

Foundation Aid Study
Information for Consideration - Rockefeller Institute
Public Hearing - Jul 30, 2024
By Dr. Maria L. Rianna

Any formula must begin with an appropriate, realistic standard amount per pupil for all districts. The new Foundation Aid Formula base amount must be updated to reflect the current realities of the investment schools are making to meet the needs of providing a sound basic education.

We must also understand the nuances of our student groups and support/fund those groups appropriately. We have up-to-date data for each group, and subgroup, of students we educate, including students in private and parochial schools within our districts. It needs to be understood that there are vast differences within some subgroups that impact programs significantly. One example are ELL students that are entering our schools educated vs students with interrupted or no education.

Average daily attendance cannot impact a district's funding negatively. The financial impact must be understood as additional services are required to enhance attendance and provide remedial services.

If the formula is calculated on data that is currently gathered and provided yearly....and is currently being reported to the State Education department, then using this data, accurate funding could be provided on a 2 or 3 year average.

Save-Harmless districts had their Foundation aid frozen for 2024-25. And I have a detailed understanding of need as a result. Their district profiles have changed considerably since first being identified as a "Save-Harmless" district, as have many districts over the past 10-15 years. I ask that you also keep in mind that districts such as Glen Cove, Westbury, Ossining, Riverhead, Port Chester and many others [of which we have a list] did not receive full funding of Foundation aid for more than 10 years. [Glen Cove was at 44%, just to provide an example] Although we know there is no manner in which these districts can be fully reimbursed for those years, the formula could provide for an equity factor included over a certain period of time to properly provide for the children of those districts.

Please also keep in mind that although Foundation aid was fully funded for only one year, after 2023-24, the manipulation of the formula in determining aid for 2024-25 (for example with the substitution of the CPI) drove aid down across the state.

This is not a new problem. Eight states have already put in place a new funding formula. We could learn from them what has worked, and what hasn't. But New York must step up, especially when we serve one of the largest populations of children in the country.