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2011-2012 OFFICERS

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R.E.F.I.T. News...

Dr. Robert Dillon, Executive Director

Helen Maloney, Executive Secretary

March 2012

www.refitny.org

On Friday, March 2, 2012, the Board of Directors of R.E.F.I.T., the sole volunteer organization representing high tax low wealth school districts in our region, organized a legislative breakfast. The meeting, held at Western Suffolk BOCES, developed into what can only be described as a conversation around the dining room table. Among the legislators present were Senator John Flanagan, Assemblyman Philip Boyle, Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick, Assemblyman Andrew Raia, Ms. Laurie Griffiths from Senator Ken LaValle's office, Ms. Betty Ann Murphy from Senator Lee Zeldin's office,

Ms. Arona Kessler from Assemblyman Stephen Engelbright's office, and Mr. Kevin Molloy from Assemblyman Dean Murray's office.

The dialogue was chaired by president Deborah Coates (Nassau BOCES). Joining Ms. Coates was First Vice President, Ms. Susan Lipman (Eastern Suffolk BOCES), Second Vice-President, Dr. James Mapes (Baldwin), Dr. Robert R. Aloise (East Islip), Ms. Audrey Jacullo (North Babylon), Dr. Michael Mensch (Western Suffolk BOCES), Mr. Aubrey Phillips (Elmont), Mr. Ronald Ellerbe (Freeport), Mr. Steven Gellar (East Islip), and

Dr. John Williams (Amityville). Also in attendance were Executive Director, Dr. Robert Dillon and Ms. Helen Maloney, Executive Secretary.

The Board shared the legislative priorities that were developed by the R.E.F.I.T. members. The background information provided to those in attendance included the findings identified in the LIEC 2011 Budget Impact Survey, The State of Long Island — *How Long Island Compares to the Rest of the State and the Nation*, developed by the Nassau and Suffolk school superintendents.



Members of the Board spoke directly to the legislators regarding R.E.F.I.T. legislative priorities and the importance of addressing these priorities in this legislative session. There were numerous, vivid and compelling examples, presented by our Board of Directors of the challenges to low wealth school districts, including the cap on the tax levy and roadblocks initiated by the State Education Department. These anecdotes were followed with specific suggestions developed from our legislative priorities permitting our school districts to address the challenges and function more efficiently and effectively.

This forum proved to be an excellent opportunity for the Board of Directors, our elected officials, and their representatives to engage directly with each other in a dialogue concerning the issues.



The R.E.F.I.T. Board of Directors is greatly appreciative to our elected officials who were able to attend the breakfast. The Board looks forward to working with our elected officials not only to maintain our educational programs but to develop ways in improving educational opportunities for all children.



Member Districts 2011-12

Amityville
Baldwin
Bayshore
Bayport-Blue Point
Central Islip
Commack
Comsewogue
Connetquot
Copiague
East Islip
East Meadow
Eastern Suffolk BOCES
Eastport/South Manor
Elmont
Elwood
Farmingdale
Freeport
Harborfields
Islip
Lindenhurst
Longwood
Nassau BOCES
North Babylon
Oceanside
Plainedge
Riverhead
West Babylon
West Islip,
Westbury

Future Meeting Dates

Tuesday, April 17, 2012
Tuesday, May 22, 2012
Tuesday, June 19, 2012

Meetings are held at
Western Suffolk BOCES
507 Deer Park Avenue,
Dix Hills, New York

The meetings begin at 8
AM.



THE STATE OF LONG ISLAND

HOW LONG ISLAND COMPARES TO THE REST OF THE STATE AND THE NATION

- If Long Island were a state...we would be *ranked #1* in the nation in High School Completion Rate:
 1. Long Island 2. Wisconsin 3. Vermont 4. N. Dakota/Minnesota 5. Iowa
- If Long Island were a state...we would be *ranked #1* in the nation in Intel Semifinalists
- If Long Island were a state...we would be *ranked #2* in the nation in the number of Siemens Semifinalists; just 2 students less than the state of California
- 54 Long Island high schools ranked in the *top 7%* of high schools in the nation by *The Washington Post*
- 19 New York State high schools are among the Top 100 in *Newsweek's* Best High Schools in America... 9 of the New York State schools (47%) are from Long Island
- 21 Long Island high schools rank among the Top 300 Best Schools in America
- 9 Long Island school districts won the National AP District of the Year Award
- 158 Long Island students were named 2012 National Merit Semifinalists
- 50% of Long Island graduates earn a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation, compared to 27% for the rest of New York State
- Long Island's high school students outperform every other region of New York State by every measure maintained by SED
- Long Island outperforms every other region of New York State on the College Readiness indicator by 11 percentage points according to *The 2012 Long Island Index* reports
- Percentage (%) of NYS students from Long Island participating in NYSSMA:

Solo and Ensemble Festivals	47%
Major Ensemble Festivals	39%
All-State Conference— Select	41%
All-State Conference –Alternate	45%
Electronic Composition Showcase	100%
All-Eastern Division	37%

R.E.F.I.T. Legislative Agenda

R.E.F.I.T. believes that school districts are the fulcrum of our villages, our towns and our state. Our legislative leaders, elected by the people, have a moral and legal obligation to provide our students with instructional and non-instructional program parity throughout the state. Over the past several years, we have done more with less. R.E.F.I.T. districts have eliminated teaching positions while increasing class size at the elementary, middle and high school levels. We have been forced to reduce instructional program offerings across the board. We have reduced or eliminated extracurricular and interscholastic programs in our school districts and communities.

