Queensbury Union Free School District

Many Voices, One Purpose: The 2012-13 School Advocacy Campaign

2013 NSPRA National School Communication Awards
Gold Medallion Awards Entry – Special Communication Projects/Campaigns

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Capital Region BOCES Communications Service
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- QUFSD Facebook page – [https://www.facebook.com/queensbury](https://www.facebook.com/queensbury) (various posts)
- QUFSD Twitter page – @qufsd (various posts)
**Synopsis**

Even after a successful budget vote in May 2012, members of the Queensbury Board of Education knew the district faced an ongoing fiscal challenge: Costs would continue to rise for the foreseeable future while aid reductions and tax levy legislation restricted revenue growth. Since 2009, the district had cut 75 staff positions, classes at the middle and high schools, and services for students at all grade levels. Continued reductions were not a viable long-term solution to the problem, so school leaders turned to advocacy to seek relief from the mandates driving up the cost of education.

Under the direction of the school board and superintendent, the district’s public information specialist developed a strategy to increase the strength, frequency and effectiveness of local school advocacy efforts. A district-hosted summer advocacy workshop gave board members from throughout the region an opportunity to expand their knowledge of the issues and strengthen their advocacy skills. The local school board then adopted three advocacy priorities, which were shared during a fall advocacy workshop for community members. Workshop participants received tool kits, sample letters and other resources designed to make advocacy less intimidating.

Advocacy messaging was later incorporated into two community forums held in conjunction with the winter budget development process. It was also included in letters to legislators and promoted on the district website and Facebook page throughout the year.

Workshop exit polls, news coverage and verbal feedback from legislators and community members indicate that these efforts are helping increase local school advocacy. The district also received significantly more aid in the adopted state budget than originally anticipated, a feat attributed in part to the advocacy with local legislators.
Program/Project Summary

Research

In May 2012, voters in Queensbury Union Free School District passed the proposed 2013-14 school budget by 75 percent. While members of the Queensbury Board of Education were happy the budget met with voter approval, they were concerned that for the fourth straight year the district had to reduce programs, services and staff—down by 13.4 percent at that point. Many reductions took advantage of attrition and declining enrollment, but school board members knew they could no longer just ‘trim around the edges.’

Long-range school budget projections showed the cost of educating local students would continue to rise for the foreseeable future. At the same time, state and federal budget projections indicated total school aid for Queensbury would remain relatively flat or decrease in the coming years. Combined with the new tax levy limit legislation, that meant the school board wouldn’t likely encounter enough of a revenue increase to avoid future reductions.

That knowledge led the school board to look at the issue of mandate relief. A state survey of school districts found that of the 151 mandates that “represent the greatest challenges to districts in terms of financial burden and required time,” 69 percent come with no funding. New York also has 227 distinct special education mandates above and beyond those required by federal law, one of the reasons it ranks first in the nation for per-pupil instructional expenses.

For decades, school and state leaders have discussed, researched and reported on how to reduce mandates for school districts and subsequently reduce taxes. Very few proposals have actually been enacted, and in fact, the governor, Board of Regents and state and federal governments regularly enact new mandates that districts must follow. In Queensbury, the school board decided it must become a stronger advocate for mandate relief and inspire its community to do the same.

Most of the district’s key stakeholders currently hold its academic, co-curricular and extracurricular programs in high esteem, as was evident in the comments received during a series of community forums in 2011 and 2012. It was also evident in the May 2012 budget vote exit survey results. With 72 percent of the 1,659 voters participating in the survey, 64 percent gave the district an “A” grade for the quality of education and 31 percent gave it a “B” grade.

So Queensbury schools already benefit from a great deal of community support. To help the district employ this support in seeking relief from state and federal mandates, the public information specialist laid out the following objectives:

- To increase local public awareness of the negative impact of the cost of mandates on the Queensbury school budget, and as a result, on programs and services for students.
- To increase the number of individuals advocating for mandate relief on behalf of Queensbury schools.
- To have local legislators introduce or support legislation that would provide significant mandate relief.

Analysis/Planning

In May 2012, the public information specialist began developing a formal advocacy campaign for the school district. That campaign was outlined in an annual communications plan for the district and in mini-communications plans geared toward specific advocacy events. Those plans were developed in conjunction with the review of a variety of advocacy resources, tips and materials (used by other school districts and state-level advocacy groups) that identified ‘best practices’ that could be used to meet the Queensbury objectives. The public information specialist relied on peers within the education communications field to help vet and strengthen her plans and materials as well as to assist with various advocacy events.

The public information specialist also assisted the superintendent in his work with the school board to develop its advocacy priorities. After coming up with a lengthy list, the school board narrowed it down to three key advocacy issues that were important and feasible to address. The public information specialist researched the issues and developed materials to succinctly explain them to community members. Those materials helped guide future decisions as to which issues to focus on during the advocacy campaign.
**Communication/Implementation**

In August 2012, Queensbury hosted a school board advocacy workshop that was coordinated by the district public information specialist in conjunction with the public relations specialist from a bordering school district. A personalized invitation was extended via email and mail to the school boards and administrators of all districts within the local BOCES. Nearly 50 school board members and administrators from six different school districts took part in the event. Guest speakers from the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service and the New York State Council of School Superintendents delivered presentations on advocacy skills and working with state legislators. Participants then took part in an advocacy skills/mixer session where they could visit six different advocacy skills stations, each with a 30” x 40” display board and a variety of relevant handouts. They also received an advocacy tool kit, a local legislator profiles packet and a link to the Queensbury advocacy webpage, where they could find more advocacy information throughout the year.

In November 2012, Queensbury hosted an advocacy forum for the wider community. The district sent personal invitations to 143 people, including local business leaders, senior citizens, politicians and concerned citizens who had attended previous community forums. The district also mailed a flier to all student households and promoted the event on its website, on its Facebook page, in a fall newsletter, via releases carried in local newspapers, and on the plasma monitors in school lobbies. More than 70 people attended the event, including district residents, residents from neighboring school districts and a local legislator. The forum began with an opening presentation by the superintendent and concluded with an open discussion. Participants were able to view the advocacy display boards and received updated versions of the advocacy resources used at the summer workshop. In particular, they were asked to immediately contact their congressional representatives about the federal sequester, which threatened to take effect in January and cut school aid.

In late January 2013, the district held the first of two community forums as part of its annual budget development process. The district again extended personal invitations and spread the word via various print and online methods. About 30 people took part in the forum, which included discussions on the school board’s advocacy priorities and participants’ willingness to advocate on behalf of Queensbury schools. Participants also received signature-ready advocacy letters addressed to the governor as well as state and federal representatives. In March 2013, the district held a second community forum that again weaved advocacy messages into budget development information. A personalized invitation that addressed the topic of advocacy went out to more than 1,200 Queensbury homes, and 50 people attended the forum.

Throughout the school year, the public information specialist assisted the superintendent with other advocacy activities such as reaching out to local legislators via letters, emails, phone calls and in-person visits.

**Evaluation**

Exit polls conducted after each of the four major events outlined above have helped the school board, superintendent and public information specialist evaluate the success of the advocacy campaign. Some of those exit poll findings include:

- Prior to the school board advocacy workshop, the majority of the survey respondents were not confident in their ability to be effective advocates. After the workshop, 100 percent of respondents felt more confident in their ability to be effective advocates.
- The same finding held true at the advocacy forum in November. Only 58 percent of respondents were confident in their ability to be effective advocates prior to the forum, but 91 percent felt more confident afterwards.
- At the March forum, 100 percent of respondents indicated they would participate in a similar meeting next year.

Based on verbal feedback from legislators and legislative aides, the advocacy campaign, in conjunction with regional advocacy efforts, ultimately helped secure significantly more state aid for Queensbury schools than originally anticipated. These efforts are believed to have helped pave the way for improvements in the Gap Elimination Adjustment, the passage of fewer unfunded mandates (so far) and the provision of a modest pension stabilization option for schools.

Aspects of the school board’s advocacy priorities remain unaddressed, so the public information specialist will continue to explore new ways to mobilize the community around school advocacy. Though no one district can shift legislative will, the superintendent and school board believe that adding their voices and those of the greater Queensbury community to regional and state-wide advocacy efforts will ultimately be effective.
Many Voices, One Purpose:

*A workshop for school boards on effective, local advocacy*

Thursday, August 30, 2012

6-8:30 p.m. @ Queensbury UFSD

Queensbury High School LGI Room
409 Aviation Rd., Queensbury, NY
(park in lot behind high school)

Can your school district keep “doing more with less” in the face of rising expenses, dwindling reserve funds and increasing state and federal expectations?

That is the challenge ahead for local school boards unless New York State legislators and the Board of Regents provide some significant relief soon. This workshop will offer useful tips, tools and hands-on activities to help increase the effectiveness of school board members’ advocacy efforts.

**Guest presenters** Robert Lowry, Jr., deputy director of the NYS Council of School Superintendents, and Deborah Bush-Suflita, senior communications manager with Capital Region BOCES, will discuss easy-to-master advocacy strategies, legislative issues for 2012-13 and how to get the Board of Regents and legislators to pay attention to school issues in an election year. Afterwards, a member mixer and advocacy skills information session will give board members an opportunity to network while exploring various advocacy methods and topics. Refreshments will be provided.

Please R.S.V.P. as outlined below so the workshop can be tailored to board members’ specific interests.

---

Yes, I plan on attending the advocacy workshop.

- Name: __________________________
- District: __________________________
- Phone #: __________________________
- Email: __________________________
- Dietary restrictions: __________________________

Please R.S.V.P. no later than August 23:

- **By phone:** (518) 824-5637
- **By email:** mbraham@queensburyschool.org
- **By mail:** Mellissa Braham, Public Information Specialist Queensbury Union Free School District Office 429 Aviation Rd., Queensbury, NY 12804

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Public school advocacy issues that most interest me include:

(Check all that apply.)

- Mandate relief in general
- Contract negotiations
- Health care costs
- Layoffs and seniority
- Retirement systems (pensions)
- Special education requirements
- School aid distribution
- Other: __________________________
June 29, 2012

Peter Aust, President & CEO
Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce
136 Glen Street, Suite 3
Glens Falls, NY 12804

Dear Peter:

I’m working with superintendents in Glens Falls, South Glens Falls and Hudson Falls to plan an advocacy workshop for our school board members on Thursday, Aug. 30, from 6-8:30 p.m. in the Queensbury High School LGI Room, 409 Aviation Rd. (enter at the rear of the school building). The plan is to offer useful tips, tools and hands-on activities all geared towards strengthening our local advocacy efforts – because “doing more with less” just isn’t a viable budget option anymore. I would like to extend an invitation to you and your executive committee to join us for the workshop.

Guest presenters Bob Lowry, NYSCOSS deputy director, and Debbie Bush-Suflita, communications manager with Capital Region BOCES, will discuss easy-to-master advocacy strategies, legislative issues for 2012-13 and how to get legislators (and candidates) to pay attention to school issues in an election year. Their presentations will be followed by a skills development session in which board members can practice some new/favored advocacy methods or participate in small discussion groups.

Enclosed are several flyers about the workshop that I thought you might want to distribute to your executive committee members. My public information specialist will also send another reminder via e-mail and/or phone closer to the workshop date. Please ask your board members to R.S.V.P. so we can ensure we have adequate supplies and refreshments.

I hope you can join us for what promises to be a worthwhile night. In the meantime, feel free to e-mail or call me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Huntley, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

“Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.”

www.queensburyschool.org
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Workshop Agenda
Aug. 30, 2012

Queensbury High School LGI Room

6 p.m. Welcome
Raymond Gordon, Queensbury Board of Education President
Dr. Douglas W. Huntley, Superintendent of Schools

6:10 p.m. Getting Savvier About Advocacy: If Not You, Then Who?
Deborah Bush-Suflita, Senior Communications Manager for Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

6:40 p.m. An Update from Albany: Education Policy, Funding and Involvement
Robert Lowry, Deputy Director for the New York State Council of School Superintendents
Kyle McCauley Belokopitsky, Esq., Assistant Director of Government Relations for the New York State Council of School Superintendents

7:10 p.m. Q&A time with guest presenters

Queensbury High School Cafeteria

7:30 p.m. BOE Member Mixer, Advocacy Skills Information
Enjoy desserts, beverages and conversation while visiting different advocacy skills information tables.
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

Presented by
Deborah Bush-Suflita
Capital Region BOCES Communications Service

What is advocacy?
The act of speaking or writing in support of something

- Speaking up on the issues you care most about.
- Relationship-building with decision-makers.
- Communicating with policy-makers about the real-world impacts of their decisions.
- Committing to actively participate in our democratic process. (Democracy is not a spectator sport!)
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

The value of advocacy done well

- Reality check!
- Positions you as a resource to your representatives
- Spurs individual and collective action
- Leads to improved problem-solving on complex education policy issues
- Constituent advocacy is the only thing that has the power to trump money in politics
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

Silence in this high-stakes environment is a TOXIC strategy

- If we aren’t perceived as advocating (hard) for the programs and services our communities value, don’t be surprised if the public starts to turn against us.
  - Dismantling valued programs & services isn’t a responsible long-term strategy.
  - Budgets just get harder every year now.
- Our credibility is on the line.

“Advocacy is a lot like football. If all you do is play defense, you’re going to lose.”

—Source unknown

A student-produced video from Unatego CSD
(http://vimeo.com/39786963)
Local legislators need to:

– Hear from their local constituents – not just from state and national advocacy organizations.

– Be reminded whom they represent – the entire community, including its students.

– Know ‘doing more with less’ is no longer a viable option.

Are common myths & misconceptions holding you back?

• I’d have to be an “expert” to speak up on an issue.

• Advocacy is the job of the designated board spokesperson. (Not it!)

• I have to know my legislator personally.

• I have to like my legislator (or be a member of his/her political party.)

• Advocacy takes too much time.

• Advocacy takes a whole lot of skill.
Advocacy Tip #1

Learn about the issues affecting your district:

- What exactly is the issue?
- Who is affected by the issue?
- Why is the issue important to your district/students?
- Why is the issue important to you as an individual?
- What will happen if the issue isn’t addressed soon?
- What can your legislator do to address the issue?
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

**Pick your issue(s)**

- I’m not here to suggest WHAT you advocate for.
- Don’t worry if everyone on your board or in your district doesn’t see things the same way.
  – Democracy is messy—but it doesn’t have to be polarizing!
- Consider hitching your district’s advocacy efforts to the agenda of one or more higher-profile advocacy groups…

**Power in numbers**
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

Advocacy Tip #2

Develop and test your “laser talk”

• **Problem** – Identify a problem you want your listener to know about.

• **Solution** – Inform the listener about a solution to the problem you presented. Give examples of how and why it would be effective.

• **Action** – Issue a “call to action” that is concrete and specific.

…*Keep it short!*

When in doubt…

Tell a story!

http://www.statewideonline.org/special01.html
Advocacy Tip #3

**Write letters to your legislators**

- Legislators want to be informed about the issues and to know their constituents’ concerns… After all, you are a potential voter!
- Turn your “PSA” into a letter:
  - Introduction
  - Problem statement
  - Proposed solution and explanation
  - Conclusion and call to action
- Keep it to one page and try to include a personal touch.

Advocacy Tip #4

**Learn about your legislators and learn where they stand on key education issues**

- Publications here tonight to help you in this regard
- Visit their websites
- “Like” them on Facebook
- Follow them on Twitter
- Read about them in the news
- Learn what committees they serve on
- Know how they have voted in the past on key issues
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

Advocacy Tip #5
Schedule a face-to-face meeting with your legislators (or their aides)
• Plan an agenda/take charge of the conversation.
• If going with a group, assign roles for each person.
• Take charge of the conversation.
• Use your “PSA.”
• Package your “PSA” as a fact sheet to leave behind.
• Send a thank you note.
• Keep following up on your call to action.

Advocacy Tip #6
Invite legislators into your school district so they can “see” and “be seen.”
• Seeing is believing! Dispute the myths and showcase the positives about your public schools.
• Invite them into your classrooms.
• Invite them to take part in special events/celebrations.
• Invite them to speak at your board meetings…
  …this fall (election time!) to talk about HOW they support education and where they stand on key issues.
  …this winter to talk about state aid runs and what they are doing to improve equity, secure mandate relief, etc.
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

Kicking it up a notch...

Mobilize your base! Get your community engaged in advocacy

• Give people a **constructive** outlet for their frustrations! For example…
  – Host community forums to discuss public policy issues impacting our schools.
  – Sponsor community letter-writing events.
  – Use social media to build (and activate!) your social networks.
  – Involve reporters, write letters to the editor, etc.

Kicking it up a notch

Hold legislators accountable for results

• Ask very direct questions
  – Will you vote in support of __________, (even if it means going against your party’s leadership)?

• Practice how you will respond to common “dodge” tactics
  – “This is divisive.”
  – “Money won’t solve the problem.”
  – “There’s nothing I can do.”

• Be firm and persistent but always polite.
Getting savvier about advocacy:
If not you, then who?

How do I know if it’s working?

- Students
- NYCOSS
- Parents
- NYSSBA
- School board
- Employee unions
- Superintendent
- Other concerned citizens

Legislator’s decision

Questions? Comments?

Deborah Bush-Suflita
Senior Program Manager
Capital Region BOCES
Communications Service
Phone: 518-464-3960
Deborah.bushsuflita@neric.org
An Update from Albany
Education Policy, Funding, and Involvement
August 30, 2012

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

90%+ of school district revenues are now capped.
Costs are not.

Statewide school district revenues by source

- Local revenues 52%
- State Aid 40%
- Federal Aid 8%

Local tax levy now subject to Property Tax Cap
School Aid now subject to cap based on statewide personal income growth.

Source: NYS Education Department
State budget outlook has improved

- Earlier this week, Standard & Poors upgraded the state’s credit outlook from “stable” to “positive.”
- In January 2011, projected budget deficits for the state’s next four fiscal years totaled more than $60 billion.
- Projected deficits for the next four years now total $9 billion.

State Budget Forecast

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<td>General Fund Surplus/Deficit (in billions)</td>
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<td>-$0.987</td>
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<td>Deficit as % of Projected Expenditures</td>
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<td>Projected School Aid Change</td>
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SOURCE: NYS Division of the Budget, 1st Quarter Financial Plan Update for Fiscal Year 2012-13

Key points:
- Under the state constitution, the Governor must propose a balanced budget – projected School Aid increases are not guaranteed.
- No individual district can count on a specific increase.
- Federal outlook presents threats.
Enacted Budget – School Aid

- $805 million (4.1%) total increase:
  - $752 million formula aid increase;
  - $50 million in competitive grants ($200 million less than Governor proposed);
  - $3 million in miscellaneous categorical programs.
- Expense-based & most other aids funded according to formulas in current law.
- Includes $221 million increase in general aid over Governor:
  - $110 million additional GEA reduction;
  - $111 million Foundation Aid increase;
  - Total general aid increase = $511 million.
- Proposal to freeze data used in calculations rejected.
- Governor held to scheduled $805 million increase – in his proposed budget and in final negotiations with the Assembly and Senate.
**Tax cap led to lower school spending and taxes, but does not seem to have changed who came out to vote**

**STATEWIDE SCHOOL BUDGET OUTCOMES**
Pass Rates and Yes and No Votes

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Statewide average proposed tax increase: 8.2% 8.7% 7.5% 6.1% 4.3% 3.7% 2.1% 3.2% 3.4% 2.2%

**Two big projects...**

- **Mandate Relief & State Mandate Relief Council**
  - Little action of consequence so far.
  - Council is comprised entirely of state officials – a good thing.
  - Can over-rule agency decisions on local flexibility requests, as well as propose statewide changes.

- **Governor’s Education Reform Commission**
  - 25 members, limited representation of public school educators and leaders; heavy on NYC perspective.
  - No independent, full-time staff.
  - Preliminary report due by December 1, 2012.

- **Both raise expectations for state leaders...**
Its been a successful session

1. Allows BOCES to contract out of state (A10205/S7120) – Chaptered
2. Removes the automatic requirement of an additional parent for CSE meetings (A7216/S5510) – Chaptered
3. Allows for cooperative purchasing and piggybacking on contracts (A8034/S5525) – Chaptered
4. Allows electronic IEPs (A7823/S5508) – Chaptered
5. Allows continued use of lever voting machines for schools (A9727/S6296) – passed both houses
6. Allows BOCES to contract with public libraries (A10147/S7014) – Chaptered
7. Allows districts to hold conference days in the last two weeks in August (A10233/S7718) – Chaptered
8. Evaluation privacy (A10786/S7792) – Chaptered
9. Requires Districts to consider the child’s home environment and family background in determining placements into special education (A10722/S7722) - Vetoed
10. Gives employees in the labor and noncompetitive classes the right to be excessed and rehired by seniority (A.8291/S5711) - Vetoed

Rhetoric & Reality

“There are statistics that New York State is 1st in per pupil spending, 39th in performance – measured by high school graduation rate.”

• Overlooks simple facts.
  • New York is high spending in everything, not just education.
  • New York expects more of graduates than most other states.

• Oversimplifies complex facts.
Costs

- New York is high cost in everything, not just education.
  - For example, NYS typically ranks between 1st and 3rd among states in average weekly wages for all workers.

- New York has among the widest gaps in per pupil spending between high and low poverty districts.

- Important to consider why New York is high spending in education –
  - State policies or local choices?
  - What budget categories drive our high spending?

Performance

- New York has had higher expectations than other states – an early leader in standards and assessments (Education Week’s “Quality Counts” reports); 1 of only 9 states to require passage of more than 3 exit exams.

- New York is hugely diverse – home to some of the nation’s best public schools:
  - 20 of the top 100 high schools in U.S. News and World Report’s rankings
  - 2nd among states in % of high school graduates scoring 3 or higher on an AP exam.

- But we have problems: A break-down of how New York ranks in high school graduation rates:
  - 12th for white students
  - 44th for African-American students
  - 45th for Hispanic students
An unproductive debate

What we can agree on is more important:
• We want to do better, we need to do better.

A better debate:
• How do we produce the learning our students need, with the resources our taxpayers can afford?

Governor’s Reform Commission should be the venue and vehicle for this debate.

APPR and Common Core

• APPR dates to remember
  • July 1, 2012 or as soon as practicable
  • Mid-October
  • January 17, 2013

• APPR Lead Evaluator Certification
• Disclosure
• Engage NY - http://engageny.org/
• Common Core/PARCC
  • 2012-2013 → 3-8 ELA Aligned to Common Core
  • 2013-2014 → Regents exams aligned to Common Core
  • 2014-2015 → 3-8 ELA PARCC
Federal Issue of the day - Sequestration

- Stems from Debt Ceiling Debate which resulted in Budget Control Act
  - 12 member committee tasked with $1.2 trillion in cuts/savings over 10 years
  - Failed to produce plan, triggering sequestration

- Sequestration - automatic, across-the-board cuts on January 2, 2013
  - Impacts almost all aspects of federal budget; ALL programs in DOE except Pell
  - Initial estimates placed sequestration cuts at 7.8%; more likely to be at 9.1%

- Cuts to USED will be between $3.5 and $4.1 billion
  - Estimated Education Impact at 7.8% level:
    - Title I: $1.1 billion
    - IDEA $978 million
    - Perkins:$136 million
    - Head Start: $590 million

- Good news – because of advocacy 2012-2013 school year will NOT be effected mid-year (January) unless you receive Impact Aid

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Lets talk about Advocacy ...

