>
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<td>Cobleskill-Richmondville Central Schools</td>
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<td>Germantown Central Schools</td>
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<td>Green Island Union Free Schools</td>
<td>South Colonie Central Schools</td>
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<td>Watervliet City Schools</td>
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<td>Hudson City Schools</td>
<td>Wynantskill Union Free Schools</td>
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<td>Ichabod Crane Central Schools</td>
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Dear Assemblymember «Last_Name»:

We are writing to invite you to an important regional event on Thursday, January 31, 2013. Representatives from 47 area school districts and their communities are coming together for “Your public schools in fiscal peril – Running out of time & options.” Our school districts consider you an important partner in educating our students -- the next generation of citizens and leaders. This event will be an opportunity to learn more about the concerns that school leaders, parents, students, teachers, administrators, and business and civic leaders have about the future of education in our state.

The event is scheduled from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Columbia High School, 962 Luther Road in East Greenbush. (A snow date has been set for February 7.) The evening will include a presentation by Dr. Rick Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, and leaders of three area school districts who will illustrate the magnitude of the crisis facing our schools unless action is taken during the 2013 Legislative Session to:

- Eliminate the Gap Elimination Adjustment;
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**We will reserve you a seat in the auditorium.** While the timeframe for the formal part of the program won’t allow for additional speakers, the event will be followed by a reception in the school’s cafeteria. This promises to be a good opportunity to talk informally with the constituents and school leaders that you represent. Each district is sending a team of stakeholders from their school community. Participating districts are listed on the back of this letter and an agenda is attached.

It is a sad reality that in public schools across the state, including the ones you represent, the Class of 2012 may have received the best education that districts will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. State aid has eroded for four years. Programs have been reduced or eliminated. Meaningful mandate relief has not materialized. The 47 districts – 112,336 students – lost more than $110 million in state funding in 2012-13 through the Gap Elimination Adjustment.

Our message to stakeholders on Jan. 31 is that we do have the power to reverse the trend of schools facing insolvency and the tide of lost opportunities. We have to decide – and act – to do so.

In our local communities and at the Capitol, the best decisions result from people listening, working together, and having a clear understanding of what’s at stake. In that spirit, we look forward to seeing you on January 31. Please contact JoEllen Gardner by email at joellen.gardner@neric.org or by phone at (518) 237-0100 x2356 to confirm your attendance.

Sincerely,

enclosure
January 9, 2013

Mark N. Eagan
President & CEO
Albany-Colonie Regional Chamber of Commerce
5 Computer Drive South
Albany, NY 12205-1608

Dear Mark:

Thank you for sharing The Chamber’s 2013 Advocacy Guide with me. I find it very informative and I will share it with my colleagues. In it, you have outlined Education and Workforce Development as one of The Chamber’s top priorities. As such, I am writing to invite you to join me and representatives from 47 Capital Region school districts in an unprecedented education advocacy event on Thursday, January 31 at Columbia High School that, with your support, could help us gain ground for area students that has been in lost recent years as a result of dwindling state support for education.

With eroding state aid, increasing mandates and the constraints of a tax levy cap, Capital Region school districts are concerned that the Class of 2012 may have received the best education we will be able to offer for the foreseeable future. With an absence of leadership in Albany to provide equitable and adequate funding for schools and meaningful mandate relief, districts are running out of time and options. We expect to have more than 800 public education stakeholders in attendance. Area lawmakers and local media have also been invited.

Please join us on Thursday, January 31, 2013 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the auditorium of Columbia High School, 962 Luther Road in East Greenbush for “Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril: Running Out of Time and Options.” The evening will include a presentation by Dr. Rick Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, and leaders of three area school districts who will illustrate the magnitude of the crisis facing our schools.

I am enclosing a tentative agenda for the evening. While the timeframe for the formal part of the program won't allow for additional speakers, the event will be followed by a reception in the school’s cafeteria. This promises to be a good opportunity to talk informally with area residents, legislators, and school leaders. Each district is sending a team of stakeholders from their school community. Participating districts are listed on the back of this letter.

Please contact me at rlibby@cohoes.org to let me know if you will join me and attend the evening event.

Sincerely,

Bob Libby
IMPORTANT REMINDER AND PARKING INFORMATION

Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril - Running Out of Time & Options
Thursday, January 31
Columbia High School
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

This is a reminder that representatives from 47 school districts will be taking part in an education advocacy event on Thursday evening at Columbia High School. It is shaping up to be the largest event of its kind in our region - perhaps ever. At last count, Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril - Running Out of Time & Options has more than 800 confirmed stakeholders - parents, students, taxpayers, business and community leaders, and school representatives – who will be in attendance.

