

# Legislative Advocacy Agenda

The 24 school districts of the Capital Region are united in support of the following priorities for the 2026 Legislative session:

## School Funding and Foundation Aid

Our superintendents appreciate the 2024-25 updates to the Foundation Aid formula. The inclusion of modern need and poverty measures was an important first step toward maintaining a fully funded and functional formula. Adjustments to BOCES and special services aid were also welcome and long overdue.



However, the State must continue refining its overall funding formulas to ensure they keep pace with current realities. Districts are serving students with increasingly complex academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs, and ongoing improvements are necessary to align funding with these challenges.

At the same time, full and consistent funding for expense-based aids — such as BOCES, transportation, building, and excess cost aids that support special education and essential programs and services — remains critical.

### Recommendations

- Increase the special education weight to reflect current costs.
- Continue to raise the weight for English language learners.
- Update the regional cost index statewide.
- Provide a due minimum increase to all districts annually.
- Fully fund all expense-based aids, including BOCES, transportation, and excess cost aids.

## Zero-Emission Bus Transition

Our districts remain committed to meeting the State's zero-emission bus goals and appreciate last year's progress, including extended waiver periods and increased investment. However, significant barriers remain — many beyond local control.

Electric remains the only available zero-emission option, yet statewide infrastructure is insufficient. Electrical grids in many regions cannot support charging needs, and districts face costly upgrades for charging stations, fire suppression systems, and storage facilities — projects that require lengthy approvals and construction.

Bus acquisition also poses challenges: demand outpaces supply, deliveries are delayed, and costs far exceed diesel models. Without sustained grant funding, districts must choose between compliance and core educational priorities.

### Recommendations

- Reevaluate the implementation timeline.
- Make all "make-ready" costs aidable expenses.
- Require utilities to assume grid-upgrade costs.
- Establish policy guidance for failed bond votes.
- Expand technical assistance for procurement and community engagement.



## FAPE to Age 22

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities are entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) until graduation or the statutory age limit. Recent court rulings established that in New York, this extends until the student turns 22 — creating new obligations without a state aid mechanism.

### Recommendation

- Update state aid formulas to fund services for eligible students until age 22.

## Workforce

Capital Region districts, like those across the state, continue to face significant workforce shortages. Recruiting and retaining qualified educators and staff has become increasingly difficult due to declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs, competition from the private sector, and outdated systems that limit access to school-based careers.

To strengthen New York's educator pipeline, the State should combine targeted financial supports — such as housing assistance, loan forgiveness, and service stipends — with a state-supported model for grow-your-own initiatives that help local districts recruit and prepare future educators from within their communities. These efforts should be paired with flexible, regionally responsive pathways into the profession, including modular credentialing and streamlined substitute certification.



### Recommendations

- Strengthen New York's educator pipeline through targeted financial supports and statewide grow-your-own initiatives.
- Continue to modernize civil service hiring and promotion processes to improve access to school-based employment.

## Capital Region BOCES

- Albany City SD
- Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD
- Bethlehem CSD
- Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake CSD
- Cobleskill-Richmondville CSD
- Cohoes City SD
- Duanesburg CSD
- Green Island UFSD
- Guilderland CSD
- Menands UFSD
- Middleburgh CSD
- Mohonasen CSD
- Niskayuna CSD
- North Colonie CSD
- Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk CSD
- Schalmont CSD
- Schenectady City SD
- Schoharie CSD
- Scotia-Glenville CSD
- Sharon Springs CSD
- Shenendehowa CSD
- South Colonie CSD
- Voorheesville CSD
- Watervliet City SD



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Produced on behalf of the superintendents of the Capital Region BOCES area, who represent approximately 80,000 students and their families and schools in four counties: Albany, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Schoharie.