- What does it mean to advocate and lobby?
- Where do I get involved?
- When should I advocate?
- Who do I talk to?
- How do I advocate effectively?
- Why is it important that I advocate?
Where do I get involved?

- Begin “at home” in your own schools
  - Talk to parents and the community
  - Inform teachers and their representatives
  - Brief local media and business partners
- Continue “on the hill”
  - Discuss issues with your local governments
  - Communicate with your elected officials in Albany
  - Reach out to the Regents and SED staff
  - Speak with your Federal team

How do I effectively advocate?

A – Administrative rules & procedures
D – Direct
V – Vocal
O – Observant
C – Communicate
A – Allies and Partners
T – Teachers
E – Engage
Why should I advocate?
Because its ...
Your Schools
Your Dollars
Your Job
Your Kids
And Their Future

Your Advocacy Checklist

In your schools
• Graduations
• Football Games, etc.
• Read to Students
• Open House
• Science Fair
• Superintendent for the day
• Principal for the day
• Watch and sit in on classes
• Lunch with a legislator
• Student of the Month
• Student government projects
• Mock Trials
• Policy classes

Communications
• Newsletters
• PTA Mailings
• School Calendars
• Email Communications
• Holiday Cards
• Birthday Cards
• Facebook
• Twitter
• LinkedIn

In Albany and DO
• Lobby Day
• Hearings
• Meetings in Albany
• Pull off floor
• Meetings in DO
• Letters to DO
• Staff names
• Legislative Breakfasts
• Budget Analysis
• Council communications
• Memos with notes
• Education Blog
NEW YORK STATE
COUNCIL OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
7 Elk Street, 3rd Floor
Albany, NY 12207
(518)449-1063
www.nyscoss.org

Check us out on Facebook and Twitter!
WHAT IS IT?

- **New York State Mandates**
  
  New York schools provide vital programs and services to students and families throughout the state. State legislators and the Board of Regents often prescribe how these services should or can be provided through the passage of laws, regulations and guidelines, generally referred to as “mandates.”

  Mandates are designed to help students by requiring greater accountability, by improving the quality of education and/or the educational environment, and by serving the interests of all students or specific student populations. Here are just a few examples:

  - Grades 3-8 and Regents exam testing, scoring, analysis and mailings to parents
  - Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teachers and principals
  - Common Core Standards adoption, implementation and curriculum realignment
  - Special education mandates
  - Internal and external audit requirements
  - Maintenance of a physical and dental health record for every student
  - Fingerprinting of potential employees, consultants and contractors
  - Numerous plans and reports for the state Education Department

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **Mandates**
  
  For decades, school and state leaders have discussed, researched and reported on how to reduce mandates on school districts and subsequently reduce taxes.

  Almost every report released on the topic has outlined a series of recommendations on how to achieve mandate relief, but very few of the proposals have actually been enacted.

  In fact, the Legislature, governor, Board of Regents and the federal government regularly enact new mandates that districts must follow.

- **Costs**
  
  New mandates often come unfunded or underfunded, meaning districts must reduce non-mandated programs and services or pass on the cost to local taxpayers.

  Of the 151 mandates that “represent the greatest challenges to districts in terms of financial burden and required time,” 69 percent came with no funding.

  (source: www.p12.nysed.gov/fmis/mandaterelief)

- **The Problem**
  
  Rising costs to meet state mandates are forcing school districts to make devastating cuts to programs and services for all students in order to stay within the new tax levy limit.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

As school costs rise to unsustainable levels, local community members must speak up on behalf of their students now or risk losing the high level of local public education that they’ve come to expect. Below are three easy ways you can help:

#1 Learn about state mandates and how they affect your school district – fiscally and in relation to programs/services.

#2 Write letters to your legislators.

#3 Meet face to face with your legislators.
WHAT IS IT?

- **Federal IDEA**
  The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has helped ensure children with disabilities receive appropriate early intervention and special education services since its passage in 1974.

- **New York State Mandates for Special Education**
  New York created additional mandates meant to provide special education students with meaningful access to general education curriculum and to appropriate, high quality instruction and support services.

  Examples of state and federal requirements include:
  - Individualized education plans, 504 plans
  - Behavioral intervention plans
  - Specialized instruction by certified professionals, related service providers
  - A Committee on Special Education, a Committee on Preschool Special Education and a district chairperson
  - Special education services to home schooled students and those enrolled in private/charter schools
  - Transportation to out-of-district programs up to 50 miles away

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **Mandates**
  New York currently has 227 distinct special education mandates above and beyond those required by federal law.

- **Costs**
  New York ranks first in the nation for per-pupil instructional expenses. Special education accounted for 27 percent of all instructional expenses in 2009-10, but only 13 percent of all students were in special education programs. That year, the state average for instructional expenditures was $26,888 per special education student and $11,105 per general education student.

  State special education mandates are estimated to increase public education costs by as much as $1.3 billion annually.

- **Results**
  There is disagreement in the education field, as well as in the public and government sectors, as to whether this investment has demonstrated a corresponding improvement in students’ educational outcomes.

- **The Problem**
  Rising costs to meet state mandates are forcing school districts to make devastating cuts to programs and services for all students in order to stay within the new tax levy limit.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

As school costs rise to unsustainable levels, local community members must speak up on behalf of their students now or risk losing the high level of local public education that they’ve come to expect. Below are three easy ways you can help:

#1 Learn about special education mandates and how they affect your school district.

#2 Write letters to your legislators.

#3 Meet face to face with your legislators.
Advocacy Skills Information

Sequestration of School Aid

WHAT IS IT?
Simply put, sequestration is the cancellation of previously approved spending.

► At the Federal Level
A law passed by Congress and signed by the president in August 2011 created a Congressional supercommittee to deal with the federal budget deficit and pass a package of spending cuts by that Thanksgiving. The law contained the threat of across-the-board cuts (sequestration) if the deadline arrived without a deal. Congress failed to reach agreement, thus triggering sequestration in January 2013.

► At the State Level
Many recent proposals and/or laws have the effect of sequestration on New York State education aid:

- To fill the gap between state revenues and expenses in recent years, state budget shortfalls were borne in part by school districts via a Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)—money deducted from the state aid due to districts under the Foundation Aid Formula.
- Districts that do not have state Education Department-approved annual professional performance review (APPR) plans in place by January 2013 risk losing their 2012-13 state aid increases.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

► Costs
If sequestration takes effect as scheduled in January 2013, federal education spending will be cut by 8.4 percent in July 2013, according to the most recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP). This will amount to about $4 billion in cuts:

- Title I will be cut by $1.2 billion.
- IDEA will be cut by just under $1 billion.
- Teacher Quality State grants will be cut by $200 million.
- Career, technical and adult education will be cut by $146 million.

► Effects
The sequester calculations will consider the advanced portion of fiscal year 2012 and the regular fiscal year 2013 appropriations, but cuts will not be made until July 2013. Proposals to replace sequestration with even larger cuts in 2013 and beyond are being considered in both the House and Senate right now.

► The Problem
Congress is set to take back about $4 billion in federal education funds in July 2013. Without a repeal or alternative legislation, up to 7.5 million students will have their educational services curtailed in some way and approximately 90,000 educators stand to lose their jobs across the United States.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?
Congressional leaders need to know that educators and school board members expect them to come up with an alternative to sequestration before January. Below are three easy ways you can help:

#1 Know how much your district receives in federal dollars (Title I, IDEA and others), and meet some of your students and staff members affected by this funding.

#2 Write letters to your legislators.

#3 Meet face to face with your legislators.
WHAT IS IT?

- **Health Benefits**
  - A school district’s expenses for employees’ health insurance benefits are based on the total dollar cost of health insurance premiums and the district’s contractual obligations to employees in terms of covering a portion of that cost.
  
  A school district and its employee bargaining units negotiate health insurance contribution rates as part of contract discussions in accordance with the 1967 Public Employees Fair Employment Act, known as the Taylor Law.

- **Retirement Benefits** *(i.e., pension systems)*
  - School employees outside of New York City generally belong to one of two public pension systems – the New York State Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and the NYS Employee Retirement System (ERS).
  
  Revenue for the systems comes from: employee contributions (fixed), employer contributions (set by state) and investment returns on the contributions (based on stock market).

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- **Mandates**
  - Under current state law:
    - **Health benefits** previously agreed to in a contract with employee bargaining units can only be altered through the negotiation process. There is currently no minimum or maximum state standard for employee or employer health insurance contribution rates.
    - Employees’ contributions to the **pension system** are fixed. The state funds its pension system, so employers must make up for any losses in the pension system that result from stock market fluctuations.

- **Costs**
  - Across NYS, school districts’ expenses for employees’ health benefits vary widely, but:
    - On average, districts contributed 89 percent toward the cost of individual plans and 87.5 percent towards the cost of family plans in 2010-11. *(source: NYS School Boards Association survey)*
    - The national average for employer contributions was 81 percent for single coverage and 70 percent for family coverage in 2010. *(source: Kaiser Family Foundation)*

  Districts’ expenses for retirement benefits are steadily rising. For example, TRS employer contribution rates rose from 7.63 percent in 2008-09 to 11.84 percent in 2012-13. Meanwhile, ERS rates rose from 8.5 percent to 18.9 percent.

- **The Problem**
  - Rising costs for health and retirement benefits are forcing school districts to make devastating cuts to programs and services in order to stay within the new tax levy limit.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

As school costs rise to unsustainable levels, local community members must speak up on behalf of their students now or risk losing the high level of local public education that they’ve come to expect. Below are three easy ways you can help:

- **#1** Learn about employee health benefits, retirement benefits and how they affect your school district.
- **#2** Write letters to your legislators.
- **#3** Meet face to face with your legislators.
Community Forums/Conversations

WHAT IS IT?

- **Community Forums**
  
  Community forums, also known as community conversations, are meant to improve the civic capacity for public problem solving. They can help school districts build informed consent for important projects, proposals and initiatives. This helps school districts avoid gridlock on key issues.

  These forums often involve:
  
  - A brief opening presentation.
  - Small-group discussions by a diverse cross-section of stakeholders.
  - Discussion questions that can elicit useful feedback for a Board of Education.
  - Discussion materials that introduce participants to the fundamentals of an issue and help them weigh alternative solutions.
  - Non-partisan facilitators/recorders to collect participants’ feedback.
  - Thoughtful, consistent follow-up from the district after the forum so participants know their feedback was of use.

  Forums give school leaders an opportunity to listen to their community and to use public input to constructively solve challenges facing public education today and in the future.

WHAT DOES IT MATTER?

- **Problem**
  
  School districts across New York are making devastating cuts to educational programs and services as they adjust to rising costs that are outpacing revenue.

  The voices of lobbyists for state-level education groups simply are not enough, as recent legislative sessions have shown. More of a grassroots voice is necessary in order for the concerns of schools to be heard in Albany.

  Community members must speak up on behalf of their students now or risk losing the high level of local public education that they’ve come to expect.

- **Solution**
  
  School districts must find new and creative ways to get community members to become more active advocates on behalf of their schools, even if they don’t all agree on the issues. Community forums can help achieve this goal by giving school district leaders the opportunity to:

  - Inform the community about specific advocacy issues (e.g., mandates, state/federal budget reductions).
  - Involve the community in efforts to prioritize the issues requiring active advocacy.
  - Showing the community fast and easy ways to help with the advocacy effort, and
  - Helping the community understand why their involvement is essential to student achievement.

WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

School districts throughout the Capital Region are exploring the value of community forums in developing informed consent for important educational initiatives. Tap into that power to address school advocacy issues by:

- **#1 Learning the basic principles of effective community forums.**
- **#2 Planning a community forum based on ‘best practices’ as well as local needs.**
- **#3 Keeping it simple: Focus only on a few key advocacy issues at each community forum.**
WHAT IS IT?
The legislative visit is a valuable opportunity to connect with your representatives and put a local “face” onto important legislation. As an advocate for schools, how you say something can be just as important as what you say during a legislative visit.

Using an “Elevator Pitch”
An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech used to spark interest in your organization. Your pitch should be interesting, memorable and succinct. It also needs to explain what makes your local school district and its students unique.

Ask yourself this question: What do you want your legislator to remember most about your school district?
Keep in mind that your pitch should excite you first—if you don’t get excited about the important work you’re doing in your schools, neither will your audience. Legislators may not remember everything you say, but they will likely remember your enthusiasm.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Problem
Legislative visits are an important part of advocating for a school district. But many people feel apprehensive about advocacy or don’t know how to make the most of the few minutes they have with a legislator, so they leave such visits feeling discouraged.

First – Identify Your Goals
Preparing for a legislative visit begins with thinking about your goals. What do you want to tell the legislators about your district? Are you asking them to support or oppose a specific bill? Educating them on a broader issue? Thanking them for their leadership in passing legislation?

Second – Explain What You Do
At the visit, start your quick, compelling pitch by describing what your teachers, students and staff do. Focus on the problems you solve and how your district helps prepare students for life. If you can, add information or a statistic that shows the value of what your district does and its unique approach to learning.

Third – Get to the Facts
Be direct about the action you’d like legislators to take. Reference specific bill numbers. Talk about the effects of the legislation under consideration, both positive and negative, using real life examples. Leave a fact sheet behind with the legislators or the legislators’ aides.

WHAT CAN I DO?
Being prepared to make a quick, compelling pitch can greatly increase the efficacy of your legislative visit. Below are three easy steps you can take:

#1 Create your pitch to be succinct, specific and unique to your district. Practice delivering it.

#2 Meet face to face with your legislators.

#3 Leave additional information with office staff when you leave, and follow up after the visit to answer any questions.
Empowering all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.
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What is an Active Advocate?

Challenge…
A newspaper quotes a local legislator as saying that New York schools consistently underperform in academics compared to other states.

A community member who actively advocates…
might call the legislator’s office to arrange a meeting to discuss the high level of academic performance in local schools.

A community member who doesn’t actively advocate…
might attend school board meetings and be supportive of other individuals’ or groups’ advocacy efforts, but not personally take any steps to correct the legislator’s misconception.

Your voice could make the difference!

School districts across New York are making devastating cuts to educational programs as they adjust to rising costs that are outpacing revenue. Queensbury Union Free School District is no exception: The latest budget reduced classes at the middle school and high school, and services for students at all grade levels. After reducing the increase in annual expenses by more than $6 million over the last four years, ‘doing more with less’ has become an overused phrase – and an increasingly difficult philosophy – in Queensbury.

Without some relief at the state level, this district will simply have to do less with less.

Doing less with less is not a viable option, though. Today’s students must meet higher academic standards than those for any previous generation. They must graduate college- and career-ready so they can successfully compete in an increasingly competitive, challenging and diverse job market. They must master core subjects such as English and math, soft skills such as collaboration and critical thinking, and technological skills such as digital communication and literacy.

Local community members must speak up on behalf of Queensbury students now or risk losing the high level of local public education that they’ve come to expect. The voices of lobbyists for state-level education groups simply are not enough, as recent legislative sessions have shown. More of a grassroots voice is necessary in order for the concerns of schools to be heard in Albany.

This advocacy tool kit is designed to help Queensbury residents more effectively advocate on behalf of their school district.

Advocacy takes many forms. It could be a letter 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 chatting with neighbors to clear up misunderstandings about education issues. It could be sharing education-related stories with a local civic organization during monthly meetings.

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

Thank you for taking the time to advocate on behalf of the children in Queensbury and for helping ensure that they continue to receive the high-quality education they deserve.

Remember: Advocacy is about giving a voice to the issues, people and principles you care about.
How can I help Queensbury students?

Concerned citizens at forums and public meetings often wonder what they can do to help Queensbury students. The answer: Complete one or more of the items on the Advocacy Checklist below. Then encourage friends and family to do the same.

*It’s that simple.*

Advocacy Checklist

- **Empower yourself**
  - Choose an issue affecting Queensbury schools and learn about that issue.
  - Hone and deliver a “laser talk”—a short, one-to-two-minute, focused message—to someone about the issue you chose (see Action Step #2).

- **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.
  - Ask questions at town hall meetings hosted by local legislators.
  - Invite local legislators to visit Queensbury schools for special events.
  - Ask local legislators to agree to take a leadership role on your selected issue.

- **Advocate in the community**
  - Host a discussion about your selected issue at a local business in your community.
  - Organize a letter-writing campaign.
  - 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’re 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 the school district website, www.queensburyschool.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.

- **Advocate through the media**
  - Write a letter to a newspaper editor and send your published letter to local legislators.
  - Meet face to face with the editorial board of your local paper.
  - Copy editorials or newspaper articles about your selected issue and send them to local legislators.
How do I contact legislators?

Building strong relationships takes time, especially with legislators. Legislators often represent a large geographical area and face a variety of special-interest groups who compete for their time and attention.

So when it comes to advocating for schools with local legislators, make building that relationship a year-round effort, but keep in mind the key dates for state decision makers.

State legislators face a general election on Nov. 6, 2012, and they have until April 1, 2013, to come up with an on-time state budget. In the meantime, begin building relationships with local legislators now by taking some or all of the following five steps to becoming a more effective advocate.

Take Action

- **Action Step 1:** Learn about the issues affecting Queensbury Union Free School District.
- **Action Step 2:** Develop and test your “laser talk.”
- **Action Step 3:** Write letters to your legislators.
- **Action Step 4:** Develop a relationship with the aides in your legislators’ offices.
- **Action Step 5:** Meet face to face with your legislators.

Key New York State Legislators for Education Issues (as of 11/6/12)

- **NYS Senator Betty Little**  
  45th Senate District – District Office  
  5 Warren St., Ste. 3, Glens Falls, NY 12801  
  (518) 743-0968  
  Email: little@nysenate.gov

- **NYS Assemblyman Dan Stec**  
  114th Assembly District – District Office  
  140 Glen St., Glens Falls, NY 12801  
  (518) 761-8229 (through 2012)  
  Email: dans@queensbury.net (through 2012)

- **Chair of the NYS Senate Education Committee:**  
  Senator John J. Flanagan  
  Room 805 LOB, Albany, NY 12247  
  (518) 455-2071  
  Email: Flanagan@senate.state.ny.us

- **Chair of the NYS Assembly Education Committee:**  
  Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan  
  Room 836 LOB, Albany, NY 12248  
  (518) 455-4851  
  Email: nolanc@assembly.state.ny.us

- **NYS Senate Majority Leader:**  
  Senator Dean G. Skelos  
  Room 909 LOB, Albany, NY 12247  
  (518) 455-3171  
  Email: skelos@sentate.state.ny.us

- **NYS Assembly Speaker:**  
  Assemblyman Sheldon Silver  
  Room 932 LOB, Albany, NY 12248  
  (518) 455-3791  
  Email: speaker@assembly.state.ny.us

- **Governor Andrew M. Cuomo**  
  State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224  
  (518) 474-8390  
  Email online: Visit www.ny.gov/governor and click “contact.”
How can I have a good discussion with a legislator?

This guide is designed to help you prepare for successful interactions with local legislators. The goal is to enable you to have productive, back-and-forth discussions whether or not you and the legislators agree on the issues.

In general:

Be brief. Stick to your key points, and legislators will appreciate your respect for their busy schedules.

Be respectful, but also assertive and direct. A thoughtful discussion gives both sides an opportunity to come to an agreement, while a divisive argument makes both sides just want to win. So keep it civil while standing up for your beliefs.

Be clear and specific. Let legislators know exactly what you want them to do (e.g., vote in favor of a bill, sponsor legislation) in a way that requires them to give you a “yes” or “no” response.

Be accurate. Research your issue so you can answer legislators’ questions, and promise to follow up on any question for which you don’t immediately have an answer.

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 and facts.

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 them, too.

Following are some tips on how to address negative responses from a legislator, based in part on materials developed by the Statewide School Finance Consortium.

› Your legislator says: “That’s a non-starter.”

You might say…

This mandate may be difficult to address, but solving the problems it creates is critically important to local students’ educational quality. For their sake, as well as for the vitality of our entire community, we must work together to tackle even the “non-starter” issues. Schools are being asked to increase their performance every day, but this will become more and more difficult until the Legislature provides some significant mandate relief.

› Your legislator says: “This is divisive.”

You might say…

Any call for change is inherently divisive, but that doesn’t make it any less necessary. Current education policies, regulations and laws are beginning to strangle our school district. Others have expressed similar concerns, but the Legislature has yet to achieve anything of real substance in response to our requests for the systemic, long-term and sustainable relief that school districts need. Continuing this gross unfairness jeopardizes the future of our students, our schools and our community. We need your leadership in fighting for change to keep our school district from facing educational and fiscal insolvency.
Your legislator says:  
“Asking for a redistribution of state aid is class warfare.”

*You might say…*

Asking for a fair distribution of state aid among schools is not class warfare; it’s about upholding our state constitution, which guarantees all children a sound, basic education – no matter where they live. Upstate school districts are seeing a proportionally larger cut to their state aid than downstate districts, and their communities are less likely to be able to make up for those cuts with local tax dollars. Until the state fully honors its obligations under the Foundation Aid Formula – without hidden “gap elimination” cuts to balance the state budget – our school district will be forced to reduce its programs and services much more significantly than any of the wealthier downstate districts.

Your legislator says:  
“What if what you’re asking for means creating even more mandates?”

*You might say…*

Then the focus should be on creating mandates that come with full funding or with relief from the cost of current mandates. The fact is that many current mandates hinder efficiency, productivity and effectiveness—both educationally and financially. While mandates are designed to help students, too often they focus on lower priority areas for our community and drive budget increases that require cuts to programs and services in our higher priority areas.

Your legislator says:  
“The school districts just need to merge to solve these problems.”

*You might say…*

Many school districts in New York are researching the possibilities associated with mergers or regional districts. Their ultimate decisions rely heavily on whether or not such a change is actually cost effective for all involved. As you probably know, it’s typically a multi-year process that ultimately requires community support, which isn’t always forthcoming. In the meantime, those districts’ expenses will continue to rise without some immediate, significant mandate relief from the Legislature.

Your legislator says:  
“The pension system can’t be touched.”

*You might say…*

Dramatic increases in pension costs simply don’t help students learn, and that’s why relief in this area is absolutely necessary. Recent efforts to reform the pension system with Tiers V and VI for new employees will help slow down the increase in costs, but they affect a very tiny pool of employees because lately most districts have had to reduce, not add staff. We need pension reform that has an immediate and positive impact. Further reforming the pension system would help reign in what have become unsustainable costs under the new tax levy limit.

Your legislator says:  
“I can’t do that. I represent everyone.”

*You might say…*

Of course, you certainly do represent all of your constituents’ interests. Queensbury schools enroll 3,600 students, and every one of those students has parents, grandparents and other family members or guardians who may be your potential voters. So, representing everyone means representing us and our interests, too.

Your legislator says:  
“I have your best interests at heart.”

*You might say…*

I’m sure that you do, and now you can demonstrate that by helping us secure more significant mandate relief for our schools.

Continued
Your legislator says: “Give me some language, and I’ll sponsor a bill.”

You might say…

For years, education organizations across the state have discussed with legislators and outlined in written communications the reforms necessary to make state mandates, the Foundation Aid Formula and the Gap Elimination Adjustment calculations more equitable. Organizations like the New York State School Boards Association, the state Council of School Superintendents and the Statewide School Finance Consortium have also provided in-depth data to back up their concerns—and yet, the inequities have continued to exist.

Both the Senate and Assembly have staff members dedicated solely to writing legislation upon request. It’s time to use these resources to work together with school groups on legislation to address the concerns we have defined for you today.