Directions to Columbia High School - 962 Luther Rd, East Greenbush
- I-90 to Exit 9
- Troy Rd (Rt 4) south towards Columbia Tpke
- Left Luther Rd (St Hwy 151)
- Left into School

PLEASE NOTE: We are making convenient parking available for our special invited guests. All VISITOR PARKING spots by the main entrance of Columbia High School have been reserved. The names listed below have been added to the list. If you are planning to attend, but your name does not appear as confirmed, please email JoEllen Gardner at joellen.gardner@neric.org or call 237-0100 x2356 by Wednesday, January 30 at 5 p.m.

Upon entering the school, elected officials and staff should check in at the VIP Guest table in the atrium outside the auditorium. From there, a student will escort you to reserved seating. While the formal portion of the program will not allow for additional speakers, your presence will be recognized and there will be an opportunity to meet and greet constituents and school leaders at a reception slated to begin at approximately 8 p.m. We look forward to seeing you!

INVITED – NYS Assembly
Hon. Didi Barrett (Confirmed)
Hon. Marc Butler
Hon. Patricia Fahy (Confirmed + Ginnie Farrell)
Hon. Peter Lopez (Confirmed)
Hon. John McDonald (Confirmed)
Hon. Steve McLaughlin (Confirmed)
Hon. Angelo Santabarbara (Confirmed)
Hon. James Tedisco
Hon. Daniel Stec
Hon. Phil Steck (Allison McLean Lane)

INVITED – NYS Senate
Hon. Neil Breslin (Confirmed)
Hon. Hugh Farley (Michael Mansion)
Hon. Betty Little
Hon. Kathy Marchione (Confirmed)
Hon. Cecilia Tkaczyk (Confirmed)

INVITED – NY Congressional Delegation
Hon. Paul Tonko (Confirmed)
Hon. Chris Gibson (Ann Mueller)
Hon. Bill Owens
Hon. Kirsten Gillibrand
Hon. Charles Schumer
Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for participating in *Your Public Schools in Fiscal Peril – Running Out of Time & Options* at Columbia High School in East Greenbush last evening.

This unprecedented gathering of more than 1,000 public education stakeholders was a resounding success. Events like this demonstrate the power of collaboration and cooperation from our region’s schools. After all, the best decisions result from people listening, working together, and having a clear understanding of what’s at stake — and when it comes to the future of our children and communities, there are no higher stakes.

As you know, the purpose of joining together was to:

- Draw regional attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools and warn of another round of unpopular to untenable school budget cuts forecast for 2013-2014.
- Help elected officials understand their responsibility to act with urgency to adequately and equitably fund public schools and deliver on the promise of mandate relief (more than a dozen state/federal officials attended thanks to your invitations and follow-up phone calls).
- Inform and energize influential stakeholder teams in the 47 school districts served by Questar III and Capital Region BOCES, and catalyze grassroots advocacy.

Dr. Rick Timbs, executive director of the Statewide School Finance Consortium, provided an excellent summary of the financial and structural issues, as usual. Following his energetic presentation, leaders from three vastly different school communities — rural, suburban and urban alike — shared how the lack of meaningful mandate relief and adequate and equitable funding impacts their students. Thank you to Bob Horan, Larry Spring and Marie Wiles for so candidly and passionately articulating these challenges. The stark reality is their stories can be retold in communities throughout our region and state — and will continue to be told unless we work together to engage others in developing solutions.

Clearly this event captured the attention of the regional media. Rick appeared on Susan Arbetter’s syndicated radio show and later joined Bob Horan, Larry Spring and John Buhner at a Times Union editorial board meeting. Our event was the lead story on all of the 11 p.m. newscasts — many crews reported live at 5:30, 6 and after the event. For your information, below is a recap of media (please keep this conversation going locally with your reporters and editors by telling your story):

- Times Union – Schools raise uproar for help
- Register Star (Hudson) – School officials say districts in dire straits
- Register Star (Hudson) – Representatives of 47 school districts meeting to tackle ‘Fiscal Peril’
- The Daily Mail (Catskill) – Greene, Columbia schools headed for fiscal disaster
  [http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_1b3fec54-6c3c-11e2-b039-001a4bcf887a.html](http://www.registerstar.com/the_daily_mail/news/article_1b3fec54-6c3c-11e2-b039-001a4bcf887a.html)
- The Record (Troy) – Fiscal peril faced by school districts expected to get worse (with video)
  [http://www.troyrecord.com/articles/2013/02/01/news/doc510b3a6f69b75179754148.txt](http://www.troyrecord.com/articles/2013/02/01/news/doc510b3a6f69b75179754148.txt)
- The Daily Gazette (Schenectady) – State aid formula attacked at school finance forum
- The Business Review - Fifty Capital Region schools will push for more money at rally on Thursday
- Times Union blog – Watch public school fiscal crisis meeting here
- Channel 6, CBS
The event was also well-covered – in real live – via social media, with many reporters and attendees tweeting from inside the auditorium. Rutgers University Professor Bruce Baker, a noted school finance expert, also tweeted about the event. You can follow the conversation on Twitter using our hashtag #NYSchoolsInPeril or by visiting Education Speaks at http://educationspeaks.org. Education Speaks will be featuring additional reports from this and future events in the weeks to come.