Now, we are being asked to do less with less. This tragedy of triage must be terminated.

Our elected officials cannot deprive our students from the opportunity to participate in a sound basic education as provided in our state's constitution. New York has a constitutional duty to educate all of the students in the state. The state is responsible to provide a sound basic education for all of the students. A sound basic education including but may not be limited to physical, intellectual, emotional, and social programs that demonstrate rigor and substance. A meaningful education must develop the skills necessary for students to prosper and function in a democratic and global society. Program parity for all students must stretch to and from every corner of the state, from Niagara Falls to Montauk Point and from Plattsburgh to Jamestown.



R.E.F.I.T. school districts whether they are large or small, urban, suburban, or rural, with their unique characteristics have contributed to the cultural, intellectual, and economic success of our state. Fairness is providing the resources necessary to implement a sound basic education and program parity throughout the state.

R.E.F.I.T. districts and communities have helped to nurture and cultivate the attributes of sportsmanship, cooperation, collaboration, perseverance, and spirituality among our students. We, in partnership with the state, are responsible for creating the leaders of today and will continue to be responsible for creating the leaders of tomorrow.

The past prosperity of our state can be directly linked to the strong commitment and partnership the state once had with education. The economic recovery of New York will balance on the health of public education. Public education has been the linchpin in New York's past economic and cultural success and will continue to do so in the future.

State mandates have dramatically driven up local costs. While mandate relief has been promised, it remains an unfulfilled promise. R.E.F.I.T. districts respectfully request your consideration for mandate relief. In order for R.E.F.I.T. districts to survive in this current environment, with the tax levy cap we need mandate relief.



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

2012

- Amend current law from the supermajority of at least 60% of the popular vote in a school district referendum required to approve a tax increase exceeding the cap on the levy to a simple majority of the popular vote to approve a tax increase exceeding the cap on the levy.
- Eliminate the Triborough amendment of the Triborough Doctrine. School districts should not be required to pay wage increases under an expired contract. Amend the Taylor law to allow regional labor relations.
- Eliminate state mandates that exceed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Provide new public school employees with the choice of a defined contribution retirement plan or defined-benefit contribution plan.
- Allow school districts to consider factors other than seniority when making decisions regarding teacher layoffs.
- Establish statewide maximum health care contributions for school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services.
- Streamline the tenured teacher disciplinary process to make it less time-consuming and cost effective.
- Permit schools to leverage the aggregate purchasing power of large, national procurement cooperatives and contracts entered into by other states and local governments.



Council of Administrators and Supervisors
 Eastern Suffolk BOCES
 Long Island Association of School Personnel Administrators
 Long Island School Public Relations Association
 Nassau County BOCES
 Nassau County Council of School Superintendents
 Nassau County Elementary School Principals Association
 Nassau County Secondary School Administrators Association
 Nassau Region PTA



Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association
 Nassau Association of School Business Officials
 New York State United Teachers (Nassau-Suffolk)
 Reform Educational Financing Inequities Today (R.E.F.I.T.)
 School Administrators Association of New York State (Nassau-Suffolk)
 SCOPE Education Services
 Suffolk Association of School Business Officials
 Suffolk County High School Principals Association
 Suffolk County School Superintendents Association
 Suffolk Region PTA
 Western Suffolk BOCES

Long Island Education Coalition

2011-12 Budget Impact Survey Ten Key Preliminary Findings

101 Districts Responding

The percentage of low wealth school districts with an average elementary school class size over 25 grew from 16% to 28% between 2010-11 and 2011-12, while middle and higher wealth school districts remained unchanged, 3% and 0% respectively.

The percentage of low wealth school districts with an average middle school class size over 25 grew from 39% to 72% between 2010-11 and 2011-12, while middle and higher wealth school districts remained unchanged, 31% and 0% respectively.

The percentage of low wealth school districts with an average high school class size over 25 grew from 56% to 72% between 2010-11 and 2011-12, while middle and higher wealth school districts also increased, from 44% to 59% and 0% to 6% respectively.

Nearly 40% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of BOCES career and technical education (CTE) opportunities for students, while 7% of middle and 0% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.

Approximately 17% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of advanced placement (AP) classes for students, while 0% of middle and 0% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.

Nearly 30% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of high school elective classes for students, while 3% of middle and 6% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.

Over 30% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of elementary school before/after school programs for students, while 0% of middle and 6% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.

Nearly 40% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of middle school before/after school programs for students, while 0% of middle and 0% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.

Over 30% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of middle school athletics for students, while 3% of middle and 5% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.

Approximately 19% of low wealth school districts planned a significant (10+%) reduction of high school athletics for students, while 3% of middle and 0% of higher wealth school districts projected the same level of cuts.