Your legislator says: “You can’t just throw money at the problem. We’re out of money!”

You might say…

Schools are being asked to operate more efficiently, but the state government needs to operate more efficiently, too. Improve how you distribute the money you’re already spending so that all students across the state can continue to receive the sound, basic education that is guaranteed to them in the state constitution. Eliminate excessive and ineffective mandates so the funds now dedicated to meeting them can be better spent on mandates that will truly help our high school graduates be college and career ready.

Your legislator says: “You can make data say anything.”

You might say…

That’s why it’s important to understand where the data came from and how it was interpreted. For example, the governor said that New York schools ranked 38th in graduation rates, but Education Week’s Quality Counts 2012 report found our public schools rank third in the nation. Queensbury ranks among the top school districts in the region for academic performance, and we received national recognition for delivering a high return on taxpayers’ investment from the Center for American Progress in 2011.

Your legislator says: “There’s nothing I can do. Long Island has a lock on the legislation.”

You might say…

There is absolutely something you can do, and we are here to work with you to help make that happen. You can sponsor or support legislation. You can talk to your fellow legislators and the media. As your constituents, we want to support your efforts to give our schools a voice in Albany.

Your legislator says: “Thank you, we’ll be in touch.”

You might say…

We’re glad to hear that. We’ll contact you again soon so you can update us on your progress and so we can provide you with any additional information that you need to support your efforts. We need you to make progress because if you don’t, our students face the eventual demise of their high-quality educational programs. Losing those programs would mean our community would face further erosion of its tax base as families and businesses moved away.
Advocacy Action Step #1

Learn about the issues affecting Queensbury Union Free School District.

The state and federal governments and the Board of Regents regularly create laws and regulations—known as mandates—that provide schools with guidance on daily operations. These mandates often do not come fully funded, but a district that doesn’t adhere to them can lose money through lawsuits and the withdrawal of other aid funds. **Mandates contribute significantly to a district’s annual budget expenses, and relief from such mandates could help decrease or at least drive down the increase in those expenses.**

In the Queensbury Union Free School District, the majority of district expenditures are either directly or indirectly related to meeting mandates. For example, consider the state mandate requiring schools to provide academic intervention services to students who struggle to meet certain educational benchmarks. One direct cost of that mandate is the cost to employ an AIS teacher. Some indirect costs include: an assessment tool to diagnose a student’s deficiency; staff time to analyze the assessment results, come up with strategies to address the deficiency and monitor the student’s progress; a database to track the student’s performance; and more staff time to manage the database.

**In 1991, the state Education Department estimated as much as 76 percent of a typical school district expenditure is a result of directly or indirectly mandated matters.**

New York schools are subject to several hundred mandates (see www.queensburyschool.org/District/budget/mandate.htm).

Following are three mandate-related issues for which Queensbury students and schools could use more passionate, active advocates.

- **Health Insurance Costs**
  
  **Challenge:** Queensbury schools expect to see a 12 percent or approximately $950,000 increase in health insurance premiums for the 2012-13 school year. This increase is attributable both to rising health care costs and to contractual obligations.

  **Solution:** While the actual cost of health care is relatively independent of the Legislature, local legislators could offer mandate relief for contractual obligations related to employers’ health care contributions.

  **Background:** District expenses for health insurance benefits are based on the total dollar cost of insurance premiums and its contractual obligations to employees in terms of covering a portion of that cost.

  The district participates in a BOCES health care consortium that allows it to negotiate as part of a larger group for more cost-effective health benefits. This is meant to keep insurance premiums lower than what the district could secure independently. In 2011-12, the district saw no increase in its premiums in part because the consortium used a large portion of its annual dividends to lower the cost and the previous year had seen very few major health claims. The jump for 2012-13 is partly the result of now having fewer dividends to offset rising costs.

  The district and its employee bargaining units negotiate health insurance contribution rates as part of contract discussions, in accordance with the Taylor Law. Recent employee contract negotiations:

  - Helped switch most employees from a more expensive matrix health plan to a less expensive PPO plan comparable in services.

Continued
In 2010, 70 percent of employees had matrix coverage, but that is now down to only 3 percent.

- Led to employees’ agreement to increase their contribution rate by 1 percent in 2011-12, from 11 percent to 12 percent.
- Administrators recently agreed to increase their contribution rate to 15 percent in 2012-13 and 17 percent in 2013-14. Administrators hired after July 1, 2012, will contribute 20 percent.

These changes have helped slow the increase in the district’s health care costs, but those costs are still increasing more than any savings achieved through negotiations.

The average, qualifying active school district employee currently enrolled in a PPO plan contributes 12 percent to the cost of an individual or family health insurance premium, while the district contributes 88 percent. Employees on the more expensive matrix plan contribute 25.5 percent, and retired employees contribute 35 percent.

In its 2011 “Essential Fiscal Reform Playbook,” the New York State School Boards Association said:

“Putting in place a statewide maximum employer contribution rate of 85 percent for individual coverage and 75 percent for family coverage would set the floor for negotiations… It would also bring New York schools closer to the national average for employer contributions in all industries of 81 percent for single coverage and 70 percent for family coverage, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation.”

Retirement Systems Costs

Challenge:

For the 2012-13 school year, the district will contribute nearly $3 million toward employees’ pensions. That is an increase of nearly $1.5 million – despite a loss of 75 staff positions – since 2009-10. Rising mandated and contractual expenses, relatively flat or declining state/federal aid, declining fund balance and reserve funds, and restrictions on local revenue under the tax levy limit will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the district to continue to absorb such increases in pension costs without further reducing positions and programs.

Solution:

Make the pension system more predictable and affordable for employers.

Background:

School employees outside of New York City generally belong to one of two public pension systems – the New York State Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and the NYS Employee Retirement System (ERS).

These pension systems have three sources of revenue: employee contributions (fixed), employer contributions (set by the state) and investment returns on these contributions (based on the stock market).

- **Employee contributions** are based on the date of employment. Employees hired before July 1976 were not required to contribute. Those hired since then have to contribute 3 percent of their salaries for at least a portion of their careers. As of April 2013, employees hired since April 2012 will contribute a percentage based on their wage for the duration of employment, with 3 percent the lowest (for those making $45,000/year or less) and 6 percent the highest (for those making more than $100,000/year).

- **Employer contributions** are determined by an accounting model that takes into account the future liabilities (pension payouts) of the system and the value of the fund. The state sets employer contribution levels each year in order to ensure that the systems are fully funded in relation to future obligations.

- **Investment returns** fluctuate with changes in the stock market. The economic slowdown in recent years drove investment returns down, and with employee contributions fixed, employer contributions had to rise dramatically to compensate for the stock market losses. This makes it very difficult for employers to predict and afford their future pension costs.
In its “2012 Position Statements,” the New York State School Boards Association said, “Employees and employers should have the ability to predict the cost of retirement benefits, resulting in a greater ability to make appropriate planning decisions… As stewards of public funds and public education, school districts must balance the need to sustain viable retirement benefits with the ability of a community to provide continued support of the educational program.”

**Special Education Costs**

**Challenge:**

In 2009-10, the district averaged $18,723 in instructional expenditures per special education student and $7,681 in instructional expenditures per general education student. The state average was $26,888 per special education student and $11,105 per general education student. (source: 2010-11 fiscal supplement, reportcards.nysed.gov) The cost difference between the two education groups reflects state special education mandates that go well beyond federal special education mandates.

**Solution:**

Reduce special education costs by eliminating state mandates that exceed federal mandates.

**Background:**

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act has helped ensure children with disabilities receive appropriate early intervention and special education services since its passage in 1974. Over the years, New York has added to this more than 200 of its own special education mandates (source: NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief).

Those mandates are estimated to increase public education costs by as much as $1.3 billion annually, without demonstrating a corresponding improvement in students’ educational outcomes. New York currently ranks first in the nation for per-pupil instructional expenses (source: www.census.gov).

Special education accounted for 27 percent of all instructional expenses in the state in 2009-10, but only 13 percent of all students were in special education programs (source: www.nysed.gov and www.cbcny.org).

A few examples of state special education mandates include requirements for: individualized education plans, specialized instruction by appropriately certified professionals and related service providers, a Committee on Special Education chairperson, 504 plans, providing special education services to home schooled students and those enrolled in private/charter schools, and transporting students with disabilities to out-of-district programs up to 50 miles away.

In its 2011 “Essential Fiscal Reform Playbook,” the New York State School Boards Association said, “New York State superimposes a host of duplicative and excessive procedures onto the fully-functioning federal IDEA requirements… NYSSBA has long recommended reforms to bring New York more into line with federal law… the state’s laws and regulations must be reviewed to determine their justification and viability, given the current fiscal conditions.”

**For More Information...**

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Advocacy Action Step #2

Develop and test your “laser talk.”

As an advocate for schools, how you say something can be just as important as what you say. Advocates can deliver their messages more effectively by telling gripping stories in brief presentations known as “laser talks.” These presentations zero in, with laser-like focus, on an issue.

Each laser talk has three sections. In the first section, you present a problem you want the person to know about. Then you inform the person about a solution to the problem. And finally, you present the person with a call to action.

\[P\] stands for Problem, 
\[S\] is for Solution, and 
\[A\] stands for call to Action.

Let's say you have the chance to speak with a member of the state Legislature or the Board of Regents at a meeting or to connect with a busy editorial writer on the telephone. They may have only a minute or two to listen to you. By using the PSA laser talk format, you'll be able to make the most of your opportunity.

- **Identify the Problem**
  
  In your laser talk, focus first on identifying a problem you want your listener to know about. Try to connect the problem to an issue the listener already cares about.

  For example, if you are speaking with your state senator, you might let him know you are scared about the type of school district that will remain if next year's school budget brings more reductions to programs and services.

  You might say:

  “I appreciate the support you’ve always given Queensbury schools, but I’m terrified of what will happen to them if the Legislature doesn’t do something about the rising costs of state mandates. The district has already cut back on some elective classes, enrichment programs, student services and 75 employees in the last four years, but expenses keep skyrocketing. Health insurance rates went up 12 percent this year, and retirement contributions are up 83 percent since 2009-10. Special education costs are also on the rise. So far, the district has been able to use its fund balance and reserves to make it through aid losses every year, but a continued increase in costs just isn't sustainable in the long run, especially under the new tax levy limit.”

- **Present a Solution**

  Next, inform the listener about a solution to the problem you just presented. Give examples of how the solution would work and why it would be effective. You might cite a recent study or use other credible statistics.

  Here’s an example:

  “There are several things the Legislature can do to help Queensbury and other...”
school districts like ours. For example, the Legislature could allow for the creation of regional or state-wide health insurance consortiums or set a maximum level for employer contributions. Another solution is to continue to reform the pension system to make retirement benefits more affordable for employers. A third solution is to reform any ineffective special education mandates.”

- **Issue a call to Action**

  The final section of the laser talk is the call to action. Calls to action should be concrete, specific and include a “yes” or “no” question. An example is the following request you might make of your legislator:

  “Can we count on you to sponsor or support legislation to allow for the creation of a regional or state-wide health insurance consortium and to reform the pension system and special education mandates?”

- **Squeeze in a personal story**

  In your laser talk, try to include a compelling, personal story that expands on the PSA messages and that captivates listeners. For instance, consider the following passage:

  “The local schools were one of the main reasons my family bought a home in this district. Our youngest son, Brian, starts kindergarten next year, and it saddens me to know how many classes, extracurriculars and enrichment programs his siblings had access to that Brian’s simply going to lose out on. That may not hurt him now, but it will when he graduates and has to compete with graduates from wealthier downstate schools for college slots and jobs.”

  Stories take something that’s abstract and impersonal, like a statistic, and turn it into something very intimate and emotional. A good story softens the listener and appeals to his or her humanity in a way that facts alone cannot. Compelling stories like the one above illustrate both the problems with inequitable school aid and unfunded or underfunded mandates as well as solutions to remedy those problems.

  Stories can be memorized, just like laser talks, or read aloud if they’re longer. Either way, it’s important to present stories in a natural, conversational style.

- **Practice makes perfect**

  Before you give a laser talk, it’s a good idea to practice it. Say it out loud to yourself and then to another person until you feel comfortable with it. Soon, you’ll be able to make the talk your own, using different sections as you need them and adapting them to different situations.

  Developing a good repertoire of laser talks to use when the time is right will help make you a powerful advocate.

- **Now it’s your turn**

  Sharp laser talks and compelling stories about real people can change hearts and minds and, ultimately, help bring about the changes that schools need legislators to make. Use the laser talk organizer on the next page to develop your own laser talk.
Laser Talk Worksheet

› **Topic:** ____________________________________________

   *What do you want to talk about?*

› **Target:** _____________________________________________

   *Who do you want to talk to?*

› **Identify the Problem:** __________________________________

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

› **Present a Solution:** __________________________________

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

› **Issue a Call to Action:** __________________________________

   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
Advocacy Action Step #3

Write letters to your legislators.

It’s your right to communicate your opinions and knowledge to the people who have been elected to represent you in state government. Legislators want to know what’s important to you, and they value your input. Sadly, they often report that their inaction on an issue is simply because not enough people spoke to them about it. So, remember your advocacy is not just permissible, it’s appreciated.

Using this tool kit, you’ve had a chance to familiarize yourself with the issues facing Queensbury schools. You’ve also practiced your main talking points. Now, it’s time to communicate your message in writing.

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:

- Include the same points that you refined in your PSA laser talk.
- Keep your letter short; a single page is best.
- Be concise and specific, but add a personal touch.

The letter should include the following parts: introduction, problem statement, proposed solution, conclusion and call to action (see examples at right).

Be sure to include all of your contact information (e.g., home address, phone number, e-mail address), so your legislator can reply to you.

When finished, the letter might be structured something like the example on page 14.

1. **Introduction**
   “Thank you for the time and effort you have invested in representing your constituents in the 21st congressional district. While Queensbury Union Free School District won’t shift to your district until January, this school community still urgently needs your help now. In the coming months, please work to rescind the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective on January 2, 2013.”

2. **Problem Statement**
   “If sequestration takes effect as scheduled... Queensbury schools would see a $100,800 cut in Title I, Title IIA and IDEA funding for the 2013-14 school year and a reduction in student support services in essential areas such as additional reading support.”

3. **Proposed Solution**
   “To date, we have been able to maintain our standing as one of the top districts in the Capital Region for academics. The time has come, though, when any additional aid losses will take essential opportunities away from students.”

4. **Conclusion and Call to Action**
   “The Queensbury community, its students and its schools need your help now to make sure that Congress rescinds the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act. Please speak with your fellow legislators and take the steps necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality education in New York.”
September 27, 2012

U.S. Congressman Bill Owens
Plattsburgh District Office
14 Durkee Street, Suite 320
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Dear Congressman Owens:

Thank you for the time and effort you have invested in representing your constituents in the 21st congressional district. While Queensbury Union Free School District won’t shift to your district until January, this school community still urgently needs your help now. In the coming months, please work to rescind the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective on January 2, 2013.

If sequestration takes effect as scheduled, federal education spending will be cut by 8.4 percent, or about $4 billion, in July 2013, according to the most recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Locally, Queensbury schools would see a $100,800 cut in Title I, Title IIA and IDEA funding for the 2013-14 school year and a reduction in student support services in essential areas such as additional reading support.

This district has reduced the increase in annual expenses by more than $6 million over the last four years, leading to a reduction in classes and student services, and to an increase in class sizes at certain grade levels. To date, we have been able to maintain our standing as one of the top districts in the Capital Region for academics. The time has come, though, when any additional aid losses will take essential opportunities away from students. Such a loss would negatively affect their ability to meet the Queensbury Board of Education’s high standards and goals as well as those of the Race to the Top program.

The Queensbury community, its students and its schools need your help now to make sure that Congress rescinds the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act. Please speak with your fellow legislators and take the steps necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality education in New York.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas W. Huntley
Superintendent of Schools

*Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.*

www.queensburyschool.org
Advocacy Action Step #4

Develop a relationship with the aides in your legislators’ offices.

Sometimes knowing a legislator’s aide can be just as valuable as knowing the legislator. Legislators’ aides often have a great deal of influence on the assemblymen and senators for whom they work. They also have more time to devote to your concerns than legislators, who may have to cancel scheduled meetings at the last minute to address legislative issues.

Aides work tirelessly to collect and filter the large amounts of information and requests that bombard legislators’ offices. Good advocates understand this and work to build great relationships with these essential staff members.

Here are some suggestions for building and maintaining strong relationships with them.

- **Learn about your legislators:**
  Their backgrounds, interests, aspirations and records of support for education issues. If you feel like you know a legislator at a personal level, you will feel more comfortable conversing with that legislator and his or her aides.

- **Call or visit your legislator’s local office.**
  It will be less hectic when the Legislature is not in session. Your first conversation with a legislator’s aide might go as follows:
  - Introduce yourself and identify yourself as a constituent.
  - Ask if the legislator’s aide has a few minutes to speak with you.
  - Focus only on one or two key issues.
  - Thank the aide for the work he/she does for the legislator, and acknowledge the legislator’s previous record of support for your issues (if applicable).
  - Deliver your PSA laser talk.
  - Ask if you can send additional information.
  - Let the aide know you will check back in a week to see how the legislator responded.
  - Thank the aide for his/her time.

- **Send a quick thank you note** – in print or via email – to the aide letting him/her know you appreciated the time he/she took to listen to your concerns.

- **When you check back after a week,** if the aide tells you the legislator will help, be sure to use some positive reinforcement. A nice note of thanks will go a long way! The legislator and his/her aide will remember your appreciation the next time you call.
Advocacy Action Step #5

Meet face to face with your legislators.

Ideally, your first meeting with a legislator should be before a problem arises. Take advantage of any public opportunities to meet legislators, such as meetings or special events. Introduce yourself as a constituent and establish a friendly rapport during whatever brief amount of time you have with the legislator.

Whether or not you’ve previously met a legislator, it is always ideal to schedule a personal meeting with your legislator in his or her local district office.

There are four steps to an effective visit with a legislator:

- **Schedule the meeting.**
- **Prepare for the meeting.**
- **Participate in the meeting.**
- **Follow up.**

### Schedule the meeting

Plan what you are going to say in advance so you feel more comfortable.

For example:

- **Hello, my name is ______________.**
- **I am a (parent, resident, teacher, student, etc.) in the Queensbury Union Free School District.**
- **I would like to meet with Senator/Assemblyman ____ to discuss mandate relief for local schools.**
- **Is there a time when the Senator/Assemblyman would be able to meet with me?**

Call your legislator’s local district office. Key legislators’ phone numbers are listed on page 3 of this advocacy tool kit.

Ask to speak with the person who manages the legislator’s calendar. If that person is unavailable or tells you they will have to get back to you, call back the next day. Keep calling until you get your meeting scheduled.

When you speak to the person who handles the legislator’s calendar, ask to have a face-to-face meeting with your legislator and follow the script you outlined in step one.

Thank the staff member for scheduling the meeting.

### Prepare for the meeting

Prior to the meeting, there are several things you can do to ensure that your meeting goes smoothly:

- **Reconfirm the meeting by phone a few days prior to the meeting.**
- **Decide whether you are going alone or with a group. If with a group, limit it to no more than three people and designate one person as the main speaker.**
- **Create an agenda for the meeting, just for you and your team (if applicable), so you know what is going to be said when and by whom.**
- **If you are going with a group of people, assign roles for the meeting:**
  - **Main speaker** – facilitates the conversation, provides the opening and closing statements, and works to keep the conversation on task and focused.
  - **Secretary** – takes notes during the meeting and records the legislator’s questions, objections, promises or concerns. Sends a “thank you” note as a follow up.
Participate in the meeting

Meetings should generally follow this format:

- **Introductions and acknowledgements**
- Introduce yourself and what you do in the community (e.g., parent, resident, student, teacher, school board member).
- Acknowledge the legislator’s public service, and thank him/her for any prior support for the school district.
- Let the legislator know why you requested the meeting and what you plan to discuss.
- **Deliver your laser talk:**
  - State the problem.
  - Provide a solution.
  - Issue a call to action.

Be sure to answer any questions your legislator may have and to promise to follow up if you don’t immediately have an answer available. Set a time line for follow up.

Provide any leave-behind materials, such as reports or statistics, that are relevant to your issue. Don’t forget to thank the legislator for his or her time.

Following are a few additional tips for how to have an effective meeting:

- **Be on time.** Legislators tend to have very full schedules and may not be available to meet if you arrive late.
- **Be concise.** Stick to your message, and expect no more than 15 minutes for your meeting.
- **Be flexible.** If your legislator is late or can’t attend because of pressing business in Albany, meet with the legislator’s aide and convey the same message you had planned to deliver to the legislator.
- **Be pleasant.** Niceness and a bit of humor can go a long way to making your visit memorable.
- **Be passionate, not emotional.** Emotional pleas often make others uncomfortable.
- **Be prepared.** Make sure you understand the arguments that people opposed to your issue might make and have talking points prepared to combat them.
- **Be personal – about your issue.** Speak with passion about local children, local jobs, the local economy, local taxes, etc.
- **Be appreciative.** Say “thank you” and be sure to thank the legislator’s staff when you leave the office, too.

Follow up

Building a relationship with a legislator is an ongoing process, so after your meeting:

- Send a “thank you” note to the legislator (or legislator’s aide if applicable) that reiterates your key points and your call to action.
- Share the feedback from your meeting with others who may be affected by the information.
- Continue to reach out to the legislator, whether through invitations to school events or by attending public meetings or political functions.
Advocacy Tool Kit
FALL 2012

Empowering all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.

Queensbury
UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
Local Legislator Profiles

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES TO AID COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

*Profile information collected comes primarily from legislators’ own Web sites, but also from reported news stories and TV interviews.
Profile information collected comes primarily from legislators’ own Web sites, but also from reported news stories and TV interviews.
Legislator Profiles

N.Y.S. Senator
Elizabeth “Betty”
Little (R)

District Office:
45th Senate District Office
5 Warren Street, Suite 3
Glens Falls, NY 12801

Phone: (518) 743-0968

Email address: little@nysenate.gov

Email online: http://www.nysenate.gov/Sen./elizabeth-little/contact

Legislative Positions:
• State Senator, 45th Senate District
• Member, Mandate Relief Council

Legislative Committees:
• Civil Service and Pensions
• Consumer Protection
• Crime Victims, Crime and Correction
• Chair Person, Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation
• Environmental Conservation
• Finance
• Judiciary
• Local Government
• State-Native American Relations

Sample Statements Related to Education:
• Re: the tax levy limit, “We need to give counties and towns and school districts flexibility.”

Recent Legislation Related to Education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S7722A: Requires schools to consider the family background of special edu. students for placement</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Vetoed 7/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S694: Makes selling or possessing fake pot brands illegal (co-sponsor)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Referred Health Com. 4/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S340-2011: Authorizes BOCES to engage in collective bargaining with component district employees (sponsor)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Referred Edu. Com. 1/12, 1/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S208: Implements the Education, Labor and Family Assistance Budget</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 3/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2707: Requires state to fund certain programs mandated for school districts</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Referred Finance Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information (from her website):

Sen. Betty Little is serving her fifth term representing the residents of the 45th Senate District, which comprises Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Warren and Washington Counties. Always accessible and willing to listen, Little has developed a reputation as a persistent and effective advocate for her constituents.

Prior to first winning election to the New York State Senate in November 2002, Little served in the state Assembly for seven years.

