

EDUCATION

- POLICY STATEMENT -

New York State Grange supports public education. We believe in the importance, value and significance of both traditional and non-traditional academic programs. We strive to promote and to ensure equal appreciation and validation of, as well as respect for, vocational, skilled trades and specialized training in our schools.

Maintaining a safe school environment is essential. The elimination of verbal, emotional and physical abuse is needed. Establishment of predator-free zones and drug-free schools are necessary. Aggressive screening programs in relation to hiring all staff must be stressed.

Challenges to the way we fund our schools and educational programs continue. Alternatives must be found to relieve the burden of property taxes, especially for those who are on a fixed income. We must be certain that enacted changes are fair and equitable for all school districts and school districts' residents.

Mandates continue to impact our school districts. We continue to work for mandate relief, as well as monitoring and encouraging the funding for necessary mandates by the originating or appropriate governing body.

We will continue our association with the Rural Schools Association of New York. By working with this association and other like organizations, we can influence positive changes in our educational system in all districts. We support the work of the NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources in relation to rural education issues, noting the many similarities to established policy of the New York State Grange.

We support higher education as an option for our members and their families. We will continue to make Grange scholarships and loans available and encourage their use.

October 2009

BOARD OF REGENTS/CURRICULUM

REGENTS DIPLOMA REQUIREMENTS

We reaffirm current Grange Policy on the Regents Action Plan; further that the development of the early identification and intervention programs for all students be continued. (2009)

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND IMPROVEMENTS ACT OF 2007

We immediately seek support of local communities and civic leaders, as well as the NYS Legislature, to urge the passage of the No Child Left Behind Improvements Act of 2007. (2007)

DRIVER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

We reaffirm current Grange policy requesting legislation, if necessary, to encourage public high schools to offer a Driver Education and Training Course for those high school students who desire to obtain a driver's license. (2006)

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

We urge the New York State Department of Education to significantly increase agricultural curricula including heritage, origins, means of production and nutritional benefits of the food we eat. (2006)

BOARD OF REGENTS MANDATES

We request the New York State Legislature and the State Board of Regents refrain from issuing new costly educational programs, unless additional funding accompanies these initiatives. (2006)

CRITICAL SKILLS INCENTIVES

We support employment incentives that could be promoted by the New York State Government, to include many critically-needed professions, such as teaching, healthcare, and agriculture that are in short supply and would affect the quality of life for people in this state. (2005)

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING STANDARDS

We seek legislation for the immediate establishment and utilization of alternative assessments to determine the successful completion of state learning standards subject to reasonable state review and the provision of a local high school diploma for school districts that provide alternative courses in multiple assessments responding to individual students' needs. (2005)

PRE-SCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS

We seek changes in state law entitling school districts and BOCES to full reimbursement for approved pre-school (3 - 5 year olds) special needs programs within the next school year. (2005)

“NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND” ACT

We request the state of New York immediately commence a legal challenge to the “No Child Left Behind” Act of 2001; such challenge to be based upon the Act's unfunded requirements, its focus on standardized testing rather than quality instruction, and such other issues as are determined to be appropriate. (2005)

DRUG USE

MARIJUANA ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

We support an amendment to Article 221 of the New York State Penal Law to address the possession of and intent to sell marijuana upon school grounds, which will give police departments and courts across New York State more power in keeping marijuana out of schools. (2005)

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ON SUNDAY

We request that schools not schedule activities on Sunday before 1 p.m. (2008)

FINANCIAL AID/GRANTS

FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)

We recommend that the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and Expected Family Contribution (EFC) regulations be adjusted to reflect family expenses, such as real estate taxes, medical expenses and other financial obligations in the determination of financial aid. (2009)

UPWARD BOUND FUNDS

We encourage federal legislators to initiate legislation protecting the Upward Bound Talent Search designed to benefit low income students seeking college educations. (2005)

FUNDING/TAX CREDITS

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL FUNDING

We encourage the NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief to review and propose new methods of public education funding that will be equitable to all taxpayers, and that the NYS Commission on Property Tax Relief in deliberations consider the following suggestive actions:

- Ensure equity in a state aid formula for funding public education based on taxpayer's ability to pay.
- Decrease the revenue raised from tax sources based on the value of real estate.
- Refrain from imposing state mandated requirements upon school systems without corresponding state funding.
- Adjust the formulas on revenues earmarked as aid to education from state lottery and other future gaming activities so that the annual percentage is substantially increased from the current level.

