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Carla Simpson-Boakye  
Chair, Suffolk Region PTA – Family Engagement  
[familyengagement@suffolkpta.org](mailto:familyengagement@suffolkpta.org)

Greetings,

As we approach the end of the school year, a reminder for all parents getting involved in their local school district budget process. Districts are required to present in a public manner through the BOE on the 2022-2023 school year budget. Most if not all districts are taking it a step further and conducting these presentations at the applicable March/April/May PTA meetings. If this is not the case for your district, I would implore our local units and/or PTA Councils to invite a budget process meeting to take place during a PTA meeting as it is another opportunity to engage with the community and answer questions.

As the NYS budget recently passed this weekend and there is a \$31.5bn allocated to education, it is of the upmost importance for us all to pay attention to our school budgets and allocation of resources. A few key things to note with the NYS budget.

#### Universal Pre-Kindergarten

The Enacted Budget increases the State's annual investment in high-quality prekindergarten to \$1.1 billion, an increase of \$125 million, or 13 percent. With this funding, school districts will be able to provide access to high-quality, full-day pre-kindergarten across the State for approximately 17,500 additional four-year-old children.

#### Academic and Mental Health Support

The State Budget includes a total of \$100 million of matching funds over two years to be provided to school districts and BOCES with the highest needs to address student wellbeing and learning loss in response to the trauma brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes support for extended school day or school year programs, afterschool programs, mental health professionals and other locally determined initiatives.

#### Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

The Budget includes funding for new initiatives centered around expanding the workforce for teachers, as well as expanding the means by which professionals from other careers may become teachers.

The Budget creates a state teacher residency program to bring more teachers into schools sooner while providing greater opportunity for support and training as they embark on their careers.

The Budget includes initiatives to upskill current paraprofessionals and teaching assistants. There are more than 100,000 paraprofessionals and teaching assistants in New York State schools—a number that

is rapidly rising. The Budget will provide grants for paraprofessionals who remain employed in a school district to pursue a teaching degree. School districts would be required to pair candidates with professional mentors.

### Green Education

In order to improve air quality for school-age New Yorkers, the State Budget requires that all new school bus purchases be zero-emissions by 2027 and all school buses on the road be zero-emissions by 2035. The State Budget will provide \$500 million through the Environmental Bond Act to support school districts in purchases of zero-emission buses and related charging infrastructure including charging stations. Additionally, the State Budget authorizes school districts to lease or finance zero-emission buses for 12 years, more than double the current five-year limitation for diesel buses, in order to help districts meet this goal, and ensures Transportation Aid is provided on zero-emission buses and related charging infrastructure.

Secondly, school board elections are in the beginning phases as candidates were invited to contact the district clerk for a petition to run for office on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Let's encourage our parents to take an active approach in the campaign of the candidates for each district. In light of the political climate we are in surrounding the pandemic, DEI and curriculum decisions, some of more of the school board elections will be more detailed and accessible to all parents moreso than the campaigns may have been in the past. It is imperative we all have a seat at the table to hear from all candidates and educate our families on the stance and value any candidate will bring to the table for the benefit and future of our schools for our children. To that end, we encourage local PTA units and Councils to send reminders for the Meet the Candidates Night taking place at your district and familiarize yourself with the issues and candidates that will be on the slate. If possible, a suggestion to local units and Councils to invite all candidates to speak at a meeting ahead of the District-wide Meet the Candidates Night to introduce themselves, their reason for running for office and what each candidate hopes to achieve if elected.

New York State School Boards Association puts together a great timeline on the budget and school board election process – one can access this timeline [here](#).

Please note that the PTA is non-partisan and does not endorse any particular candidate as part of his or her campaign for any campaign. Moreover, PTAs cannot represent the viewpoint of the PTA at any level unless the PTA membership body elects a specific person to serve as the point person and voice on a specific issue.

Last but certainly not least, lets encourage our parents to turn their attention to secondary school children's schedule selections for the '22-'23 school year and encouraging parents to attend.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carla Simpson-Boakye  
Family Engagement Chair