Little’s fifth term builds on many legislative successes. These include: adoption of an initiative that encourages local governments to work cooperatively and share services to save tax dollars; reform of the adverse possession law to ensure greater fairness for property owners; creation of a program to eradicate invasive species that threaten Adirondack streams, rivers and lakes; creation of the Adirondack Community Housing Trust; and passage of the Timber Theft Law.

The mother of an active-duty combat veteran, Little was honored to sponsor Patriot Plans I and II, which expanded benefits and services available to military personnel in New York and their families. Little also proudly sponsored a law designating the Adirondack Northway, I-87, the “Adirondack Veterans’ Memorial Highway” in honor of all NY veterans who have served our country.

Little serves as chair of the Senate Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation Committee. In January 2011, she was selected by Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos to serve in a leadership position as deputy majority leader for Intergovernmental Affairs.

She is also secretary of the NYS Legislative Sportsperson’s Caucus, a member of the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission and serves on the NYS Commission on the Restoration of the Capitol.
Legislator Profiles

Little first began public service as a member and later chair of the Town of Queensbury Recreation Commission. In 1986, she was elected as an at-large-supervisor to the Warren County Board of Supervisors for the Town of Queensbury, where she served on various committees, including the Warren County Recycling Advisory Committee which she organized and chaired, and as county budget officer in 1990 and 1991.

Little has earned numerous awards and distinctions during her years of public service. In 1992, she was the recipient of the prestigious Liberty Bell Award for Community Service, and in 1997 she was awarded the Adirondack Girl Scouts’ Women of Distinction Award. In 2000, Little received the Public Service Sector Partnership Award from the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council. The Community Health Care Association of NYS presented Little with their Legislative Leadership Award in February 2005. Also in 2005, she was recognized as Legislator of the Year by Families Together in NYS for her advocacy on behalf of families with children suffering from emotional and behavioral disabilities.

In May 2006, the NYS Economic Development Council presented Little with its Advance NY Leadership Award. In 2007, she was awarded the Charles Stewart Parnell Award by the American-Irish Legislators Society of NYS. Little also has been honored by the NYS Farm Bureau as a member of their “Circle of Friends” throughout her years of service in the Legislature.

Little was awarded an honorary doctorate by her alma mater, the College of Saint Rose, in December 2007. Born in Glens Falls, NY, Little is a graduate of St. Mary's Academy and the College of Saint Rose with a degree in elementary education. A former teacher and realtor, she resides in Queensbury. Little is the mother of six children and the proud grandmother of 14.

N.Y.S. Assemblyman
Dan Stec (R)

District Office (as of January 2013):
140 Glen Street
Glens Falls, NY 12801

Current Office (through December 2012):
742 Bay Road
Queensbury, NY 12804

Phone: (518) 761-8229
Email address: dans@queensbury.net
Social media: www.facebook.com/dan.stec or www.twitter.com/danstec

Legislative Position:
• State Assemblyman, 114th Assembly District
• Former Queensbury Town Supervisor

Legislative Committees:
• TBD

Recent Legislation Related to Education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information:

Stec, who grew up in Queensbury, was elected to the position of assemblyman for the 114th Assembly District in November 2012. He will take office in January 2013.

With his recent election, Stec will soon end nine years as the Queensbury town supervisor (2004-2012) following five years as a town councilman before that. Earlier, he spent four years as the maintenance superintendent for Saint-Gobain Abrasives (2000-2004) and more than eight years as an officer in the Navy (1990-1998), during which time he bought a dairy farm in Fort Ann where he tried to grow Christmas trees. He also worked in paper mills in college.

Stec is currently chairman of the Warren County Board of Supervisors. He also previously served on the board of the Warren County Economic Development Council and the Queensbury Zoning Board of Appeals (1998).

He earned a master's degree in business administration from the University of Rhode Island (1997) and a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering from Clarkson University (1990).

Stec and his wife, Hilary, have been married for 21 years. Their son attends Queensbury Elementary School. Stec enjoys climbing mountains and attending his son's tee ball games.
State Legislators – Education Committee Chairs

N.Y.S. Senator
John J. Flanagan (R)

*Albany/Capital District Office:*
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 805
Albany, NY 12247

*Phone:* (518) 455-2071
*Email address:* Flanagan@senate.state.ny.us

**Legislative Position:**
- State Senator, 2nd Senate District
- Chair, Senate Education Committee

**Legislative Committees:**
- Codes
- Corporations, Authorities and Commissions
- Chair, Education
- Finance
- Higher Education
- Insurance
- Judiciary
- Veterans, Homeland Security and Military Affairs

**Sample Statements Related to Education:**
- Would grade current state school testing system around a 5 on a scale of 1 (worst) to 10 (best).
- “We’re nowhere near where we need to be” regarding graduation rates. Need to “be careful about what we expose” re: teachers’ assessments. Should benefit student learning. “The one thing I want to see here before we leave” the legislative session “is significant mandate relief... if we are going to live up to our commitment in terms of fair and proper implementation of the tax cap...”
- Re: state mandates, “We have problems that come from the federal government, we have problems created by the state of New York... There are mandates that are unnecessary. There are paperwork mandates that don’t do anything to educate a child... If we do think there’s a good idea, then we [the state] should be paying for it.”
- Re: local control, “I don’t want to set the salaries for administrators or teachers. Albany should not do that... Maybe we can find efficiencies by doing regional collective bargaining or regional health insurance, but those are management decisions that are made by boards that are elected by their own communities.”

**Recent Legislation Related to Education:**

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<td>S7722A: Requires schools to consider the family background of special edu. students for placement (sponsor)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Vetoed 7/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4169: Provides an additional exemption from real property taxes levied for school purposes to qualifying residential property owned by veterans (sponsor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Referred Veterans Comm. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4394: Requires school or BOCES employee to vacate position upon conviction for crime (sponsor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Referred Invst. Comm. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S981: Enacts a statewide one-year salary freeze for all public-sector employees (sponsor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Referred Civil Svc. Comm. 1/12, 1/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2808: Implements the Education, Labor and Family Assistance Budget</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 3/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2026: Apportionment of state aid for libraries, teachers of tomorrow teacher recruitment and retention program, duties of school districts (sponsor); substituted by bill A2289</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 2/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2707: Requires state to fund certain programs mandated for school districts (co-sponsor)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Referred Finance Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Biographical Information (from his website):**

Sen. John J. Flanagan represents the Second Senate District, which includes the entire Town of Smithtown and portions of both the Town of Brookhaven and the Town of Huntington. He was first elected to represent this portion of Suffolk County in 2002 and overwhelmingly reelected in 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010. During his time in the Senate, Flanagan has been a
constant leader in the fight to reduce the tax burden Long Islanders face – a fight he began when he served in the New York State Assembly prior to his election to the Senate. During his tenure in the lower house, he served as the ranking member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, where he fought to provide taxpayers with meaningful tax relief.

An outspoken critic of late state budgets, Flanagan has consistently argued for budget reforms that will improve the financial health of New York while preventing burdensome tax increases.

Flanagan also led the fight for the adoption and implementation of the STAR Rebate Program in 2006, which delivered billions to NYS homeowners before being eliminated in 2009, and continues to fight for the repeal of the MTA Payroll Tax.

To help ease the tax burden of volunteer firefighters and ambulance workers throughout NY, he authored legislation that grants these first responders an expanded real property tax exemption on their homes.

A staunch supporter of education, Flanagan is currently the chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Education. He has been a constant voice for educational quality in NYS with a long history of fighting to ensure all regions get their fair share of state aid to reduce class size and to protect property taxpayers.

To enhance safety in schools, Flanagan has supported the Safe Schools Against Violence in Education Act (Project SAVE) and worked to permanently extend the Child Safety Zone law, which gives otherwise ineligible children access to bus service.

And to expand students’ ability to succeed, he has also expanded funding for pre-kindergarten programs, made college more affordable by maintaining funding for the NYS tuition assistance program and also has been supportive of the college savings programs that allow for tax-free savings and increased deductions for future college tuition payments.

As a state senator, he has also used his commitment to the disabled community, school organizations and women’s groups to deliver increased state funding and enactment of critical legislation in these areas.

His commitment to these issues was evident in his very first year in the Senate when he worked with local advocates to author landmark protections for stalking victims and their families. In the years that have followed, he has worked to increase public protection by successfully expanding public access to the NYS Sex Offender Registry, requiring lifetime registration for sexual predators and ending the statute of limitations for rapists.

A strong proponent of safety on Long Island waterways, he successfully worked to lower the legal blood alcohol level for boating while intoxicated to .08 and fought to increase the penalties faced by those who operate a boat while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

To protect the public’s right to know, Flanagan successfully fought to require the Department of Environmental Conservation to disclose more information concerning toxic spills to the general public on its Web site.

Flanagan has worked closely with members of the Kings Park community to successfully halt the sale of the environmentally fragile Kings Park Psychiatric Center in order to protect more than 370 acres of open space, secure $29 million in state funding for the cleanup of the site and transfer this beautiful parcel of open space into the NYS parks system for preservation and public enjoyment.

He has also been instrumental in helping the Long Island State Veterans Home at Stony Brook provide services and care to veterans. His support has been vital in enabling the facility to proceed with important capital and technological improvements that will enhance the care received by those who have served our country.

Flanagan was raised in Huntington where he attended Harborfields High School. In 1983, he earned a bachelor’s degree in economics from the College of William and Mary in Virginia, and in 1990, he received a law degree from Touro Law School.

Flanagan resides in East Northport with his wife, the former Lisa Perez of Maryland. Together, they have raised three children including a daughter who recently graduated from college, a son who is currently attending college and a younger son who is a student in the Northport-East Northport School District.

N.Y.S.
Assemblywoman
Catherine Nolan (D)

Albany/Capital District Office:
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 836
Albany, NY 12248
Phone: (518) 455-4851
Email address: nolanc@assembly.state.ny.us

Legislative Positions:
• State Assemblywoman, 37th Assembly District
Legislator Profiles

- Chair, Assembly Education Committee

Legislative Committees:
- Chair, Education
- Corporations, Authorities and Commissions
- Rules
- Veterans’ Affairs
- Ways and Means
- Task Force on Women’s Issues

Sample Statements Related to Education:
- “I am very, very supportive of tackling... the 3020-A process... something that should have been resolved years ago.”
- “Our children are our hope for the future. We need to adequately fund our educational services in this state, and we need to do that in a way that addresses the great achievement gap and the inequities that exist.”
- Re: Race to the Top, “As a parent of a public school student, I know how much this money is needed... As chairwoman of the Assembly Education Committee, I know Race to the Top money will go a long way in helping New York renew and renovate our education system.”
- “The challenge is that despite a law requiring schools to provide physical education, many students in New York State do not receive instruction, and that is a shame... We will ask Comptroller DiNapoli to help enforce the State’s strong, but widely ignored, physical education requirements by including them in his regular school district audits.”

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<tr>
<td>A6300: Allows a principal employed by a certain district to make a written request to the board of education for an extended leave to teach at a charter school (sponsor)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Passed House 6/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7722A: Requires schools to consider the family background of special edu. students for placement</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Passed House 6/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4832: Restricts sale, lease, transfer and certain uses of existing outdoor school playgrounds (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Finance Com. 6/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9880A: Relates to clarifying health education</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 6/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A10290: Relates to mandate relief for school districts and other educational entities; repealer</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 5/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8002: Authorizes two or more school districts in certain supervisory districts to enter into a contract to establish and operate a regional high school (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Ways &amp; Means Com. 5/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9647: Authorizes schools to offer instruction or education program in sexual health (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 5/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7815A: Reforms aspects of local government and school accountability (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 3/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1651 – Charter school employees entitled to same collective bargaining representation and retirement as public school employees (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1828: Relates to codes of conduct on school property and prohibiting students from leaving property during the school day (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4158: Establishes standards, procedures and protocol for the use of restraints in schools (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6225: Updates the procedures for conducting tenured teacher disciplinary hearings (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6226: Limits salaries of school superintendents (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7500: Establishes residency requirements for school district superintendents (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A7501: Relates to the assessment of persistently lowest achieving schools (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred</td>
<td>Edu. Com. 1/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Number</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>A8319</td>
<td>Relates to intervention in chronically underperforming school districts (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred Edu. Com. 1/12 │</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8343</td>
<td>Prohibits the use of handcuffs on students in schools (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred to Codes 1/12 │</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8412</td>
<td>Relates to transportation of children receiving special education services (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred Edu. Com. 1/12 │</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8441</td>
<td>Relates to grants for universal prekindergarten (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred Edu. Com. 1/12 │</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8929</td>
<td>Relates to access to advanced secondary school courses (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred Edu. Com. 1/12 │</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A8930</td>
<td>Provides for random testing for anabolic steroids in athletes in public and private schools; appropriation (sponsor)</td>
<td>Referred Edu. Com. 1/12 │</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information (from her website):

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan represents the 37th Assembly District in Queens County, which includes the historic New York City neighborhoods of Sunnyside, Ridgewood, Long Island City, Queensbridge, Ravenswood, Astoria, Woodside, Maspeth, Dutch Kills and Blissville. She was first elected to the Assembly in 1984.

A resident of the district for most of her life, she is a graduate of St. Aloysius R.C. School and Grover Cleveland High School. Nolan graduated from New York University cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in Political Science.

Speaker Sheldon Silver appointed Nolan to chair the Assembly’s Committee on Education in 2006. She has spearheaded efforts to achieve class size reduction, universal pre-k, middle school initiatives, improve high school graduation rates and other measures that will ultimately mean success for the more than three million school children in the state. As a parent of a public school student, Nolan will bring a parent’s perspective to ongoing education debates.

Prior to chairing the Education Committee, Nolan chaired the Assembly’s Committee on Banks from 2003. She has focused that committee’s efforts on enhancing consumer protections and maintaining a competitive balance among financial institutions, successfully passing numerous new banking related laws. Among Nolan’s initial achievements was the extension of the state’s wildcard provisions that foster parity between federal and state-chartered banks. She also authored a new law to extend the retention period for ATM surveillance tapes in an effort to curb ATM fraud.

Nolan also chaired the Committee on Labor. As chairwoman she led the committee’s review of workers’ compensation, worker safety, protection and privacy laws. She successfully passed legislation in the Assembly to raise the minimum wage, to enhance whistleblower protections for healthcare workers, strengthen sweatshop enforcement, tighten enforcement of unpaid wage violations, protect innocent bystanders involved in strikes and to create a special fund to investigate prevailing wage violations.

Nolan also continued to focus on occupational safety and health and worker education and retraining, securing funding for several programs, including the first ever occupational safety and health clinic in Queens. She has also held hearings on such important issues as raising the minimum wage, wage and hour violations, workers’ compensation, the understaffing of nurses and age discrimination in the workplace.

For many years in the legislature Nolan was the Assembly’s representative to the MTA Capital Program Review Board, where she successfully signed the third MTA Capital Plan, driving millions of dollars to mass transit. She was successful in passing laws increasing the public’s participation in MTA decisions, extending the arbitration provisions for MTA’s labor unions and requiring fire safety training for employees.

In addition, she serves on the Assembly Majority Steering Committee. Nolan previously chaired the Real Property Taxation Committee, where she was successful in passing important legislation to save taxpayer dollars by consolidating assessing units and a bill allowing the United Nations Development Corporation to expand its New York City-based operation for UNICEF. Prior to that, she chaired the NYS Assembly Commission on State-Federal Relations, where she focused on fighting for more federal aid for public transportation. Nolan is also a proud past chair of the Legislative Women’s Caucus. Nolan is active in many civic associations in her district where she has been the recipient of numerous awards.

She lives with her husband, Gerard Marsicano, and son on Grove Street in Ridgewood.
U.S. Legislators for Warren County

U.S. Congressman
Chris Gibson (R)

District Office (through December 2012):
136 Glen Street
Glens Falls, NY 12801
Phone: (518) 743-0964
Email online: https://chrisgibsonforms.house.gov/Forms/WriteYourRep/default.aspx

Legislative Position:
- U.S. Congressman, 20th district of New York
- As of January 2013, Queensbury will move from the 20th Congressional District (U.S. Congressman Chris Gibson) to the 21st Congressional District (U.S. Congressman Bill Owens) as a result of redistricting.

Legislative Committees:
- Agriculture
  - Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry
  - Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management
- Armed Services
  - Subcommittee on Readiness and Emerging Threats
  - Subcommittee on Capabilities
- Republican Policy

Recent Legislation Related to Education:

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<td>Passed House 4/12</td>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Referred Com. in Senate</td>
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<td>HR1214: Repeal funding for school-based health center construction</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Passed House 5/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR471: School vouchers for Washington, D.C. (provides grants for private school scholarships)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Passed House 3/11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information (from his website):

As of January 2013, Queensbury will no longer fall into U.S. Congressman Chris Gibson’s congressional district.

Gibson grew up in Columbia County in the town of Kinderhook. He was the point guard and co-captain of Ichabod Crane’s High School Basketball Team and went on to graduate magna cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in history from Siena College while earning a ROTC Commission.

Over the course of his 24 year Army career, Gibson rose to the rank of colonel and deployed seven times. His deployments included four combat tours to Iraq and separate deployments to Kosovo, the southwestern United States for a counter-drug operation and Haiti, where he commanded the 82nd Airborne Division’s Second Brigade Combat Team (BCT) during the opening month of that humanitarian relief operation. The Secretary of the Army awarded the BCT the Superior Unit Award for their actions in Haiti.

Other key assignments included teaching American Politics at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, serving as a congressional fellow with U.S. Representative Jerry Lewis (R-CA), the chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, and completing a Hoover National Security Affairs Fellowship at Stanford University. Gibson was also the distinguished honor graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

Among his military decorations are two Legions of Merit, four Bronze Star Medals, the Purple Heart, the Combat Infantryman’s Badge with Star, the Master Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab. For their actions in Mosul in support of the first national election in the new Iraq, his Battalion Task Force earned the Valorous Unit Award. For their actions in Tal Afar during the second and third national elections in Iraq, his Battalion and the third Armored Cavalry Regiment were recognized for excellence by President George W. Bush and earned a second Valorous Unit Award.

Gibson holds a master’s degree and doctorate in government from Cornell University and is the author of Securing the State, a book on national security decisionmaking.

Gibson has been married to Mary Jo, a NYS licensed clinical social worker, for over 15 years, and they have three children. Their home is in Kinderhook, where Gibson is active in several civic organizations including the American Legion, VFW, NRA, the Knights of Columbus and St. John’s Church of Valatie.
U.S. Congressman Bill Owens (D)

Plattsburgh District Office:
14 Durkee Street, Suite 320
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Glens Falls District Office:
TBD

Phone: (518) 563-1406
E-mail online: http://owens.house.gov/contact/
Online meeting request: http://owens.house.gov
Social media: www.facebook.com/repbillowens or www.twitter.com/BillOwensNY

Legislative Position:
• U.S. Congressman, 21st Congressional District of New York
• As of January 2013, Queensbury will move from the 20th Congressional District (U.S. Congressman Chris Gibson) to the 21st Congressional District (U.S. Congressman Bill Owens) as a result of redistricting.

Legislative Committees:
• Agriculture
  • Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy and Forestry
  • Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy and Poultry
• Armed Services
  • Subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces
  • Subcommittee on Readiness
• Small Business

Sample Statements Related to Education:
• Re: No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), “I believe it is critical that we review the burden placed on school districts and teachers by one-size-fits-all mandates... I’m pleased the Department of Education is acting to remove several of these burdensome requirements by allowing states to apply for waivers, and will continue working to help ensure common-sense NCLB reforms.”
• Re: Race to the Top, “A bottom-up approach that incorporates the views of local communities is critical to ensuring that both educators and parents have a voice in the process.”
• Re: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, “I support full funding for these formula-driven education programs.”

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<td>N</td>
<td>Passed House 3/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR4872: Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 3/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information (from his website):
As of January 2013, U.S. Congressman Bill Owens will begin representing the 21st Congressional District instead of the 23rd Congressional District. His new district will encompass all or parts of 10 counties from northern Saratoga County north to the Canadian border and west through the North Country.

Owens has represented the 23rd Congressional District since November of 2009. Before being elected to Congress in a special election to fill the vacancy created by former-Rep. John McHugh’s appointment to Secretary of the Army, Owens had never run for public office. Now, as the representative for the second largest congressional district east of the Mississippi, Owens is working with his colleagues on both sides of the aisle to help create jobs and economic opportunity for hardworking New York families.

Owens has made his home in the North Country for over 30 years. After graduating from law school, Owens enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and served as a captain at Plattsburgh Air Force Base. After completing his service, Owens decided to stay in the North Country, where he built a successful practice and raised three children with his wife, Jane.
Throughout his life in Plattsburgh, Owens has worked closely with his community to help promote economic development. As Managing Partner at the Stafford, Owens law firm, Owens specialized in business and tax law. With the skills he learned as an attorney and businessman, Owens joined a handful of other community leaders in helping to recruit businesses from Canada to upstate NY. In addition, Owens was an integral part of the team that helped redevelop Plattsburgh Air Force Base when it closed down. In all, Owens helped create over 2,000 jobs for his community.

As a member of Congress, Owens is working to continue those efforts and help communities build a successful plan for economic development. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, the Agriculture Committee, and the Small Business Committee, Owens is also working to strengthen existing resources in the region that are vital to job creation and our local economy, including Fort Drum and the Canadian border.

He and his wife still reside in Plattsburgh. They have three grown children and four grandchildren.

### U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D)

#### Albany/Capital District Office:
Leo O’Brien Building  
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 821  
Albany, NY 12207

**Phone:** (518) 431-0120  
**Washington, D.C. Scheduling Office:** 202-224-4451  
**Email address:** invite@gillibrand.senate.gov  
**Email online:** http://www.gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/

#### Legislative Position:
- U.S. Senator from New York (junior)

#### Legislative Committees:
- Environment and Public Works  
- Armed Services  
- Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee  
- Special Committee on Aging

### Recent Legislation Related to Education:

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<td>S2343: Extending Current Student Loan Interest Rates</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Failed Senate 5/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3830: Undergraduate Scholarships for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Act (sponsor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Referred Health, Edu. Com. 9/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1586: Aid To States for Medicaid, Teacher Employment, and Other Purposes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 8/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3206: Keeping our Educators Working Act (co-sponsor)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Referred Health, Edu. Com. 4/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR4872: Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 3/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Biographical Information (from her website):

Kirsten E. Gillibrand was sworn in as U.S. Senator from New York in January 2009, filling the seat of the current Secretary of State, Hillary Rodham Clinton. In November 2010, Gillibrand won election to the seat with 63 percent of the vote. Prior to her service in the Senate, Gillibrand served in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing the 20th Congressional District, which spans across 10 counties in upstate New York.

Throughout her time in Congress, Gillibrand has been committed to open and honest government. When she was first elected, she pledged to bring unprecedented transparency and access to her post. And she did, becoming the first member of Congress to post her official public schedule, personal financial disclosure, and federal earmark requests online. The New York Times called Gillibrand’s commitment to transparency a “quiet touch of revolution” in Washington, and The Sunlight Foundation, the leading advocacy organization dedicated to making government more open and transparent, praised Gillibrand as a pioneer for her work (see http://gillibrand.senate.gov/sunlight/).
In the U.S. Senate, Gillibrand has made her presence felt, helping lead the fight to repeal “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell,” the policy that bans gays from serving openly in the military, and providing health care and compensation to the 9/11 first responders and community survivors that are sick with diseases caused by the toxins at Ground Zero. Gillibrand worked to bring Democrats and Republicans together to win both legislative victories, leading Newsweek and The Daily Beast to name Gillibrand one of 150 women who shake the world.