- Maintain the enhanced STAR exemption for the town's neediest citizens, but also increase the STAR exemption for senior citizens specifically at all income levels.
- Regain lost tax revenue from the above actions through income tax. (2008)

COLLEGE FOR ALL NEW YORK

We support proposed legislation to define "The College For All in New York" Program, to set up tax credit incentives for qualifying graduates and businesses and to set up the qualification guidelines for both students and businesses. (2008)

QUARTERLY SCHOOL TAX PAYMENTS

We support the writing and adoption of New York State legislation to require that all school districts and municipalities offer an optional payment plan allowing taxes to be paid on an installment basis with interest. (2006)

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

We appeal New York State public officials to implement new measures for financing public education, including the following suggested actions: (1) ensure equity in a State Aid formula for funding public education based on the taxpayers' ability to pay (2) decrease the revenue raised from tax sources based on the value of dwellings (3) refrain from imposing state mandated requirements upon school systems without corresponding state funding (4) adjust the formulas on revenues earmarked as aid to education from state lottery and other future gaming activities so that the annual percentage is substantially increased from the current level (5) maintain the enhanced STAR exemption for the town's neediest citizens, but also increase the STAR exemptions for senior citizens specifically at all income levels, and (6) regain lost tax revenue from the above actions through income tax.. (2005)

FUND BALANCES OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

We support legislation to increase the unencumbered fund balance that school districts may maintain from year to year from two percent (2%) to five percent (5%). (2005)

LUNCH/FOOD PROGRAMS/POLICIES

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

We support funding for the school food service program to ensure that children have a better foundation for learning. (2009)

STATEWIDE BAN OF OPEN CAMPUSES FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We support legislation that would ban open lunch policies at high schools statewide, thereby prohibiting students from leaving campus during lunch period unless written permission is given by the student's parent or legal guardian to address a specific need. (2008)

MANDATES

EDUCATIONAL MANDATES

We oppose all new state educational mandates placed on local school districts which are not funded by the New York State Budget, and favor the creation of a state taskforce with the purpose of reviewing each unfunded mandate imposed by the state on school districts over the last ten years to identify those which should be state funded. (2008)

MISCELLANEOUS

VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SQUADS TUITION

We urge the passage of legislation which allows members of a volunteer ambulance squad to take courses tuition free at a State University College on a space available basis, further this also applies to any volunteer medical squads, such as first responders. (2007)

VERBAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL ABUSE IN SCHOOLS

We suggest that the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare and our New York State Department of Education continue to support planning which will teach children the positive effects of dealing with each other kindly and fairly and about the negative impact of verbal, emotional and physical abuse on individuals and the possible end results of violence, injuries and death. (2005)

PLEDGE/PRAYER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN SCHOOLS

We oppose the deletion of the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance from our schools. (2006, 2005)

PRAYER IN SCHOOL

We reaffirm the policy to support the right of children to voluntarily participate in prayer in public school. (2006)

SAFETY

SCHOOL SAFETY/SECURITY

We support the efforts of school districts in implementing better security and safety measures in schools, as well as preventive programs which will help identify potential violent acts before they happen, thus improving the learning atmosphere of our schools so that they are a better and safer place for the education of our children. (2006)

PREDATOR-FREE ZONE AROUND SCHOOLS

We seek legislation which would create a predator-free zone around all schools in New York State which would require registered sex offenders to maintain a distance of at least 1,000 feet from school property or be subject to arrest. (2005)

SCHOOL DAY/YEAR

LONGER SCHOOL DAYS

We oppose legislation that would allow school districts to operate with a shorter school year achieved by longer school days. (2009)

TEACHERS

TEACHER BACKGROUND CHECKS

We support legislation/regulations which would give school boards more control over the hiring of prospective teachers through improved background checks. (2007)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION/BOCES

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

We request the NYS Department of Education to revise their curriculum to make it possible for students to receive a vocational education and still meet the credit requirements for graduation with a regents diploma. (2008)

We urge the Board of Regents to review its current mandates requiring regents exams for students who do not intend to go to college and are seeking their education through trade training at their local BOCES center. (2006)

SUPPORT OF BOCES

We oppose any cuts in BOCES funding. (2008)