Photos from last night are available at http://goo.gl/xtE3u and the video shown at the end of the program is available at http://vimeo.com/58634622. A BOCES-produced recap of the evening, including reaction from elected officials, is available at http://youtu.be/3K77R1Na4dw.

As a follow-up to last night’s efforts, Niskayuna CSD is hosting a second forum on the evening of Monday, February 11, to teach effective advocacy strategies and techniques. This session will be led by our colleague Robert N. Lowry, Jr. from NYSCOSS. Here attendees will learn how to take what they learned last night and mobilize it into action and conversation with policymakers.

In closing, I want to thank the members of our legislative committees from Questar III and Capital Region BOCES – chaired by Bob Horan and Bob Libby and supported by Questar III’s State Aid & Financial Planning and Communications Services and Capital Region BOCES Communications Service – for organizing these regional events.

Moreover, I want to recognize East Greenbush CSD Superintendent Angela Nagle and her staff for their work and hospitality in hosting last night’s event. I also want to thank Niskayuna CSD Superintendent Susan Kay Salvaggio for volunteering to host our follow-up event. Your efforts are truly appreciated by me and your colleagues.

On behalf of the Superintendents’ Legislative Committee, I look forward to seeing you and your stakeholder teams again on February 11 and putting last night’s words into action. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Dear Colleagues:

As you know, the promised follow-up to our January 31st regional advocacy forum will held at 7 p.m. on Monday, February 11 in the auditorium of Niskayuna High School. This 90-minute session, led by Robert Lowry, Jr. and Kyle Belokopitsky from NYSCOSS, will show attendees how to take what they learned on January 31 and mobilize it into action with policymakers.

There has been a lot of attention on our regional efforts – from the Governor's Office to the local media – and we need a significant showing at the next session to keep our momentum and credibility with “Your public schools in fiscal peril: Running out of time & options.” To this end, we are asking Questar III districts to RSVP to Robin Emanatian (479-6882, remanatian@questar.org) and Capital Region BOCES districts to Rachel Yamin (862-4901 / rachel.yamin@neric.org) by the end of business on Thursday with the number of people attending from your district.

While we do not need to know who will be attending, we do need to know how many people to expect so we can better prepare for Monday. Please reengage the key communicators you asked to be part of your stakeholder team at Columbia High School. Please feel free to also forward an invitation to your schools’ PTA/PTO members and Booster Club members or anyone you feel will be motivated to help your district share its story this legislative session. Districts are encouraged to carpool or organize buses to make it easier for teams to attend.

Our goal is to help you develop district-level key communicators who will share our message with their friends and neighbors and relay it, in greater numbers, to our state representatives. To be effective, we need the participation of all 47 school districts. We cannot afford to squander the regional momentum achieved last week.

The unprecedented gathering of more than 1,000 stakeholders at Columbia High School was a resounding success, but it is only the start of our work. We need to sustain our collaborative efforts to:

- Draw regional attention to the looming fiscal crisis facing all public schools and warn of another round of unpopular to untenable school budget cuts forecast for 2013-2014.
- Help elected officials understand their responsibility to act with urgency to adequately and equitably fund public schools and deliver on the promise of mandate relief.
- Inform and energize influential stakeholder teams in the 47 districts served by Questar III and Capital Region BOCES – advocates who will help catalyze effective advocacy efforts around the region.

In the meantime, follow the conversation on Twitter using our hashtag #NYSchoolsInPeril or by visiting Education Speaks at educationspeaks.org. Education Speaks will be featuring additional reports from this and future events in the weeks to come.

The solutions to the challenges facing our schools will result from people listening, working together, and having a clear understanding of what’s at stake – and when it comes to the future of our children and communities, there are no higher stakes. This is why we need to engage parents, students, community members, business people, educators and elected officials alike – to start a chain reaction that leads to mutual understanding, meaningful action and significant results.

On behalf of the Superintendents’ Legislative Committee, we look forward to seeing you and your stakeholder teams on February 11. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,