As the mother of two young children, Gillibrand knows that working families are struggling in this difficult economy. By making quality child care and higher education more affordable, providing property tax relief and keeping our neighborhoods safe, Gillibrand’s legislative agenda aims to help middle class and working families. She has written legislation to address the country’s nursing shortage, make quality autism treatment more affordable, improve asthma treatment for children, and ensure that drinking water and baby products are safe for consumers.

Gillibrand’s number one priority is to rebuild the American economy, by creating good-paying jobs, helping small businesses get loans, and partnering with the private sector to foster innovation and entrepreneurship. Using her seat on the Environment and Public Works Committee, Gillibrand has worked to increase investment in infrastructure, including drinking water and sewer systems, rural broadband, health care information technology, and renewable energy, working closely with the Obama Administration and Sen. Charles Schumer to ensure that NY gets its fair share of federal dollars.

As the first NY Senator to sit on the Agriculture Committee in nearly 40 years, Gillibrand is giving NY families the seat at the table they deserve as Congress debates food policy. She is taking a leading role to improve child nutrition and combat child obesity by giving children and families more access to fresh fruits and vegetables grown right here in NY. She is also fighting hard to protect NY farmers, especially those who need help in the current economic crisis. Gillibrand is leading the fight to make sure dairy farmers get a fair price for the milk they produce.

After serving on the Armed Services Committee in the House, Gillibrand is now serving on the Senate Armed Services, using her position to strengthen America’s armed services, national security and military readiness, and to continue fighting for America’s troops and military families by creating better economic opportunities for veterans returning home to their families today.

From her seat on the Aging Committee, Gillibrand is committed to fighting on behalf of seniors, working to lower the cost of prescription drugs, make long-term care more affordable so seniors can remain independent for as long as they are able, and protecting seniors from financial fraud. Gillibrand is also working to lower property taxes, co-sponsoring legislation that would give NY residents a full federal tax deduction for their property taxes.

After attending Albany’s Academy of Holy Names, Gillibrand graduated in 1984 from Emma Willard School in Troy, NY, the first all women’s high school in the United States. A magna cum laude graduate of Dartmouth College in 1988, Gillibrand went on to receive her law degree from the UCLA School of Law in 1991 and served as a law clerk on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals.

After working as an attorney in New York City for more than a decade, Gillibrand served as special counsel to U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Andrew Cuomo during the Clinton Administration. She then worked as an attorney in upstate NY before becoming a member of Congress.

Born and raised in upstate NY, Gillibrand now lives in Brunswick, NY, with her husband, Jonathan Gillibrand, and their two young sons.

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer (D)

Albany/Capital District Office:
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 420
Albany, N.Y. 12207
Phone: 518-431-4070
Email online: https://www.schumer.senate.gov/Contact/contact_chuck.cfm

Legislative Position:
• U.S. Senator from New York (senior)
• Chair, Committee on Rules and Administration

Legislative Committees:
• Rules and Administration
• Judiciary
  • Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship, Chair
  • Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights
• Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law
• Finance
  • Subcommittee on Healthcare
  • Subcommittee on Social Security, Pensions, and Family Policy
  • Subcommittee on Taxation, IRS Oversight, and Long-Term Growth
• Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs
  • Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation and Community Development
  • Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection
  • Subcommittee on Securities, Insurance and Investment

Sample Statements Related to Education:

• “The goals of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)... are certainly admirable, but I believe that the law does not provide states, school districts, parents, and educators with the flexibility and support that they need to accomplish these important goals.”

• “I believe that any federal standards must be accompanied by a greater federal investment in education.”

• Asked USDA to change regulations that disincentivize schools from using New York-made Greek yogurt

• Re: awarding of grants from Carol M. White Physical Education Program, “Given the uptick in childhood obesity in our country, physical education is an important, yet often overlooked, part of a well-rounded education.”

Recent Legislation Related to Education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S3187: Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act (sponsored three bills in act to stop legal sales of ‘bath salts,’ synthetic marijuana and synthetic hallucinogens)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 7/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2343: Extending current student loan interest rates</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Failed Senate 5/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL111-358: America COMPETES Reauthorization Act (authored the National Science Foundation Teaching Fellowship included in act)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 1/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR1586: Aid to states for medicaid, teacher employment, and other purposes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 8/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR4872: Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act (worked to enact expanded access to college education)</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Signed into law 3/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information (from his website):
Over the past three decades in public service, U.S. Sen. Charles “Chuck” Ellis Schumer has built a reputation as a leader in finding common-sense solutions to national issues and as a tireless fighter for New York.

Schumer was born in Brooklyn, NY, on November 23, 1950, to parents Selma, a homemaker active in the community, and Abe, who owned a small exterminating business. Schumer grew up in the Sheepshead Bay neighborhood and with his siblings, Fran and Robert, attended PS 197 and Madison High School. Schumer has two daughters, and he still resides in Brooklyn with his wife, Iris Weinshall.

After graduating from Harvard College and Harvard Law School in 1974, Schumer returned home and ran for the NYS Assembly, becoming, at 23, the youngest member of the state Legislature since Theodore Roosevelt. He soon made his mark with his trademark vigor and tireless advocacy. In 1980, at 29, Schumer ran for and won the seat in the Ninth Congressional District.

Schumer represented the Ninth Congressional District in Brooklyn and Queens for 18 years, where he established his reputation as a pioneer in the fight against crime and as a consumer advocate. Schumer authored the Omnibus Crime Bill, which put 100,000 new cops on the street. He was the leading sponsor of the Violence Against Women Act, to combat domestic violence and sexual assault, and the Brady Bill, which instituted mandatory background checks for handgun purchases. He co-wrote the Assault Weapons Ban, and sponsored the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which also sponsored legislation that required banks and credit card companies to provide greater disclosure to consumers.

In 1998, Schumer was elected to the U.S. Senate; he became the senior senator in New York when Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan retired in 2000. Schumer kicked off his first Senate term by announcing he would visit each of the 62 counties in the state every year, a tradition he continues today. Doing so has enabled Schumer to keep in touch with voters from every corner of the state.
Throughout his time in the Senate, Schumer has made improving the state economy his top priority, bringing affordable air service to upstate NY and the Hudson Valley and delivering over $20 billion in aid to New York City following the attacks on September 11, 2001. Schumer was the author of legislation that eliminated barriers that delay low-cost generic medications from entering the marketplace and led the charge to make college tuition tax deductible. He also aggressively championed agricultural measures to preserve vital market support programs for New York dairy farmers and crop growers.

After New Yorkers re-elected him in 2004, Schumer was awarded two powerful posts by his colleagues. The first, a seat on the Senate Finance Committee, which oversees the nation’s tax, trade, social security and health care legislation. The second honor was the chairmanship of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC). Schumer successfully led the DSCC for two consecutive cycles before stepping down at the end of 2008.

Following the elections of 2006, Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) appointed Schumer to serve as vice chair of the Democratic Conference, the number three position on the Democratic Leadership team and a position he continues to hold. In 2009, Schumer was selected as the chairman of the Senate Rules Committee, which oversees federal elections, voting rights, campaign finance, and the operation of the Senate complex. After New Yorkers re-elected him for a third term in 2010, Schumer took on an expanded role in the Senate as chairman of the Democratic Policy and Communications Center.

Regent for Judicial District IV

- **Regent**
  - James C. Dawson

**Contact Information:**

166 U.S. Oval
Plattsburgh, NY 12903

Phone: (518) 324-2401

Email: RegentDawson@mail.nysed.gov

**Legislative Positions:**

- Regent for Judicial District IV (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington counties)

**Biographical Information (from NYSED website):**

Regent James C. Dawson was appointed to the New York State Board of Regents in 1993, and reappointed in 2000, 2005 and 2010 to represent the fourth Judicial District (the North Country from the Mohawk River to the Canadian border).

During his service on the board, he has chaired the Regents’ Cultural Education Committee, the Regents’ Administrative Committee and the Regents’ State Aid Subcommittee. He is currently in his second appointment as chair of the Cultural Education Committee, which has oversight over libraries, museums, archives and public television; and he continues as vice chair of State Aid. He believes that he is the first Regent to have visited every school district and every school building in his judicial district.

He has been active in the National Association of State Boards of Education, representing 50 states, and has served as its president and as the chair or member of several of its study groups on topics as diverse as school construction, the achievement gap and arts and foreign language education.

Since 1970, Dr. Dawson has served on the faculty at SUNY Plattsburgh, where he teaches courses in geology as a distinguished service professor in the Center for Earth and Environmental Science.

Dr. Dawson’s personal interests include classical music, history (especially local history), hiking and canoeing with Caroline, his spouse.
Governor of New York State

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo (D)

Albany Office:
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224
Phone: (518) 474-8390
Email online: http://www.governor.ny.gov/contact/GovernorContactForm.php

Legislative Position:
• Governor of New York State

Sample Statements Related to Education:
• “It is essential that we give New York students the knowledge and the tools to compete and to thrive in this highly competitive global economy.”
• “One year later, it is clear that the property tax cap has been a tremendous success, saving hard-earned money for New York families while ensuring that local governments learn to do more with less.”
• “Families as well as businesses are leaving New York because they can no longer afford to be here... These unfunded and underfunded mandates are one reason why taxes are so high, and this new Mandate Relief Redesign Team will begin a top-to-bottom review of the system to help bring needed relief to taxpayers.”

Recent Legislation Related to Education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislation</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Bill #48: Requires public disclosure of APPR for teachers/principals.</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Bill #43: Prohibits bullying and cyberbullying in public schools</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Bill #32: Establishes a Tier VI retirement benefit.</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Bill #28: Creates a statewide teacher/principal evaluation system.</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Bill #5: Limits salaries of school superintendents.</td>
<td>Did not pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Bill #1: Limits amount by which schools and local governments may increase property taxes each year.</td>
<td>Passed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Biographical Information (from his website):

Andrew M. Cuomo, elected the 56th Governor of New York State on Nov. 2, 2010, has a lifelong commitment to public service and the proven leadership skills to make government work for the people of the state.

Prior to his election as governor, Cuomo served four years as New York’s attorney general. As the state’s top legal officer, he made restoring public trust in government and protecting New York taxpayers the top priorities of his administration.

As attorney general, Cuomo brought national reform to the student loan industry, uncovered fraud within the largest health insurers in the country, protected investors from abuses on Wall Street, and made the Internet safer for children nationwide. His groundbreaking investigations into the state pension system ended decades of government corruption in New York and set a model for public pension funds across the country.

Gov. Cuomo has a long record of fighting for justice and championing government reform.

In 1997, Cuomo was appointed by President Clinton to serve as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Under his leadership, HUD was transformed from a bureaucratic backwater rife with waste, fraud, and abuse to a revitalized engine for economic development and unprecedented housing opportunities. Cuomo brought dramatic reforms to make government efficient and competent while saving taxpayers millions of dollars.

Cuomo's work earned HUD the prestigious “Innovations in American Government Award” from the Ford Foundation and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University on three different occasions.

As secretary, Cuomo made fighting racial discrimination a key focus and brought 2,000 anti-discrimination cases all across the country.

In addition, Cuomo established Housing Enterprise for Less Privileged (HELP) in 1986, which became the nation’s largest private provider of transitional housing for the homeless. Based on his pioneering work through HELP, Cuomo was appointed by New York City Mayor David Dinkins in 1991 to lead the New York City Commission on the Homeless.

Cuomo first practiced law as an assistant district attorney in Manhattan. He also worked as a partner in a New York City law firm and was of counsel at Fried, Frank, Harris, Shriver & Jacobson. He graduated from Fordham University in 1979 and Albany Law School in 1982.

He is the father of three girls, twins Mariah and Cara and his youngest Michaela.
KEY FINDINGS

A total of 46 people took part in the advocacy workshop on Thursday, Aug. 30, including the guest speakers. The following findings are based on the results from 19 completed exit polls collected at the workshop.

- Prior to the workshop, the majority of the survey respondents were *not* confident in their ability to be effective advocates.
- After the workshop, all of the survey respondents felt more confident in their ability to be effective advocates.
- All of the survey respondents found the various workshop elements “useful” or “very useful,” with the majority finding them “very useful.”
- All of the survey respondents felt the advocacy workshop should be offered again next summer.

RESULTS SUMMARY

1. *Prior to attending this workshop*, did you feel confident in your ability to be an effective advocate with local legislators on behalf of your school district?
   - Yes = 16.7%  No = 83.3%

2. *After attending this workshop*, do you now feel *more confident* in your ability to be an effective advocate with local legislators on behalf of your school district?
   - Yes = 100%  No = 0%

3. In terms of usefulness in increasing the effectiveness of your advocacy skills, how would you rate the following portions of the advocacy workshop?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation/Activity</th>
<th>NOT Useful</th>
<th>Useful</th>
<th>VERY Useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation #1 – Getting Savvier About Advocacy</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation #2 – An Update from Albany</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Skills Information Session</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(e.g., displays, handouts, table hosts, conversations)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy Tool Kits</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Legislator Profiles</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>70.6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Do you think an advocacy workshop should be offered to new and/or other interested school board members next summer?
   - Yes = 100%  No = 0%

5. Do you have any other comments/questions related to the advocacy workshop or advocacy in general?
   - How can Adirondack School Boards Association play a larger role as advocates for us?
   - Community forums specifically related to getting parents, business owners, etc. advocating for mandate relief
   - Get the other slide presentation. *<Note: PDF copies of the presentations were emailed to participants on Sept. 4.>*
Queensbury schools are making increasingly challenging reductions – affecting staffing, programs and services – in response to rising costs that are outpacing revenue. Part of the problem: Nearly 70 percent of the state and federal mandates that present the greatest challenges to districts come with no funding. Real relief, for schools and taxpayers, requires legislative action now. Come find out how easy it is to add your voice to the call for relief.

RSVP at (518) 824-5615 or online at www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm
Dear «TITLE» «LAST_NAME»:

State and federal mandates are a key contributor to the rising costs of education in New York. Those costs continue to far outpace revenue, leading the Queensbury Board of Education to make challenging reductions in staffing, programs and services. We invite you to come take part in finding a solution to this problem at “We Need Your Voice, Too! A Forum on Community Advocacy” on Wednesday, Nov. 28, from 7-8:15 p.m. in the Queensbury High School Large Group Instruction (LGI) Room, 409 Aviation Rd.

Even as education costs are rising, aid reductions and tax levy legislation are restricting the growth in school district revenue. As a result, recent Queensbury school budgets have reduced 75 staff positions (13.4 percent of staff) since 2009, classes at the middle school and high school, and services for students at all grade levels. Despite the reductions, this district still has an obligation to fulfill the community’s high expectations for local education and to prepare students for today’s colleges and careers. That means continued cuts are not a viable long-term solution to the problem of rising costs.

Local schools, as well as taxpayers, need the real relief that would come from legislative action on all redundant, excessive and/or ineffective mandates.

The upcoming advocacy forum will focus on how community members – parents, business owners, retirees, school employees and other concerned citizens – can help the Board of Education and other school leaders bring legislators’ attention to the urgent need for mandate relief. Forum speakers will discuss the mandates with the most negative financial impact on Queensbury schools. Participants will then engage in activities to help strengthen their advocacy efforts on behalf of local students.

Come find out how easy it is to add your voice to the call for mandate relief. Please RSVP online at www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm, by e-mail at mbraham@queensburyschool.org or by phone at 518-824-5615. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Huntley, Ed.D.    Raymond Gordon

“Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.”

www.queensburyschool.org
YOUR VOICE NEEDED AT QUEENSBURY SCHOOLS ADVOCACY FORUM

QUEENSBURY, N.Y. – The Queensbury Board of Education is hosting a forum on community advocacy called “We Need Your Voice, Too!” on Wednesday, Nov. 28, from 7-8:15 p.m. in the Queensbury High School Large Group Instruction Room, 409 Aviation Rd. At the advocacy forum, participants will discover easy ways to add their voices to the call for mandate relief for schools.

The state and federal governments and the Board of Regents regularly create laws and regulations – known as mandates – that provide schools with guidance on daily operations. While the cost to meet those mandates has risen, revenue has not kept pace in Queensbury Union Free School District. As a result, recent budgets have reduced 75 staff positions (13.4 percent of staff) since 2009; classes at the elementary, middle and high schools; and services for students at all grade levels. Some early budget projections for 2013-14 (to be shared at forum) show that cost increases in two mandated areas alone – pensions and health insurance – could reach between $1.6 million and $1.8 million.

“Continued budget reductions are not a viable long-term solution to the problem of rising costs, not when we want our students to graduate from high school prepared for today’s colleges and careers,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Douglas W. Huntley.

At the forum, speakers will share the Board of Education’s advocacy priorities and some mandate reforms that could help prevent negative effects on the quality of public education in Queensbury. Participants will learn about the necessity for immediate mandate relief and how they can help schools get it.

“There is no bottomless well of funds for Queensbury schools. We must have mandate relief now in order to secure the necessary changes in public school funding and expenses,” said Huntley.

Those planning to attend the forum are asked to RSVP by phone at (518) 824-5615 or online at www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm.

# # #
We Need Your Voice, Too!
A Forum on Community Advocacy

November 28, 2012

Advocacy: What Is It?

• **Advocacy** – The act of speaking or writing in support of the issues, people and principles you care about.
  
  – Speaking up on the issues (e.g., in person, in print, online)
  
  – Relationship-building with decision-makers.
  
  – Communicating with policy-makers about the real-world impacts of their decisions (for example, view [http://vimeo.com/39786963](http://vimeo.com/39786963)).

*You don’t need to be an expert to be an advocate.*

*You just need to be passionate and persistent!*
Good News: Education In Queensbury

- **QUFSD rank for:** (1 = highest)
  - **Academics:**
    - 13 out of 85 school districts in Capital Region (source: Albany Business Review)
    - 64 out of 430 upstate schools districts (source: Buffalo Business First)
  - **Taxes, spending:**
    - 90 out of 91 school districts in Capital Region (source: Albany Business Review)
    - 1 of 64 school districts in NYS to earn “High Return on Investment” rating (source: Center for American Progress, www.americanprogress.org)

Bad News: Challenges Growing

- Expenses outpacing revenue
- To balance budget, **BOE already reduced:**
  - 75 positions (13.4% of staff) since 2009
  - Classes at ES, MS, HS
  - Services for students at all grade levels
  - Fund balance, reserves
- **BOE kept tax levy increase under limit in 2012:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax Levy Change</td>
<td>+1.12%</td>
<td>+4.49%</td>
<td>+0.31%</td>
<td>+0.82%</td>
<td>+1.13%</td>
<td>+2.18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BOE Advocacy Priorities

- NYS Legislature, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Board of Regents should immediately:

  1. Reform the state aid distribution system to provide for more equity.

  2. Reform, remove or refuse to create additional unfunded/underfunded state mandates.

  3. Reform the current pension systems and provide employers with relief from unsustainable health benefit costs.

School Mandates

- **Mandates** – Laws/regulations pertaining to schools created by state/federal governments, Board of Regents
  - Meant to improve quality of education
  - 76% of typical school district expenditure results from direct/indirect mandates
  - 69% of mandates representing greatest challenges to districts come with no funding (source: www.p12.nysed.gov/fmis/mandaterelief/)
  - Not abiding by mandates = loss of $$
    (e.g., lawsuits, withdrawal of other aid, fines)
## School Mandate Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enacted:</th>
<th>Removed:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012: Annual Professional Performance Review</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010: Dignity for All Students Act, Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009: Race to the Top, Common Core</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001: No Child Left Behind Act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994: Shared Decision Making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991: Compact for Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984: Regents Action Plan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## The Problem

M mandates raising the cost of education +

School revenue not keeping pace =

Ongoing reductions to staff/programs/services* and/or tax levy increases**

* Reduced 75 staff positions (13.4% of staff) since 2009; elementary, MS and HS classes; and services for students at all grade levels.

** Tax levy increases subject to tax levy limit law.
The Problem: Looking Ahead to 2013-14

### EXAMPLE MANDATES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NYS Retirement Systems (Teachers – TRS, Employees – ERS)</th>
<th>Increased Cost 2013-14 (est. for QUFS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$699,000 to $895,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Health Insurance Premium Contributions                 | $950,000                               |

**EST. TOTAL COST INCREASE $1.5 - $1.7 million**

### EXAMPLE SOURCES OF REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Aid (at est. maximum 3% increase – likely less)</th>
<th>Increased Revenue 2013-14 (est. for QUFS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$450,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Federal Aid (sequestration impact)                    | $100,800                                  |

| Local Tax Levy (w/ tax levy limit + allowable carryover est. at 3.5% increase) | $1,020,000                               |

**EST. TOTAL REVENUE INCREASE $1.4 million**

---

* Indicates number of full-time equivalent positions reduced in annual school budget

---

**QUFS contributions to Teachers’ and Employees’ Retirement Systems**

- **ERS**
- **TRS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>QUFS Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>$1,003,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>$1,003,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>$1,003,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>$1,003,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>$2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>$2,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>$3,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2013-14</td>
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* TRS - 26 FTE*
* ERS - 26 FTE*
* TRS - 22 FTE*
* ERS - 19 FTE*

www.queensburyschool.org
Help Solve the Problem

- Community members must add their voices to the call for mandate relief for schools.

1 superintendent’s call to a local legislator
vs.

60 community members’ calls + 1 superintendent’s call to a local legislator

Which would get your attention?

Advocacy Tip #1

- Learn about the issues affecting QUFSD:
  - Be sure you know:
    - What the issue is.
    - Why it’s important.
    - What will happen if it isn’t addressed.
  - Find answers using:
    - Advocacy tool kit
    - Legislator profiles
    - Online advocacy tools (www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm)
### Advocacy Tip #2

- **Develop and test your “laser talk”**
  - **Problem** – Identify a problem you want your listener to know about.
  - **Solution** – Inform the listener about a solution to the problem.
  - **Action** – Issue a “call to action” that is concrete and specific.

*Keep it short!*

### Advocacy Tip #3

- **Write letters to local legislators using your PSA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Call to Action</th>
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</table>
| September 27, 2012  
U.S. Congressman Bill Owens  
Pittsburgh District Office  
14 Graham Street, Suite 220  
Pittsburgh, NY 12301  
Dee Congressman Owen:  
Thank you for the time and effort you have invested in representing your constituents in the 21st congressional district. While Queenbury Union Free School District won’t shift to your district until January, this school community needs your help now. In the coming months, please work to rescind the supplemental provisions of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective on January 2, 2013. If implementation takes effect as scheduled, federal education spending will be cut by 8.4 percent or about $50 billion, in July 2013, according to the most recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Queenbury schools would see a $500,000 cut in Title I, Title II, and IDEA funds. For the school year, this could result in students losing valuable in-person instruction reading support.  

This district has reduced the increase in annual expenses by more than $4 million over the last four years, leading to a reduction in student enrollment of some classes.  

The time has come, though, when any additional aid issuers will take essential opportunities. The Queenbury community, its students, and its schools need your help now to make sure that Congress enacts the supplement provision or the budget control Act. Please speak with your local legislators and the state necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality education in New York.  

