



MEMORANDUM OF CONCERN

School Aid Incentive Grants

In relation to the 2012 – 2013 Executive Education Budget

February 13, 2012

ADVOCACY TEAM

Robert J. Reidy, Jr.
Executive Director
rreidy@nyscoss.org

Robert N. Lowry, Jr.
Deputy Director for
Advocacy, Research and
Communications
bblowry@nyscoss.org
518.435.5996

Kyle McCauley Belokopitsky
Assistant Director for
Government Relations
kyle@nyscoss.org
518.817.3017

2011 - 2012 OFFICERS

Marilyn C. Terranova
President
Eastchester
580 White Plains Road
Eastchester, NY 10709

James T. Langlois
President-Elect
Putnam-No. Westchester
BOCES

Mary Beth R. Fiore
Vice President
Elmira Heights

Neil F. O'Brien
Treasurer
Port Byron

Robert W. Christmann
Past President
Grand Island

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Maureen E. Donahue
Friendship (2013)

Laura Feijoo
NYC Dept of Education (2013)

Lorna R. Lewis
East Williston (2013)

Ralph Marino, Jr.
Horseheads (2013)

Richard E. Organisciak
New Rochelle (2012)

Phillip G. Steinberg
Pine Bush (2013)

Patricia Sullivan-Kriss
Hauppauge (2012)

Cosimo Tangorra, Jr.
Ilion (2012)

Whitney K. Vantine
Tonawanda (2013)

The New York State Council of School Superintendents is recommends reallocating \$250 million in competitive School Aid grants proposed in the Governor's budget in order to provide additional general aid to all districts

Governor Cuomo has proposed an increase in School Aid of \$805 million, consistent with the two-year appropriation enacted in the 2011-12 state budget. Within this amount, \$250 million would be awarded as competitive grants, to encourage and reward gains in student performance or management efficiency.

These are desirable goals, but more than new incentives, we think changes in old rules are necessary – changes in state mandates which will allow schools to get more impact for students from the resources taxpayers can provide.

As it stands now, no more than \$25 million of the competitive grant funds will be awarded to districts by the time their boards must adopt budgets and tax levy increases for voter consideration. It is improbable that all the funds would be allocated even by the start of the school year next fall.

Some districts do not meet eligibility criteria for the grant programs, and some leaders of poorer districts contend they lack the in-house capacity to develop competitive funding proposals.

Excluding the competitive grant funding, the School Aid increases districts could count on in planning their 2012-13 budgets would average 2.9 percent, below the rate of inflation for the most recent calendar year (3.2 percent). After three years of cuts and freezes in state aid, districts have exhausted easier budget cutting options and have drained reserves. In the year ahead, they face the task of operating under the new property tax cap.

We recommend holding the incentive grants at \$50 million, as the Board of Regents Regents recommended, and using the balance of the \$200 million to provide additional general aid to all districts, to enable them to make better choices for students and taxpayers in the budgets they will ask voters to consider in May.