

May 2001

Focus on Education

From the NYS Assembly ■ Sheldon Silver, Speaker ■ Steven Sanders, Chair, Education Committee

Right now, school districts must craft their budgets for the coming school year.

The Assembly's landmark, two-year education plan gives schools the resources they need to prepare for the future. But the Senate has still not put forward a detailed plan, leaving schools guessing as they try to finalize their budgets.

The Assembly's groundbreaking two-year education plan will enable New York's schools to plan ahead.

The Assembly's education budget provides flexibility and equity that will help schools across the state raise educational standards — without shifting the burden onto property taxpayers.

This year alone, we restore the Governor's \$1.1 billion cut in state aid that was promised our schools last year, and we increase education funding by \$1.7 billion for each of the next two school years for a total of \$3.4 billion.

The Assembly plan will help alleviate classroom overcrowding, assure kids start learning at an earlier age, provide up-to-date computer technology, invest in teacher training, and ensure funding for school maintenance and repair. And our plan provides school districts with much-needed flexibility by streamlining six separate funding categories into a core operating aid formula — so they can use the funding as they see fit.

The Governor's budget disguises school aid cuts as "reforms," leaving our schools with less resources to help children achieve higher standards.

The Assembly rejects the Governor's cuts and paves the way toward real reform in the way school aid is distributed. It's difficult enough for school districts to plan from year to year without the added worry that they can't count on money promised under current law. School

"[The Assembly's] ambitious plan would lock in \$1.7 billion in school spending growth in each of the next two years, concentrating 70 percent of it on districts with the greatest need...It would commit the state to greater financing for early childhood programs, reduction of class size, teacher training and repair and maintenance of schools. These are worthy goals that should be at the center of any budget negotiation."

■ *New York Times, 4/8/01*

"...with a \$2.7 billion surplus, a two-year allocation seems affordable. And it is necessary as well. The state is challenging a court ruling that, if upheld, will require substantial new investment in school aid...So what better time to start planning for the higher expenses than now? ...A two-year cycle would have other distinct advantages as well. It would give school districts some stability in their budgeting, and it would remove school aid from the budget debate next year...."

■ *Albany Times Union, 4/8/01*

districts are forced to put budgets together for voter approval without even knowing how much state aid they can depend on.

By setting up a two-year school aid plan, the Assembly proposal gives schools the information they need to plan timely budgets and prepare programs that meet high standards. It also reaffirms the Assembly's commitment to protect property taxpayers from higher tax bills. Our two-year plan guards against education cuts that could force school districts to raise taxes.

The Assembly has always made education a top priority.

Last year, the Assembly defeated the Governor's \$885 million school aid cut and increased education aid by over \$1 billion. This year's Assembly budget will continue our investment in education by providing local districts with the tools they need to give our children the right start for the jobs of tomorrow and help them meet tougher academic standards.

We urge the Senate to join us in budget conference committees to work out an agreement that gives our students the tools they need to succeed and holds the line on property taxes.

To see how much more funding your school district would receive under the Assembly's proposal, [click here](#).

For a comparison of the Assembly's proposal with the Governor's plan, [click here](#).

Additional information is available in the publication, Report of the Ways and Means Committee on the New York State Assembly Budget, posted on the Assembly's Internet Home Page (www.assembly.state.ny.us/Reports/WAM/2001ABudg/)

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