Sincerely, |
| Sept 27, 2012  
U.S. Congressman Bill Owens  
Flushing, NY 12301  
Dear Congressman Owen:  
Thank you for the time and effort you have invested in representing your constituents in the 21st congressional district. While Queenbury Union Free School District won’t shift to your district until January, this school community needs your help now. In the coming months, please work to rescind the supplemental provisions of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective on January 2, 2013. If implementation takes effect as scheduled, federal education spending will be cut by 8.4 percent or about $50 billion in July 2013, according to the most recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Queenbury schools would see a $500,000 cut in Title I, Title II, and IDEA funds. For the school year, this could result in students losing valuable in-person instruction reading support.  

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Sincerely, |
Advocacy Tip #4

• **Develop a relationship with your legislators’ aides:**
  
  – Learn about your local legislators
  
  – Call legislators’ local offices to share your PSA with their aides.
  
  – Send a quick thank you note to the aide for listening.
    * In print or via email

Advocacy Tip #5

• **Meet face to face with legislators.**
  
  – Schedule the meeting.
  
  – Prepare for the meeting.
    * Plan an agenda.
    * Limit groups to 3 max and assign roles (e.g., main speaker, note taker).
  
  – Participate in the meeting.
    * Take charge of the conversation.
    * Use your PSA.
    * Leave behind a fact sheet.
  
  – Follow up.
    * Send a thank you note and follow up on your call to action.
Recent News Headlines

- Schools urge Congress to stop looming cuts
- House Debating Education Reforms
- Many districts on brink of disaster due to inequitable funding system

Insolvency Looms for Schools

- Districts try to balance programs, tax rates with budgets
- Education Leaders Fear Sandy’s Wrath on State Budget
- 64% of Schools Plan to Cut Teaching Positions

Why It Matters

- So why should YOU advocate for Queensbury schools?

  Your schools educate your children.
  Your schools employ community members.
  Your schools help attract property owners to the area and maintain property values.
  Your schools are funded by tax dollars.

  Without your help, your schools face more reductions to programs and services for students.
Advocacy Activity:

- Advocacy can be very simple using the PSA method for conversations and letters. Given the following information, work with a neighbor at your table to develop an effective PSA for your local state legislators.

  - Review the single-page sequestration handout. (http://www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm, click on “Sequestration”)

  - For Queensbury schools, sequestration would mean a $100,800 cut in Title I, Title IIA and IDEA funding for the 2013-14 school year and a reduction in student support services in areas such as additional reading support.

Thanks For Your Participation!

Find advocacy forum materials and more at www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm
Queensbury Union Free School District
Board of Education Goal #5, Objective #3

Advocacy Priorities for 2012-13

In recent years, the Queensbury Board of Education has made significant reductions to critical components of the annual school budget as rising costs outpaced revenue. Queensbury has reduced 75 staff positions (13.4 percent of staff) since 2009; classes at the elementary, middle, and high schools; and services for students at all grade levels. While some of those reductions reflected declining enrollment, most came out of the need to create a balanced budget despite the imbalance between expenditures and revenue. This is a disturbing trend that must be addressed. Therefore, the Board of Education offers the following advocacy priorities for 2012-13. Immediate action must be taken in these areas to prevent long-term negative effects on the quality of public education for Queensbury children.

As a school board, we strongly advocate for the New York State Legislature and Gov. Andrew Cuomo to immediately:

1. Reform the state aid distribution system to provide for more equity.
2. Reform, remove or refuse to create additional unfunded/underfunded state mandates.
3. Reform the current pension systems and provide employers with relief from unsustainable health benefit costs.

Additionally, we offer our assistance to community members and to legislators interested in addressing these issues.

Advocacy Priority #1: State Aid

- The state Legislature and the governor should reform the state aid distribution system to provide for more equity.

State aid should be distributed based on the actual cost of providing a sound basic education for every student in a way that fairly compensates for differences in community costs, needs and resources. The current state aid distribution system (i.e., Foundation Aid Formula) appears to be based on need, but funds are at least partly distributed based on the philosophy of making sure every school district gets something. In practice, this means well-funded districts in wealthier communities receive a level of state aid (allowing for expanded programs and services) that is disproportionate in terms of need when compared to less funded districts that would benefit more from the aid.

Without some reform, districts with below average wealth (e.g., Combined Wealth Ratios < 1.0) will also continue to suffer the greatest negative impact when the government reduces districts’ Foundation Aid Formula amounts through Gap Elimination Adjustments. Under the tax levy cap, these less funded districts (with smaller annual budgets) are less able than wealthier districts (with larger annual budgets) to compensate for state aid losses by raising local revenue (i.e., taxes).

Queensbury Union Free School District has a Combined Wealth Ratio of 0.793, placing it below the 1.0 average.
Advocacy Priority #2: Mandate Relief

- The state Legislature and the governor should reform, remove or refuse to create additional unfunded/underfunded state mandates.

Of the 151 mandates that represent the greatest challenges to districts in terms of financial burden and required time, 69 percent come with no funding. New York State also has 227 distinct special education mandates above and beyond those required by federal law. Some solutions to this financial problem for schools include: placing no new unfunded/underfunded state mandates on school districts, exempting school districts from the Wicks Law (Gen. Mun. Law §101) and limiting special education mandates to those required by the federal government. A full review and study of unfunded or underfunded mandates would help prioritize their effectiveness based upon cost benefit analysis. However, as already stated, it is imperative that school districts are not further burdened with more unfunded or underfunded mandates.

Advocacy Priority #3: Employee Benefits

- The state Legislature and the governor should reform the current pension systems and provide employers with relief from unsustainable health benefit costs.

The New York State Teachers Retirement System (TRS) and the NYS Employee Retirement System (ERS) have three sources of revenue: employee contributions (fixed), employer contributions (set by the state) and investment returns on these contributions (based on the stock market). Both pension systems were established by the Legislature, but ERS is administered by the NYS Comptroller while TRS is administered by the NYSTRS Retirement Board. Under the current funding structure for TRS and ERS, employers have to compensate for any stock market losses, leaving these benefit costs subject to a great deal of fluctuation and uncertainty.

Legislation establishing a Tier VI for those employed after April 1, 2012, will provide some relief for employers – eventually. The relief felt in Queensbury will be rather minimal, though, as the district has reduced staff (by 13.4 percent) rather than added staff since 2009. In the meantime, Queensbury anticipates an increase in ERS of $110,000 and in TRS of between $589,000 and $785,000 in 2013-14. This amount exceeds the anticipated state aid increase for the district of 2 to 3 percent. The state should enact more immediate reforms that would make the TRS and ERS pension systems more predictable and affordable for employers.

In terms of health insurance contribution rates, what was once an affordable benefit is becoming increasingly unmanageable for school districts due to rising health care costs. For example, Queensbury schools expect to see a 12 percent or approximately $950,000 increase in health insurance premiums during the 2012-13 school year. Those rising costs are largely a function of the health insurance industry, and as such, long-term relief will require reforms beyond the scope of public schools. In the meantime, the state can provide schools with some immediate, partial relief through possible solutions such as allowing for the creation of state-wide or regional health insurance consortiums and setting maximum employer contribution levels for individual and family health care coverage.

Without reforms to the current pension systems and employers’ health benefit contributions, these employee benefits are simply unsustainable in the future.
Key Legislators for Education Issues in New York State (as of 11/6/12)

Representing Warren County:

- **N.Y.S. Senator Betty Little**
  45th Senate District – District Office
  5 Warren St., Ste. 3, Glens Falls, NY 12801
  (518) 743-0968
  Email: little@nysenate.gov

- **N.Y.S. Assemblyman Dan Stec**
  114th Assembly District – District Office
  140 Glen St., Glens Falls, NY 12801
  (518) 761-8229 (through 2012)
  Email: dans@queensbury.net (through 2012)

- **U.S. Congressman Chris Gibson**
  (through December 2012)
  136 Glen St., Glens Falls, NY 12801
  Phone: (518) 743-0964
  Email online: https://chrisgibsonforms.house.gov/Forms/WriteYourRep/default.aspx

- **U.S. Congressman Bill Owens**
  (as of January 2013)
  Plattsburgh District Office
  14 Durkee St., Ste. 320
  Plattsburgh, NY 12901
  Phone: (518) 563-1406
  E-mail online: http://owens.house.gov/contact/

Representing New York State:

- **N.Y.S. Board of Regents – Judicial District IV**
  Regent James C. Dawson
  166 U.S. Oval
  Plattsburgh, NY 12903
  Phone: (518) 324-2401
  Email: RegentDawson@mail.nysed.gov

- **Chair of the N.Y.S. Senate Education Committee:**
  Senator John J. Flanagan
  Room 805 LOB, Albany, NY 12247
  (518) 455-2071
  Email: Flanagan@senate.state.ny.us

- **Chair of the N.Y.S. Assembly Education Committee:**
  Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan
  Room 836 LOB, Albany, NY 12248
  (518) 455-4851
  Email: nolanc@assembly.state.ny.us

- **N.Y.S. Governor Andrew M. Cuomo**
  State Capitol, Albany, NY 12224
  (518) 474-8390
  Email online: Visit www.ny.gov/governor and click “contact.”

- **U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**
  Leo O’Brien Building
  1 Clinton Ave., Rm. 821, Albany, NY 12207
  Phone: (518) 431-0120
  Email address: invite@gillibrand.senate.gov

- **U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer**
  Leo O’Brien Building
  1 Clinton Ave., Rm. 420, Albany, NY 12207
  Phone: 518-431-4070
  Email online: https://www.schumer.senate.gov/Contact/contact_chuck.cfm

LOOK ONLINE to find more detailed legislator profiles, including voting records and biographical information.

www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm
1. How many people participated in the forum and completed an exit poll?
   - RSVPs received prior to forum = 48
   - Participants who signed in/picked up a name badge = 68
   - Participants who completed an exit poll = 35 or 51%

2. How did you hear about the advocacy forum?
   (Respondents checked all answers that applied.)

3. Prior to attending the advocacy forum, did you feel confident in your ability to be an effective advocate with local legislators on behalf of your school district?
   - Yes – 57.58%
   - No – 42.42%

4. After attending the advocacy forum, do you now feel more confident in your ability to be an effective advocate with local legislators on behalf of your school district?
   - Yes – 91.18%
   - No – 8.82%
In terms of usefulness in increasing your ability to be an effective advocate for your school district, how would you rate the following portions of the forum and advocacy materials?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Presentation</strong> – We Need Your Voice, Too!</th>
<th><strong>NOT Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>VERY Useful</strong></th>
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<td>41.18%</td>
<td>58.82%</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Advocacy Tool Kit</strong></th>
<th><strong>NOT Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>VERY Useful</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Key Legislators for Education Issues</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Useful</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Advocacy Issues Handouts</strong> (e.g., sequestration, state mandate relief, special education requirements)</th>
<th><strong>NOT Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>VERY Useful</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Queensbury BOE Advocacy Priorities for 2012-13</strong></th>
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<th><strong>Useful</strong></th>
<th><strong>VERY Useful</strong></th>
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6. More comments/questions related to the advocacy forum.

- It seems that legislators need to spend more time taking action and less time in committees, where it seems that a lot of discussion takes place, but very little action actually does, and to examine states where the system seems to be functioning, which it clearly seems that New York isn’t.

- I did get a negative feeling that we wouldn’t get results, especially with probably the biggest part – the pensions and health care. State law is the problem, and we have little hope of changing. What is needed is a state-wide advocacy group. All schools or most districts and taxpayers need to be involved. Also, are sports a mandate? If not, perhaps it should be community funded – not taxes – because the percentage of kids who benefit is small.

- Keep supplying data on the website. Connect with other upstate districts.

- Audience needs a primer on political realities in state! Hard to believe how little they know about upstate vs. downstate priorities.

- I already sent my letters. Considering calls.

- Might be a good idea to invite PTSA presidents to attend these meetings. They can pass word along at monthly meetings to parents. Direct parents to website. *NOTE: Personal invitations were sent to QES PTSA and WHBI PTA leaders and members via mail (Nov. 2) and/or email (Nov. 21) based on lists provided by the schools. A list of QMS PTSO contacts was not available in time for the print mailing.*

- Make one form letter where a signature is sent. Attach to Facebook, post on website, include on sport event fliers, get to the parents. Post on electronic board to sign. Send mass signatures to legislature. Make it effective.
• Very nice, Doug.

• I believe Doug did an excellent job, in particular the urgency of the issue.

• Put your presentation slides on the website so we can use them. <NOTE: Presentation .pdf posted to advocacy webpage the morning of Nov. 29.> We need more specific points on how the reduction of mandates will save money. Do we reform or eliminate some of the existing mandates? How do we save money this budget year by going after the mandates?

• Frustrated about laws that most likely won’t get changed due to powerful lobbying groups.

• Like with any budget, whether it be a business, home or school, you need to focus on what is making it not work. You can chip away as Queensbury has with layoffs, etc. Now you go after mandates – what then the pension plans, health insurance. Unless you tackle the big problems, you will always have a problem. Bottom line, you need to decrease the cost of the teachers’ pension. The cost of health insurance. It should not be off limits. When is enough enough?
Credit Recovery Helps Students Redo Failed Classes

In a quiet classroom at the end of a long hallway, several Queensbury High School students are working to overcome academic challenges with the aid of a self-guided, online credit recovery program. This technology has enabled students who apply themselves to make up failed courses and earn credits essential to graduation.

The credit recovery program is targeted toward students who have already failed a particular class or who are in danger of failing that class a second time.

“The credit recovery program doesn’t supplant classroom instruction; it supports it. It gives students a second chance, an additional opportunity to gain credit,” said Principal Damian Switzer.

During credit recovery class time, each student works on a computer and progresses through online lessons, based on state standards for the curriculum in the failed class, at his or her own pace. Lessons are accompanied by quizzes and post-tests. A student who successfully completes a credit recovery class automatically earns a grade of 65, which replaces his or her original failing grade for the class.

Teaching assistant Carol Hickey has worked with the students taking credit recovery courses since the launch of the program in the spring of 2011. This fall, she has six students enrolled in course areas such as English, social studies and math. Students can also take some science classes.

“They come in thinking it’s going to be easy, but it’s tough. The nice thing is that they can go back through the lesson as many times as they want before taking a quiz,” said Hickey.

Hickey keeps track of students’ attendance, progress and results for each class, but she sees one of her primary roles as helping them stay focused. “The students have to understand the lesson in order to successfully complete the post-test, so sometimes I’ll sit with them and maybe help explain the concept or question in a different way,” said Hickey.

Administrators, guidance counselors and Hickey are working together to evaluate the success of the program over time. Switzer estimates that on average about 90 percent of those who attempt a credit recovery class are able to complete it.

“It’s not a program where you want to see an increase in enrollment, but it’s another layer of support that needs to be there” said Switzer. “When students are successful, you can sense the emotion that’s attached to this.”

Advocacy Made Easy at Nov. 28 Forum

Add Your Voice to the Call for Mandate Relief for Schools

Nearly 50 Board of Education members and administrators from six local school districts worked to improve the effectiveness of their advocacy skills during a workshop held at Queensbury High School this August. The event inspired the Queensbury Board of Education to host another advocacy workshop, this time for community members, on Wednesday, November 28, at 7 p.m. in the high school LGI Room, 409 Aviation Rd.

Increasing effective, local advocacy has become more important in recent years as area school districts have made challenging reductions to educational programs in response to rising costs that have outpaced revenue. Queensbury schools are no exception; the 2012-13 school budget reduced classes at the middle school and high school, and services for students at all grade levels. In fact, the Queensbury Board of Education has reduced the increase in district annual expenses by more than $6 million over the last four years, in part through the loss of 75 positions.

A Forum on Community Advocacy

Wednesday, November 28, 7 p.m.
Queensbury High School LGI
Please r.s.v.p. at:
www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm

Continued, see Advocacy page 7
Continued cuts to programs, services and positions are not a viable long-term solution to rising costs, according to Superintendent of Schools Dr. Douglas W. Huntley.

“We have an obligation to our students to educate them up to our community’s standards and to prepare them for today’s colleges and careers. We will not be able to meet that obligation for much longer without some significant, immediate mandate relief,” said Dr. Huntley.

The state and federal governments and the Board of Regents regularly create laws and regulations – known as mandates – that provide schools with guidance on daily operations. A district that doesn’t adhere to these mandates can lose money through lawsuits and the withdrawal of other aid funds. In 2010, the New York State Education Department found that 69 percent of the 151 mandates that “represent the greatest challenges to districts in terms of financial burden and required time” come with no funding (source: www.p12.nysed.gov/fmis/mandaterelief).

“There has been no meaningful mandate relief, no changes in statute, no diminishment of requirements in recent memory to reduce the monetary burden on school districts. In fact, legislation passed for school year 2012-13 only heaped increased unfunded and expensive mandates on the backs of school districts,” according to a September 2012 report by the Statewide School Finance Consortium.

That is why much of the advocacy forum in November will focus on how parents and other community members can bring legislators’ attention to the urgent need for mandate relief. Forum speakers will discuss the mandates with the most negative financial impact on Queensbury schools. Participants will then engage in activities and get tool kits to help strengthen their advocacy efforts on behalf of local students.

“There is no bottomless well of funds for Queensbury schools, especially with the tax levy cap and stagnant state and federal aid. We must have mandate relief now, and that will only happen if our legislators realize just how important it is to our parents and to our community of taxpayers,” said Huntley.
Come discuss a variety of issues related to Queensbury schools and provide feedback that will help shape the 2013-14 school budget.

January 31 and March 7 @ 7 p.m.
Queensbury Elementary School Cafeteria
431 Aviation Rd.

RSVP online at www.queensburyschool.org/news/forum.htm, by e-mail at budget@queensburyschool.org or by phone at 518-824-5615.
Dear «TITLE» «LAST_NAME»:

As the district begins to prepare its spending plan for the 2013-14 school year, it will be holding two community forums to garner public input. We cordially invite you to join the conversation at a budget forum on Thursday, Jan. 31, at 7 p.m. in the Queensbury Elementary School cafeteria, 431 Aviation Road.

Our district has an obligation to fulfill the community’s high expectations for local education and to prepare students for today’s colleges and careers. As we work to develop the budget, we are aware that continued reductions are not a viable long-term solution to the problem of rising costs, even as state aid is reduced and the tax levy cap restricts our growth in revenue.

To begin to address these problems, we focused on the importance of advocacy at our November community forum. We would like to thank the individuals who attended and sent letters or spoke to legislators on behalf of our schools and students.

At the upcoming forum, residents will be given the opportunity to provide the district with feedback on the potential tax increase for the 2013-14 school year. In addition, the district will report on its advocacy efforts and revisit ways residents might also advocate for changes in aid distribution and mandate relief.

The district will hold a second forum on Thursday, March 7. Please consider attending one or both of the meetings as your schedule allows. Please extend this invitation to other community members. As always, we are striving to have a diverse collection of voices.

If you are able to participate, please RSVP online at www.queensburyschool.org/District/budget/forums.htm, by e-mail at mbraham@queensburyschool.org or by phone at 518-824-5615. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Huntley, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Raymond Gordon  
Board of Education President

“Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.”

www.queensburyschool.org
QUEENSBURY TO HOST COMMUNITY FORUM JAN. 31
Participants to discuss tax increase, advocacy

QUEENSBURY, N.Y. – Queensbury Union Free School District is continuing a series of community forums with its first forum of the school year on Thursday, Jan. 31, from 7-8:45 p.m. in the Queensbury Elementary School cafeteria, 431 Aviation Road.

As schools continue to face financial pressure for the 2013-14 school year, district officials will look to community members for their feedback about a potential tax rate increase in order to maintain the district’s current academic and extracurricular offerings. The Queensbury Board of Education will use participants’ feedback as it crafts a 2013-14 school budget proposal.

“As always, we encourage our community to provide us with their feedback so we can make decisions based on what is in the best interest of our students and community,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Douglas W. Huntley. “This year we would like to share our fiscal challenges with the community and solicit their recommendations as we prepare for the 2013-14 school year. Our primary objective is to preserve the programs they have told us are vital to our schools.”

Community members are asked to RSVP online at www.queensburyschool.org, by e-mail at budget@queensburyschool.org or by phone at 518-824-5615. Those who RSVP and provide an e-mail address will receive discussion materials via e-mail in advance of the forum.

###
QUEENSBURY TO HOST COMMUNITY FORUM JAN. 31
Participants to discuss tax increase, advocacy

QUEENSBURY, N.Y. – Queensbury Union Free School District will continue its series of community forums with its first forum of the school year on Thursday, Jan. 31, from 7-8:45 p.m. in the Queensbury Elementary School cafeteria, 431 Aviation Road.

Based on Gov. Cuomo’s budget proposal, released last week, the Queensbury Union Free School District is anticipating no increase in state aid compared to the current school year. The anticipated 0 percent increase in state aid will create an approximately $2 million budget gap. District officials will look to community members for their feedback about ways to bridge this gap through reductions and a potential tax levy increase, and the Queensbury Board of Education will use participants’ feedback as it crafts a 2013-14 school budget proposal.

“Our primary objective is always to provide and preserve programs for our students,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Douglas W. Huntley. “However, as the cost of running a school district increases, and state aid remains unchanged, we are faced with choices about what to maintain and how we can make reductions with the least impact on our students.”

Community members are asked to RSVP online at www.queensburyschool.org, by e-mail at budget@queensburyschool.org or by phone at 518-824-5615. Those who RSVP and provide an e-mail address will receive discussion materials via e-mail in advance of the forum.

###
Queensbury Community Forums:
Planning for the Future of Local Education
Detailed Agenda for Session #1 – Jan. 31, 2013

6:30 p.m.  Check-in process

Check-in Staff
• Staff sign-in tables located just inside cafeteria.
• Create name badges for those who didn’t RSVP.

Facilitators
• As people come to your table, ask them to add their names and addresses to the sign-in sheet.

7 p.m.  Opening remarks
Superintendent of Schools
• Thank all for attending.
• Discuss how meeting will work, including that:
  o School board members will sit at tables, rotating after each question, and focus on listening to residents’ concerns. They will receive a full report on feedback gathered at all of the tables.
  o Introduce administrators present and mention that they will also sit at tables, rotating after each question, and focus on listening to residents’ concerns. They will provide clarification in response to fact-based questions as well.
• Ask participants to use the white note cards provided to write down any fact-based questions that cannot be immediately, accurately answered by the facilitators and/or administrators at their tables.
  o Someone will be picking up those notecards throughout the meeting.
  o If time allows, district administrators will try to answer the most common questions at the conclusion of tonight’s reporting-out phase.

7:05 p.m.  Presentation #1 – “Where are we now? Where are we headed?”
Superintendent of Schools

7:35 p.m.  Small groups begin discussions

Timekeeper
• Will announce when groups should be moving on to the next question.

Facilitator
• Introduce yourself and have participants introduce themselves and their district affiliation.
• PLEASE explain the expectations for the table:
  o Please expect that each person will have differing points of view.
  o Please allow each person to share his or her thoughts on the topic.
  o Please avoid side conversations so the facilitator can record all comments/questions.
  o The facilitator may have to interrupt a speaker or call on someone in order to be sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak within the limited discussion time.
• Hand out question packets and ask people to read question #1 before beginning the discussion.

QUESTION 1: For the past six years the district has developed budgets with tax levy increases that averaged 1.675 percent each year. As we work to close a projected budget gap for next year, the estimated tax levy increase may be between 3.5 and 3 percent. Is this increase in taxes acceptable in order to minimize the impact of reductions on our current academic and extracurricular offerings?

7:55 p.m.  Small groups wrap up the first round of discussions
Facilitator
- Review the key points about question 1 made by your discussion group.
- Discuss with your group:
  - Areas where they discovered common ground.
  - Areas of disagreement that need to be discussed further.
  - Areas on which they need more information.

8:00 p.m. Facilitators report out on small-group discussions

Timekeeper
- Bring microphone to each table so the facilitators can use it to report out to the whole group.

Facilitator
- Share one to three key points made by your group during its discussions for question 1, based on the wrap-up areas listed above.
- Limit your comments to one minute at most. Do not give a detailed review of your notes.

8:05 p.m. Presentation #2 – “Advocacy in Queensbury”
Superintendent of Schools

8:15 p.m. Small groups begin second round of discussions

QUESTION 2: The Queensbury Board of Education has established several advocacy priorities in an effort to inform and remind elected officials about the challenges Queensbury, and many other New York State schools, are facing. With this in mind, would you be willing to advocate for your school district? Have you done so in the past? What additional information do you need in order to feel comfortable being an advocate? Would you be willing to send more letters as the budget process continues?

8:30 p.m. Small groups wrap up their discussions

Facilitator
- Review the key points about question 2 made by your discussion group.
- Discuss with your group:
  - Areas where they discovered common ground.
  - Areas of disagreement that need to be discussed further.
  - Areas on which they need more information.
- Hand out the evaluation forms and ask people to leave the completed forms at their table or in the blue and yellow “exit poll” box on the sign-in table as they leave.

8:35 p.m. Facilitators report out on small-group discussions

Timekeeper
- Bring microphone to each table so the facilitators can use it to report out to the whole group.

Facilitator
- Share one to three key points made by your group based on the wrap-up areas listed above, particularly those that are unique from what other groups share.
- Limit your comments to one minute at most. Please do not give a detailed review of your notes.

8:40 p.m. Closing Remarks
Superintendent of Schools
- Thank all for attending.
- Encourage participants to:
  - Go online for follow-up information (e.g., discussion summaries, handouts, presentation).
  - RSVP for and participate in the next community forum on Thursday, March 7, at 7 p.m.
State aid

- 2013-14 State Aid proposal:
  - New York State → 4.4 percent increase
  - Queensbury UFSD → 0 percent increase

- Current state aid level → 2007-08

- NYS Gap Elimination Adjustment
  - State aid reduction introduced in 2010-11 to help NYS close its budget gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>Total Reduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reduction</td>
<td>-$3.7 million</td>
<td>-$3.4 million</td>
<td>-$3.2 million</td>
<td>-$10.3 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2013-2014 Budget

Critical Assumptions:

• Expenses
  – Health insurance increase (+12%) $950,000
  – Pension increase $960,000
    • TRS 16.5%, ERS 20.9% contribution rates

• Revenue
  – Appropriated fund balance $3,550,000
  – Tax levy increase 3.5 – 3.0 percent $875,670

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<thead>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax levy change</td>
<td>+1.12%</td>
<td>+4.49%</td>
<td>+0.31%</td>
<td>+0.82%</td>
<td>+1.13%</td>
<td>+2.18%</td>
<td>+1.68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1% increase in tax levy = $290,000

Tax levy increase

• The increase on an average assessed home value of $165,000 ($206,250 market value) would mean:

  3 percent increase 3.5 percent increase

  $89.93/year* $104.61/year*
  $7.49/month $8.72/month

  About a “tank and a half of gas”

*Doesn’t factor in taxpayers’ exemptions (e.g., STAR)
2013-14 Budget gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Gap – 2009 to present</th>
<th>Projected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>2010-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3.1 million</td>
<td>$2.7 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Gap-closing measures:
  - Personnel and non-personnel reductions $917,957
  - 3.5-3.0% tax levy increase $875,670
- Remaining budget gap $1.1 million

Options for closing the budget gap

- Four options*
  1. Additional 3.5 percent tax levy increase
     - Resulting in total 7.0 - 6.5 percent tax levy increase
     - Requires a 60 percent super-majority vote
  2. An additional $1.1 million in reductions
  3. A combination of #1 and #2 - additional tax levy increase and additional reductions
     - Requires a 60 percent super-majority vote
  4. Governor’s Stable Rate Pension Contribution Option
     - TRS 12.5%, ERS 12% ($1 million reduction)

*All four options assume a 3.5 – 3.0 percent tax levy increase.
**Projected cost reductions**

Personnel and non-personnel reductions for 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Non-personnel</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary Teacher</td>
<td>-$90,000</td>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>-$118,344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS Foreign Language</td>
<td>-90,000</td>
<td>PM School</td>
<td>-25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>-90,000</td>
<td>Energy Conservation</td>
<td>-97,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director of Guidance</td>
<td>-120,000</td>
<td>OT/PT</td>
<td>-54,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HS P/T Math</td>
<td>-23,013</td>
<td>Retiree Health Ins.</td>
<td>-120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated retirement</td>
<td>-90,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>- $503,013</td>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>- $414,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Reductions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- $917,957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total staff reductions**

Percentage of Staff Reductions by Category
2009-10 to 2013-14

- CSEA: 4.0%
- Queensbury Faculty Association: 12.7%
- Administrators & Supervisors Assoc.: 28.6%
- Queensbury Educational Support Staff: 23.6%
- Queensbury Transportation Assoc.: 5.8%
- Central Office Staff: 22.2%
- OT/PT Group: 83.3%
Instructional position reductions

- Instructional areas impacted by previous reductions:
  - Elementary education
  - Mathematics
  - English
  - Social Studies
  - Foreign language
  - Physical education
  - Consumer & Careers
  - Special education
  - Enrichment
  - Extra-curriculars/athletics

- Instructional areas *not* impacted by previous reductions:
  - Music
  - Art
  - Science
  - Technology
  - Business

Cost reduction history

- Since 2009-10, reduced increase in:
  - **Non-personnel expenses** - $2 million
  - **Personnel expenses** - $4.9 million
    - 80 positions eliminated

- Other cost-savings/cost containment initiatives:
  - Funding PPO plan instead of more expensive Matrix plan (-$1M)
  - BOCES Health Consortium (savings better than industry trend)
  - Brought back special education students (-$100,000/class)
  - Consolidated maintenance/transportation facilities
  - Grants ($2.4M over 3 years)
  - Cloud Computing ($401,565 over 5 years)
  - Recycling
  - Reserve funds
  - Triple trips for busses
  - Energy conservation ($923,325 over 3 years)
Class size/Special education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Reg. Ed. #</th>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Avg. Size</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>224 (?)</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>224</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Queensbury maintains a low special education expenditures per pupil rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2009-2010 School Year*</th>
<th>QUFS</th>
<th>Similar District Group</th>
<th>All School Districts in NY State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education expenditures per pupil</td>
<td>$18,723</td>
<td>$26,949</td>
<td>$26,888</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: NYS School Report Card Fiscal Accountability Supplement (most recent available)

Enrollment

District Enrollment History

![Graph showing enrollment history from 2004-2013](#)
**Expenditures per pupil**

- Queensbury continues to rank **low in total expenditures per pupil*** in the region and state.

```
*Source: 2009-10 administration per pupil rankings at [http://seethroughny.net/benchmarking-ny/#/](http://seethroughny.net/benchmarking-ny/#/)
```

**Administrative spending**

- Queensbury has one of the **lowest administration spending per pupil rates*** in the region and state.

```
*Source: 2009-10 administration per pupil rankings at [http://seethroughny.net/benchmarking-ny/#/](http://seethroughny.net/benchmarking-ny/#/)
```
**Pension costs**

**QUFSD Contributions to Teachers’ and Employees’ Retirement Systems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-26</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instructional salaries**

**School Districts Ranked by Median Instructional Staff Salaries**

*Source: Rank of area school districts, The Albany Business Review, June 24-30, 2011*
**Spending**

– Queensbury is **1 of 64** school districts in NYS to earn a “High Return on Investment” rating

(source: Center for American Progress, www.americanprogress.org)

**Academics**

– Queensbury academics rank competitively in the state and region*

– **Academics:**
  - **13** out of 85 school districts in Capital Region
    (source: Albany Business Review)
  - **64** out of 430 upstate schools districts
    (source: Buffalo Business First)

*1 = highest ranking
Our greatest challenges

- Health insurance
- Pension
- Inequitable state aid distribution
- Mandates – unfunded and underfunded
- Future planning – (EBALR cliff)
- Depletion of reserves
- Sequestration (?)

Discussion question #1

For the past six years the district has developed budgets with tax levy increases that averaged 1.675 percent each year. As we work to close a projected budget gap for next year, the estimated tax levy increase may be between 3.5 and 3 percent.

Is this increase in taxes acceptable in order to minimize the impact of reductions on our current academic and extracurricular offerings?
BOE advocacy priorities

• NYS Legislature, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Board of Regents should immediately:

  1. Reform the state aid distribution system to provide for more equity.

  2. Reform, remove or refuse to create additional unfunded/underfunded state mandates.

  3. Reform the current pension systems and provide employers with relief from unsustainable health benefit costs.

---

Pension costs

QUFSD Contributions to Teachers’ and Employees’ Retirement Systems

- $2,500,000 to $3,000,000
- $1,500,000 to $2,000,000
- $500,000 to $1,000,000

School Year

2001-02 to 2013-14

- 6 positions
- 22 positions
- 19 positions
- 26 positions
Health insurance costs

• District funds PPO plan instead of more expensive Matrix plan
• Member of the BOCES Health Consortium
• $950,000 increase in health insurance costs
  • Based on a 12 percent increase in insurance premiums

The problem

Mandates raising the cost of education

+ 

School revenue not keeping pace

= 

Ongoing reductions to staff/programs/services*
and/or tax levy increases**

* Reduced 80 staff positions (14.3% of staff) since 2009; elementary, MS and HS classes; and services for students at all grade levels.
** Tax levy increases subject to tax levy limit law.
School mandate examples

Enacted:

- **2012**: Annual Professional Performance Review
- **2010**: Dignity for All Students Act, Healthy, Hunger-free Kids Act
- **2009**: Race to the Top, Common Core
- **2001**: No Child Left Behind Act
- **1994**: Shared Decision Making
- **1991**: Compact for Learning
- **1984**: Regents Action Plan

Removed:

- None

Discussion question#2

The Queensbury Board of Education has established several advocacy priorities in an effort to inform and remind elected officials about the challenges Queensbury and many other New York State schools are facing.

With this in mind, would you be willing to advocate for your school district? Have you done so in the past? What additional information do you need in order to feel comfortable being an advocate? Would you be willing to send more letters as the budget process continues?
Thank you for participating

• Please complete an exit survey, including any questions/topics you may have for the March 7 forum.

• Follow-up information will be available at www.queensburyschool.org/forums

• Next forum is Thursday, March 7, 7-8:45 p.m.
January 31, 2013

Senator John J. Flanagan
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 805
Albany, NY 12247

Dear Senator Flanagan:

As you and your colleagues in the Legislature begin the task of drafting your own state budget, please consider the opinions of the Queensbury Union Free School District in your deliberations.

We find several areas of Gov. Cuomo’s recently released budget proposal encouraging, and it seems the governor listened to the cries of public education advocates throughout the state for no new mandates. The Queensbury Union Free School District supports performance grants, early college high school programs, and the mandate relief measures that are being proposed. However, we believe a more systematic change and equitable distribution of funding is necessary in order for school districts to stay afloat financially without seriously compromising or eliminating vital programs.

We agree that all New York schools would benefit from more pre-kindergarten opportunities, more instructional time for older students, rewards for high-performing teachers, community schools, and more rigorous educational requirements for prospective teachers, but we would need adequate and sustainable funding to pay for these additional programs. We believe schools would be better served if money targeted for these specific areas was returned to the general aid fund and distributed equitably to districts throughout the state.

We are well aware of the state – and the national – fiscal crisis. The Queensbury Union Free School District has taken extensive steps to avoid plunging over a fiscal cliff of our own. Queensbury is still receiving state aid at the same level it did six years ago, the 2007-08 level. With less money to work with, our Board of Education has reduced the increase in annual expenses by more than $6 million over the last four years, leading to the loss of 81 staff positions (15 percent of staff) since 2009, a reduction in classes and student services, and an increase in class sizes in some grade levels. To date, we have maintained our academic standing as one of the top districts in the Capital Region.

As the Legislature begins reviewing numbers for the coming fiscal year, please consider our request: Preserve the competitive grants, early college high school programs, and mandate relief efforts that Gov. Cuomo proposed, but take the funding for pre-kindergarten opportunities, high-performing teacher rewards, more instructional time and community schools, and consider distributing this money throughout the state. Please also consider a more equitable distribution of funding for all school districts, so each child in New York State has an equal start.

Thank you for all that you do in supporting public school education. Please let me know if I can be of help as you continue to make difficult decisions in these times of strong competition for scarce resources.

Sincerely,
January 31, 2013

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 420
Albany, N.Y. 12207

Dear Senator Schumer:

We appreciate that you and other elected officials took steps earlier this month to address our nation’s looming fiscal cliff, and that sequestration – if it happens at all – is now delayed until March. This helps the Queensbury Union Free School District and schools across the nation, at least for the short-term.

While Congress now has several months to try to resolve our nation’s fiscal woes, here in your home state of New York, things are still grim, and looking grimmer, for both the short- and long-term. While there are no easy solutions to our current economic crisis, there are steps our state lawmakers can take to help ease the impact on the educational programs that serve our students. Just as we are asking you to help put a halt to sequestration, we are also asking our state legislators and governor to take the necessary steps to:

- Reform New York’s state aid distribution system to provide for more equity;
- Reform, remove and refuse to create additional unfunded or under-funded state mandates; and
- Reform the current state pension systems and provide employers with relief from unsustainable health benefits costs.

With your help at the federal level to avert sequestration – and with support from our state legislators to resolve issues here at home – we can help ensure that students in the Queensbury Union Free School District receive the quality educational programs they need to become productive citizens now and in future generations.

Our community, our students and our schools need your continued help to ensure that Congress permanently rescinds the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act. Please speak with your fellow legislators and take the steps necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality public school education.

Sincerely,
January 31, 2013

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 836
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Assemblywoman Nolan:

The governor recently released his executive budget for the coming fiscal year, and now the work begins in earnest as you and your colleagues craft a spending proposal of your own. We know this is a challenging task in a good year, and a nearly impossible task in yet another fiscally challenging year.

While tough choices will need to be made, there is a way to make sure the precious resources we do have available are utilized for the greatest good; a more equitable redistribution of state aid for schools. State aid for education shouldn’t be used as a political prize, distributed disproportionately to schools. State aid should be distributed based on the actual cost of providing a sound basic education for every student in a way that fairly compensates for differences in community costs, needs and resources. Queensbury does not receive its fair share of state aid. Our Combined Wealth Ratio is approximately .79, well below the 1.0 that indicates a district is receiving its fair share of aid.

The current state aid distribution system – namely the Foundation Aid Formula – appears to be based on need, but you and I know that funds are at least partly distributed based on the philosophy that every school district should get something, regardless of need. This practice means well-funded school districts in wealthier communities are able to provide expanded programs and services that are disproportionate to what less-funded school districts can offer, perpetuating education gaps across the state.

In addition, the New York State Legislature must address the unsustainable costs associated with the New York State Pension System. At Queensbury we are faced with close to a million dollar increase in the pension system alone for the 2013-14 school year. We also face about a million dollar increase in health insurance. As you are aware, the pension system is a function of the legislature and the comptroller’s office. The health insurance increases are a function of board of education collective bargaining with labor unions, which are extremely limited by the New York State Triborough Amendment.

These recommendations do not require the state to find any new money; they do require the Governor and the Legislature to find the political will to do the right thing. I know that these are tough issues requiring tough decision-making. However, if you fail to act this year, you will see more schools tumbling off the fiscal cliff and Queensbury will not be far behind.

This budget season, we implore you to work with your colleagues to ensure that New York State public schools, like the Queensbury Union Free School District, are able to maintain quality public education programs for our children.

Sincerely,
1. How many people participated in the forum and completed an exit poll?
   - RSVPs received prior to forum = 30
   - Participants who signed in at forum = 28
   - Participants who completed an exit poll = 22 or 79%

2. How did you hear about this session of the community forum?
   (Respondents checked all answers that applied.)

![Source of Information](chart)

3. What did you like best about the community forum tonight?
   - Hearing others peoples viewpoints.
   - The ability to be heard and the information Dr. Huntley presented.
   - The open discussion and topics covered by questions.
   - Let’s get thing going. What goal should we focus on. Change the gap equation?
   - Information exchange.
   - It was good to hear questions asked by non-school employed community members.
   - Open discussion with a diverse group of participants.
   - The idea that contacting the senator and Gov. is an option.
   - Peer discussion.
   - Dr. Huntley started on time and ended within parameters.
   - That we started on time. NOT dragged out.
   - Dr. Huntley’s presentation (including visuals) of options before us.
   - “Workshop table” working together to create solutions.
   - Well presented, understandable, user-friendly information – good pacing by Dr. Huntley.
   - Hearing the various comments/perspectives from everyone.
   - Diplomatic, problem-solving, shared discussion is always valuable. Time management—A+.
   - Facilitator—great idea!
   - Our facilitator did an excellent job. I appreciated the time limits.
• Informative and comfortable.
• Opportunity to discuss. Dr. Huntley’s presentation information.
• The most recent information presented by Dr. Huntley.
• Gaining more knowledge regarding the challenges our school district faces.
• The information as well as the collaboration.
• Getting to share factual information about demographics of our primary students in support of services staying the same while enrollment is decreasing.

4. What did you like least about the community forum tonight? What could be done to change that?
• Our facilitator—included her own opinions heavily about what group said.
• The turnout of people. Maybe combine with other schools to get better press coverage and interest.
• More information (like the handouts) sent beforehand.
• Would like to see a bigger number of community members who are not in favor of raising taxes. They need to see the bigger picture.
• The fact that there were not many answers to questions the Gov. plans. Wait until answers are given before holding a budget meeting.
• Lack of community participation. Too bad more people don’t attend.
• Lack of community participation.
• Discussion at the table tended to meander and become diluted at times.
• Include more than one question related to the budget.
• Not enough people here to hear this. Not sure how to help this. Maybe ask each of us to invite a couple people to the next one. Personal invite is best!
• Perhaps start earlier (6-8 p.m.). Thank you!
• Not enough community participation. More word of mouth about it to encourage more friends/family.
• Opportunity to discuss. Dr. Huntley’s presentation information.
• I would like to see a large scale event come about due to question 2. Report out for question 2 was not very informative.
• Wish more people from the community attended.
• The turnout. My hope is that more sessions will be made available to accommodate working parents, etc.
• Wish there were more people here!
5. What topics would you like to learn more about and/or discuss at the community forum on March 7, 2013? (Respondents checked all answers that applied.)

Items listed as other include: mandates (4); what’s behind the numbers, how health insurance benefits are bargained; pension stabilization program; percent of budget going to each area; music position; ways to mobilize larger groups to advocate.

### Future Forum Topics

- Staffing levels and class sizes, 43.48%
- Other, 39.13%
- Employee retirement funds, 30.43%
- Maintaining school facilities and the master site plan, 26.09%
- The district’s reserve funds, 26.09%
- More about the tax cap levy as it pertains to QUFSD, 21.74%
- Technology in schools, 13.04%
QHS Students Attend Presidential Inauguration

Fifty Queensbury High School students and chaperones traveled to Washington, D.C., January 19-21 to tour the area and witness the 57th Presidential Inauguration.

The group toured various national monuments and other historical sites, such as Arlington National Cemetery and George Washington’s home estate, Mount Vernon. They also took in a performance of “Shear Madness” at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Saturday evening and attended an Inaugural Ball in Crystal City, Virginia, on Sunday evening.

On Monday, students got a first-hand lesson in American politics as they joined nearly one million people on the National Mall to witness President Barack Obama taking the oath of office for a second term. This was a significant, historical event that the group will remember for a long time.

District Plans for 2013-14 Following Governor’s Budget Proposal

Queensbury sees no increase in aid

Gov. Andrew Cuomo revealed his executive budget proposal in January, to fund New York State in 2013-14. Based on the proposal, the Queensbury Union Free School District is not anticipating an increase in state aid compared to the current school year.

The anticipated 0 percent increase in state aid, coupled with increases in health insurance and pension contribution rates, will create an estimated $2.9 million budget gap that the district will need to close for the upcoming school year. The district is looking to close the gap through a combination of revenue from an increase in the tax levy and reductions in personnel and non-personnel expenses. Since 2009, the district has closed budget gaps in part by reducing expenses by $7.9 million, including the elimination of 80 positions.

“Our Board of Education and district administrators have been working to develop creative solutions to close the budget gap,” said Superintendent of Schools Douglas W. Huntley. “We are striving to maintain our academic program, first and foremost, although dwindling state aid is making it increasingly harder to do so.”

According to the Governor, the total year-to-year increase in aid for education statewide is $889 million, or a 4.4 percent increase. Queensbury, however, will receive no increase in aid, while other school districts appear to be recipients of stronger aid projections. This apparent inequality in aid is something school officials and Board of Education members in Queensbury and throughout the state have been fighting to change.

The Queensbury UFSD 2013-14 budget proposal will be discussed further at the district’s second community forum, on Thursday, March 7. To join the discussion, please RSVP online at www.queensburyschool.org/forums, by e-mail at budget@queensburyschool.org or by phone at 518-824-5615.
March 14, 2013

Dear «TITLE» «LAST»:

In Queensbury, your feedback at community forums really can make a difference. Last year, participants’ feedback helped guide the Queensbury Board of Education’s decision to stay within its tax levy limit and to increase its advocacy efforts on behalf of local students. This year, you can help shape the future of local public education by joining us for the second community forum of the year on **Wednesday, March 27**, at 7 p.m. in the Queensbury Elementary School cafeteria, 431 Aviation Rd.

Queensbury schools currently face a budget gap of nearly $1.6 million and a fifth straight year of reductions to programs and services for students as well as to the staff members who provide them. Local taxpayers are feeling the financial strain and seeking some relief, too. At the upcoming forum, we will share more detailed, updated budget proposal figures for 2013-14, including the latest reductions under consideration. We will also outline financial projections for the next three years and causes for concern in relation to the future of the Queensbury educational program.

As a forum participant, you will have an opportunity to share your own financial and educational priorities for Queensbury schools – both immediate and long-term. You and your fellow community members will also explore different ideas for advocacy on issues like inequitable state funding that negatively impact local students and taxpayers. A question and answer activity will offer you the chance to get some hands-on experience with educational technology used in our classrooms, too.

An **RSVP by March 25** would be appreciated at [www.queensburyschool.org/District/budget/forums.htm](http://www.queensburyschool.org/District/budget/forums.htm), via email at budget@queensburyschool.org or by calling (518) 824-5615. Walk-ins are also welcome, so please extend this invitation to your friends and neighbors as well. Thank you and we hope to see you there.

Sincerely,

Douglas W. Huntley, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools  

Raymond Gordon  
President, Queensbury Board of Education

“Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.”

[www.queensburyschool.org](http://www.queensburyschool.org)
PRIORITIES, ADVOCACY KEY ISSUES AT SECOND QUEENSbury FORUM

Classroom Technology to Make an Appearance via Q&A

QUEENSbury, N.Y. – Come help shape the future of local public education by attending the second community forum of the year hosted by the Queensbury Board of Education on Wednesday, March 27, at 7 p.m. in the Queensbury Elementary School cafeteria, 431 Aviation Rd.

Public feedback really can make a difference when it comes to education and school funding issues, according to Board of Education President Raymond Gordon. “Last year, it helped guide our decision to stay within the district’s tax levy limit for 2012-13. It also showed us that our community supports our ongoing efforts to advocate for their children’s education,” he said.

At the upcoming forum, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Douglas W. Huntley will share updated budget proposal figures for 2013-14, including the latest reductions under consideration. He will also outline financial projections for the next three years and causes for concern in relation to the educational program. Participants will discuss financial and educational priorities – both immediate and long-term – as well as advocacy on state funding issues that negatively impact local students. They will also get some hands-on experience with technology used in Queensbury classrooms during a question and answer activity.

“Whether you are passionate about education or concerned about taxes, we need you to take an active role in helping us decide which direction to take for our schools and our students,” said Huntley.

To RSVP for the forum, visit www.queensburyschool.org/District/budget/forums.htm, send an email to budget@queensburyschool.org or call (518) 824-5615.

# # #
Queensbury Community Forums:
Planning for the Future of Local Education
Detailed Agenda for Session #2 – March 27, 2013

6:30 p.m.  Check-in process

*Check-in Staff*
- Staff sign-in tables located just inside cafeteria.
- Create name badges for those who didn’t RSVP.

*Facilitators*
- As people come to your table, ask them to add their names and addresses to the sign-in sheet.

7 p.m.  Opening remarks
*Superintendent of Schools*
- Thank all for attending.
- Share that school board members and/or school administrators may sit at tables in order to listen to residents’ concerns. They will receive a full report on feedback gathered at all of the tables.

7:05 p.m.  Explain live Q&A
*Communication and Information Technology Specialist*
- Share how to use Chrome books to submit questions and explain the process for getting answers (e.g., some brought to Doug’s attention during presentation, some addressed later in evening).
- Coordinate forum presentation, videos and live Q&A
- Take still photos and video as time allows

7:10 p.m.  Community forum presentation
*Superintendent of Schools*

7:45 p.m.  Small groups begin discussions.

*Timekeeper*
- Will announce when groups should be moving on to the next question.

*Facilitator*
- Introduce yourself and have participants introduce themselves and their district affiliation.
- **PLEASE explain the expectations for the table:**
  - Please expect that each person will have differing points of view.
  - Please allow each person to share his or her thoughts on the topic.
  - Please avoid side conversations so the facilitator can record all comments/questions.
  - The facilitator may have to interrupt a speaker or call on someone in order to be sure that everyone has an opportunity to speak within the limited discussion time.
- Hand out question packets and ask people to read question #1 before beginning the discussion.

**QUESTION 1:** Given the projections for the next three years of school budgets, the Board of Education’s current goals and your personal priorities for your household:

A.  What level of importance do you place on maintaining current programs, services and class sizes even if it means increasing school taxes? Why?
B.  What goals/priorities would you like to add to the Board of Education’s current list of goals?
C.  What do you think about the overall 2013-14 school budget proposal as outlined tonight?
8:07 p.m. Small groups wrap up the first round of discussions.

Facilitator
- Review the key points about question 1 made by your discussion group.
- Discuss with your group:
  - Areas where they discovered common ground.
  - Areas of disagreement that need to be discussed further.
  - Areas on which they need more information.

8:10 p.m. Small groups begin second round of discussions.

QUESTION 2: School budget revenue is not keeping pace with expenses, so personnel and non-personnel reductions have become the only feasible option in planning the 2013-14 school budget.

A. What questions or concerns do you have about the budget reductions outlined in plan A? What is your level of support for those reductions?

B. Under a contingent budget, additional reductions would be necessary to meet state laws. What concerns do you have about those reductions (plan B)?

C. Given those reductions, what actions might you be willing to take, if any, in order to help the district avoid going to contingency?

8:32 p.m. Small groups wrap up their discussions.

Facilitator
- Review the key points about question 2 made by your discussion group.
- Discuss with your group:
  - Areas where they discovered common ground.
  - Areas of disagreement that need to be discussed further.
  - Areas on which they need more information.
- Hand out the evaluation forms and ask people to leave the completed forms at their table or in the blue and yellow “exit poll” box on the sign-in table as they leave.

8:35 p.m. Facilitators report out on small-group discussions.

Timekeeper
- Bring microphone to each table so the facilitators can use it to report out to the whole group.

Facilitator
- Share one to three key points made by your group based on the wrap-up areas listed above, particularly those that are unique from what other groups share.
- Limit your comments to one minute at most. Please do not give a detailed review of your notes.

8:45 p.m. Closing remarks

Superintendent of Schools
- Thank all for attending.
- Encourage participants to:
  - Go online for follow-up information (e.g., summary of feedback from discussion tables, handouts, presentation, Q&A) and to follow the budget development process.
  - Visit the advocacy webpage and consider advocating on the issues addressed tonight.
  - Vote on the school budget on May 21.

9 p.m. Facilitator
- As you leave, please drop off the evaluation forms in the exit poll box and leave the notepad, pens, table number, name badges, and any extra handouts from your table at the sign-in table by the door.
2013-14 School Budget Priorities, Advocacy Issues

Community Forum #2
March 27, 2013

Queensbury Union Free School District
Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.

Communities across NYS are rallying for their schools...
Queensbury Board of Education is advocating for the NYS Legislature and Gov. Cuomo to:

1. Reform the state aid distribution system to provide for more equity.
2. Reform, remove or refuse to create additional unfunded/underfunded state mandates.
3. Reform the current pension systems and provide employers with relief from unsustainable health benefit costs.

Advocacy Reason #1:
Reserve funds draining fast

QUFSD set up reserve funds to prepare for anticipated expenses...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reserve Fund (Restricted)*</th>
<th>Current/Projected Liability</th>
<th>Balance in Fund</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reserve for Employee Benefits and Accrued Liability</td>
<td>Intent was to fund $66,800,000 liability according to GASB 45, but state comptroller’s audit changed liability.*</td>
<td>$4,462,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve for Tax Certiorari</td>
<td>$4,347,032</td>
<td>$3,199,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reserve for Retirement System Contributions</td>
<td>$1,500,000</td>
<td>$836,721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Insurance Reserve</td>
<td>$245,500</td>
<td>$272,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Reserve</td>
<td>Depends on current/potential litigation</td>
<td>$154,689</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Advocacy Reason #1: Reserve funds draining fast**

QUFSD can meet its liabilities, but fewer EBALR funds available to balance state aid losses...

![Employee Benefits & Accrued Liability Reserve (EBALR) Balance in QUFS](chart)

**Advocacy Reason #2: Uncontrollable costs rising**

Pension systems contributions climbing steadily...

![QUFSD Contributions to Teachers’ and Employees’ Retirement Systems](chart)
Advocacy Reason #3: State revenue not keeping pace

- State budget adoption soon:
  - QUFSF state aid up $838,238
    - Good news, but still subject to “Gap Elimination Adjustment”

Advocacy Issue
– Take Action!
www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm

One of the major reasons our public schools are in fiscal peril.

“GEA – Statewide”
http://vimeo.com/60567776

Advocacy Reason #4: Federal revenue not keeping pace

- Federal budget
  - QUFSF federal aid loss -$62,322
  - Sequestration took effect, but still time for change

Advocacy Issue
– Take Action!
www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm

www.queensburyschool.org/District/budget/forums.htm
**Advocacy Reason #5:** Limits on local revenue

**Year two of the tax levy cap...**

“New York State’s Property Tax Cap”
http://vimeo.com/62371152

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**Advocacy Reason #5:** Limits on local revenue

Possible options for QUFSF:

- Recommended tax levy increase = + **2.93%**
- Maximum allowable tax levy increase = + **5.08%**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actual Tax Levy Increase</strong></td>
<td>1.12%</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>0.31%</td>
<td>0.82%</td>
<td>1.13%</td>
<td>2.18%</td>
<td><strong>2.93%</strong> (recommended)</td>
<td><strong>1.85%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum Allowable Tax Levy Increase</strong></td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>4.23%</td>
<td>5.08%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advocacy Reason #5: Limits on local revenue

- Tax levy increase of **+2.93%** means increase in school taxes for average assessed home value of $165,000 (market value of $206,250):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Tax rate per $1,000</th>
<th>Estimated tax on assessed home value $165,000</th>
<th>$ Change</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>$18.172</td>
<td>$2,998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>$18.704</td>
<td>$3,086</td>
<td>$88</td>
<td>+ 2.93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Think of it as:
  - Less than two fill-ups at the gas pump
  - $7.33/month

- Tax figures are prior to exemptions, like STAR:
  - 2013-14 basic STAR savings (taken off resident’s tax bill) = $421
  - Reapply by 4/1/14, but wait for guidance

Advocacy Reason #6: Easier Reductions Already Made

Five straight years of reductions means most cost control options exhausted...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUFSF Budgets</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
<th>2011-12</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personnel Reductions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 positions</td>
<td>$1,200,000</td>
<td>8 positions</td>
<td>$570,000</td>
<td>22 positions</td>
<td>$1,300,000</td>
<td>19 positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 positions</td>
<td>$570,000</td>
<td>20 positions</td>
<td>$1,202,613</td>
<td>19 positions</td>
<td>$1,350,500</td>
<td>Plan B*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-personnel Reductions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- $300,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>- $755,000</td>
<td>- $285,500</td>
<td>- $280,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- $755,000</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- $285,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>- $280,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plan A</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plan B</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plan A</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Plan B</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Plan B reductions cover the Plan A reductions and additional reductions required by law under a contingent budget.*
Advocacy Reason #6: Easier Reductions Already Made

Percentage of Staff Reductions by Category
2009-10 to 2013-14 (plan A)

Queensbury BOE goals help shape budget...

1. All students will be involved with extra-curricular and service activities either in or out of school.

2. All students will have literacy skills on or above grade level in all curriculum areas.

3. All students will develop dream plans and make progress toward reaching their dreams each year.

4. All students will graduate from high school able to meet or exceed local and state standards for college and career readiness.

5. The district will safeguard its educational, financial and structural assets as well as its reputation for transparency in accordance with the community’s input and expectations.
Want to continue to rank low in total expenditures per pupil rates* for the region and state...

*Source: 2009-10 administration per pupil rankings at http://seethroughny.net/benchmarking-ny/#/

Closing the budget gap means some uncomfortable reductions...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2013-14 Budget</th>
<th>Plan A (with 2.93% tax levy increase)</th>
<th>Plan B (contingent budget)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Budget Gap</td>
<td>$1,250,226</td>
<td>$2,105,464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gap Closing Reductions &amp; Cost-saving Options</td>
<td>Personnel: 2 ES teaching positions MS foreign language 1 career and consumer science position Music (.6 FTE reduction) Guidance administration HS PT math Physical Education</td>
<td>Non-personnel: Grants (WHBI AP 11 mo., inc. .4 FTE) Energy Education savings PM school savings OT/PT reductions Retiree health insurance savings Restructuring of B &amp; G Lease/purchase buses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Group Discussions

Question #1 7:45 – 8:10 p.m.

Given the projections for the next three years of school budgets, the Board of Education’s current goals and your personal priorities for your household:

A. What level of importance do you place on maintaining current programs, services and class sizes even if it means increasing school taxes? Why?

B. What goals/priorities would you like to add to the Board of Education’s current list of goals?

C. What do you think about the overall 2013-14 school budget proposal as outlined tonight?

Group Discussions

Question #2 8:10 – 8:35 p.m.

School budget revenue is not keeping pace with expenses, so personnel and non-personnel reductions have become the only feasible option in planning the 2013-14 budget.

A. What questions or concerns do you have about the budget reductions outlined in plan A? What is your level of support for those reductions?

B. Under a contingent budget, additional reductions would be necessary to meet state laws.
   – What concerns do you have about those reductions (plan B)?
   – Given those reductions, what actions might you be willing to take, if any, in order to help the district avoid going to contingency?
Drive safely and don’t forget to...

- **Learn more:** [www.queensburyschool.org/district/budget/index.htm](http://www.queensburyschool.org/district/budget/index.htm)
- **Advocate:** [www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm](http://www.queensburyschool.org/community/advocacy.htm)
- **Vote:**

  **Tuesday, May 21**

  **10 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

  **QES Gymnasium**
1. How many people participated in the forum and completed an exit poll?
   - RSVPs received prior to forum = 34
   - Participants who signed in at forum = 32
     (does not include administrators, board members)
   - Participants who completed an exit poll = 32 or 100%

2. How did you hear about this session of the community forum?
   - Respondents checked all answers that applied.
   - Written-in answers – message board, digital sign.

3. How many forums did you attend this year?
   - One – 56%
   - Two – 44%

4. This is the third year that the Queensbury Board of Education has held community forums to aid in its development of an annual school budget. As a community member and potential voter, what value do you find in the offering of these forums?
   - Need to look more at the breakdown of budget.
   - I have attended all of the forums. I wouldn’t attend if I didn’t find value.
   - The presentation is very informative. Various round table experience and knowledge (or lack of) may or may not be relevant or informative, but it gives the board an idea of what to expect.
   - I value the transparency of the district and genuine interest in educating public/community and interest in obtaining feedback from members of community.
   - Extreme. Important to know what goes on behind the numbers.
   - Great. When I can’t attend, I can read about the results on the website.
   - (Not a taxpayer – teacher/observer) Any open discussion with facilitators and experts is useful to problem-solving.

Sources of Information

- Email from district = 19%
- Phone call from district = 17%
- Letter from district = 16%
- District newsletter = 14%
- District website = 10%
- Word of mouth = 9%
- The Post Star = 6%
- District Facebook/Twitter = 5%
- The Chronicle = 3%
- Flyer/announcement in a school = 1%
- Flyer in a business = 0%
• Informative. Good to know others in community share high regard for QSD and willing to pay any tax.
• High.
• Excellent.
• They are very important. Keep doing them.
• Forums are great. Nice to hear what is going on.
• High priority.
• I think bringing the community in is very important to communicate a clear message.
• These forums are very informative. I did attend forums last year, and when you are able to bring many people around the same table, you learn a lot of new and important information.
• Community forums allow for dialogue as well as Q&A. Keep them going. The retirees at my table are willing to pay at least 4% and want to avoid contingency at all costs.
• Great value, makes the process open and available to all the residents and taxpayers.
• Good, but too short.
• Valuable, transparent.
• Informative.
• Opportunity for all taxpayers to become familiar with school budgets and operation.
• They are informative, and I truly appreciate the opportunity.
• I though the forum this evening was very helpful and provided a good amount of information that would help the average taxpayer and voter.
• Very valuable. I will start to attend more.
• It gives a lot of information, but we end up year after year the same story. We need to have a long-term vision, not just year to year.
• A much better understanding of the issues facing the district.
• I feel these forums are excellent.

5. Would you participate in a similar community forum next year?
• Yes – 100%
• No – 0%

6. What could the district do differently next year to make it easier for you to participate in the budget development process? Current participation opportunities include things like community forums, Board of Education budget workshops, staff presentations, the budget webpage, district newsletter articles, etc.
• I’d like to suggest that Dr. Huntley address parents before a basketball or football game to encourage them to attend the forums. He needs to go where the families are!
• The district is doing a good job.
• I think the district is offering plenty of opportunity. Just disheartening that more individuals don’t make more of an effort to attend. Keep up the good work and communication!
• Newsletter sent home with students? Like to hear about board meetings.
• Being retired, I have an open schedule to attend most of the time if I wish.
• More staff/faculty commentary – “window into behind the scenes.” <Note: respondent circled “staff presentations” on survey.>
• Many opportunities.
• Better “spin” on budget issues.
• Spin positively.
• Continue the same.
• Continue same level of community involvement and transparency.
• Start a little earlier, 6-8 p.m. maybe.
• Serve more refreshments. At my table, high quality programs are important. They want our district to be great. Important to our community!
• This is great. I can’t think of anything more that could be done.
• Actual numbers for past three years would be helpful. Comparative analysis on spread sheet, available two weeks in advance.
• This was fine.
• The district does a lot. Perhaps add newspaper announcements directing people to the QUFSD website.
• Things have been very easy to understand and follow.
• I think the presentations this year allowed for fair participation from the residents and potential voters.
• Great job. I will start being more active.
• I would like to see new people coming. Those of us who have been coming will continue most likely. Now we need to get those who don’t come involved.
• Just keep it up, good job!
• I think forums and budget workshops are very helpful. Dr. Huntley’s presentation was extremely informative.
July 10, 2012

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Gov. Cuomo:

I appreciate your ongoing efforts to help school districts improve their efficiency and effectiveness. As a superintendent, I know New York schools are struggling to balance the rising expectations for students and teachers with our communities’ declining ability to bear the cost of local education. That is why it is essential that you veto bill #A10722A, which would require schools to take into account the home life and family background of special education students in the determination of school placement.

While the bill has passed in the Senate and Assembly, it offers too broad a spectrum for what might constitute “home life and family background” issues. Queensbury, for example, can provide a special-needs student with a sound, basic, quality education amidst general education students. In so doing that special-needs student receives the opportunity to interact on a daily basis with those who will likely be present in his/her future workplaces and other public environments.

In the Queensbury Union Free School District, we have realized significant cost-savings by educating our special-needs students on campus within programs specifically designed to meet their needs. We prefer to educate our students on our campus in an integrated setting. This provides for a high quality education for special education students at a cost that is much more reasonable than outside placements. This may not remain true if you support bill #A10722A.

Schools should make the best academic placement possible for special-needs students: If they can do so within the public school system at a lower cost, that is of benefit both to the students and the taxpayers. The costs related to implementing this bill are simply unworkable at a time when school districts must continue to operate more efficiently. That is why I urge you to veto this bill.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas W. Huntley  
Superintendent of Schools

“Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.”

www.queensburyschool.org
September 27, 2012

U.S. Congressman Bill Owens
Plattsburgh District Office
14 Durkee Street, Suite 320
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Dear Congressman Owens:

Thank you for the time and effort you have invested in representing your constituents in the 21st congressional district. While Queensbury Union Free School District won’t shift to your district until January, this school community still urgently needs your help now. In the coming months, please work to rescind the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective on January 2, 2013.

If sequestration takes effect as scheduled, federal education spending will be cut by 8.4 percent, or about $4 billion, in July 2013, according to the most recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Locally, Queensbury schools would see a $100,800 cut in Title I, Title IIA and IDEA funding for the 2013-14 school year and a reduction in student support services in essential areas such as additional reading support.

This district has reduced the increase in annual expenses by more than $6 million over the last four years, leading to a reduction in classes and student services, and to an increase in class sizes at certain grade levels. To date, we have been able to maintain our standing as one of the top districts in the Capital Region for academics. The time has come, though, when any additional aid losses will take essential opportunities away from students. Such a loss would negatively affect their ability to meet the Queensbury Board of Education’s high standards and goals as well as those of the Race to the Top program.

The Queensbury community, its students and its schools need your help now to make sure that Congress rescinds the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act. Please speak with your fellow legislators and take the steps necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality education in New York.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas W. Huntley
Superintendent of Schools

“Empower all students to be lifelong learners, inspired to pursue their dreams and contribute to the global community.”

www.queensburyschool.org
October 11, 2012

U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 821
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

On September 27, I sent you a letter asking for your support in rescinding the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective January 2. Please find enclosed a copy of the resolution passed by the Queensbury Board of Education last night regarding the urgency of this issue.

As before, they and I encourage you to speak with your fellow legislators and to take the steps necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality education in New York.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas W. Huntley
Superintendent of Schools
November 9, 2012

U.S. Congressman Bill Owens
Plattsburgh District Office
14 Durkee Street, Suite 320
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Dear Congressman Owens:

I would like to offer my congratulations on your reelection this November. Your support for education was notable during the debate held at Queensbury High School this fall. I look forward to working with you to ensure your constituents in Queensbury continue to have access to high quality, local public schools.

As you prepare to lead the new 21st Congressional District, please consider stopping by the Queensbury school campus this winter to enjoy one of our numerous holiday music programs. Below are just a few of the many scheduled performances. All will be held at 7 p.m. in the Queensbury High School Auditorium.

- **Saturday, December 1** – QHS Jingle Bell Rock
- **Monday, December 3** – QHS Mixed Chorus, Concert Choir and Madrigals Performance
- **Thursday, December 6** – QHS Symphonic Band and Concert Band Performance

I hope you will be able to join us for a concert, but I also welcome the chance to give you a tour of Queensbury schools anytime you are in our area. Please feel free to call me at (518) 824-5602 to schedule a tour.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas W. Huntley
Superintendent of Schools
November 16, 2012

U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer
Leo O’Brien Building
1 Clinton Avenue, Room 420
Albany, N.Y. 12207

Dear Senator Schumer:

Thank you for your recent efforts to support New Yorkers affected by Hurricane Sandy. While Queensbury Union Free School District escaped the worst of Sandy, a ‘super storm’ of a different kind still looms just six weeks away. As I mentioned in October, Queensbury students urgently need you to work to rescind the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act of 2011 before it becomes effective on January 2, 2013.

If sequestration takes effect as scheduled, federal education spending will be cut by 8.4 percent, or about $4 billion, in July 2013, according to the most recent estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Locally, Queensbury schools would see a $100,800 cut in Title I, Title IIA and IDEA funding for the 2013-14 school year and a reduction in student support services in essential areas such as additional reading support.

Such a loss is unsustainable when balanced against the rising costs for mandated expenses and the local revenue restrictions created by the tax levy limit law. The Queensbury Board of Education has reduced the increase in annual expenses by more than $6 million over the last four years, leading to the loss of 75 staff positions (13.4 percent of staff) since 2009, a reduction in classes and student services, and an increase in class sizes at certain grade levels. To date, we have maintained our standing as one of the top districts in the Capital Region, but additional aid losses – through things such as sequestration – will take critical opportunities away from students in Queensbury.

The Queensbury community, its students and its schools need your help now to make sure that Congress rescinds the sequestration provision of the Budget Control Act. Please speak with your fellow legislators and take the steps necessary to ensure this provision is not allowed to undercut quality public school education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Douglas W. Huntley
Superintendent of Schools

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www.queensburyschool.org
Media Coverage Samples


Aquije, Omar Ricardo. “Queensbury hopes parents will raise voices against mandates.” The Post Star


Aquije, Omar Ricardo. “School board wants to advocate for mandate relief.” The Post Star 31 May 2012
<http://poststar.com/blogs/a_time_to_learn/school-board-wants-to-advocate-for-mandate-relief/article_1ee419f8-ab52-11e1-acdc-001a4bcf887a.html>

Sample of reporter’s live Twitter coverage of forum on Nov. 28, 2012

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Omar Ricardo-Aquije
@ps_education
Omar is the education reporter for The Post Star. He covers more than two dozen school districts and NYS Aid? Advocacy.
Olson Falls, NY

3,971 tweets
346 followers
230 following

Tweets

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
Huntley said lawmakers are considering mandating prekindergarten. He supports presk, but can’t support the mandate because of the cost. Expand

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
Right now audience members are asking questions and making comments. Expand

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
With no lawmakers here, audience members are asking SBO to help schools. Expand

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
"Some school districts are in worse shape than others. There are some districts right now in insolvency," Huntley said. Expand

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
Huntley is speaking with urgency. Expand

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
Huntley said he wrote two letters to Congressman Owens, but letters from many residents will have a bigger impact. Expand

Omar Ricardo Aquije @ps_education
Huntley said he hopes residents will write letters to Congress to urge lawmakers to stop cuts in federal aid. Expand

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