

Foundation Aid Study

Issue for Consideration

The Issue:

One significant factor that determine the Foundation Aid per pupil is the Pupil Need Index ("PNI"). The most significant factor in this equation for the Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD (the "District") is Free and Reduced Price Lunch Applications ("FRPL"). However, since going Community Eligible for student meals the application count has been significantly reduced and thus Foundation Aid is lower than it should be. These two items appear to be in direct conflict – a District with increasing poverty and student needs is punished in Foundation Aid for providing meals where no applications are needed.

Perhaps this is best illustrated with an example using real numbers as follows:

Illustrated Example of Effect on Foundation Aid:

This poverty factor is measured by taking an average of the prior three-year period. The below table shows how "Community Eligibility" effected the FRPL count for the Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD:

| Aid Year | FRPA Percentage | Percentage Change |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 2014-2015 | 0.5233 | |
| 2015-2016 | 0.5528 | 2.95% |
| 2016-2017 | 0.5664 | 1.36% |
| 2017-2018 | 0.5756 | 0.92% |
| 2018-2019 | 0.5910 | 1.54% |
| 2019-2020 | 0.6072 | 1.62% |
| 2020-2021 | 0.5655 | -4.17% |
| 2021-2022 | 0.5197 | -4.58% |
| 2022-2023 | 0.4758 | -4.39% |
| 2023-2024 | 0.5081 | 3.23% |
| 2024-2025 | 0.5161 | 0.80% |

The District went Community Eligible in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The first effect on FRPL was in the 2020-2021 fiscal year.

As displayed above Community Eligibility masked the fact that poverty was growing even more rapidly in our District. What would FRPL be if the District had not gone Community Eligible? Below we attempt to project this factor:

| Aid Year | FRPA Percentage | Percentage Change |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2014-2015 | 0.5233 | |
| 2015-2016 | 0.5528 | 2.95% |
| 2016-2017 | 0.5664 | 1.36% |
| 2017-2018 | 0.5756 | 0.92% |
| 2018-2019 | 0.5910 | 1.54% |
| 2019-2020 | 0.6072 | 1.62% |
| 2020-2021 | 0.6222 | 1.50% |
| 2021-2022 | 0.6372 | 1.50% |
| 2022-2023 | 0.6518 | 1.47% |
| 2023-2024 | 0.6668 | 1.50% |
| 2024-2025 | 0.6815 | 1.47% |

We believe these to be a very conservative estimate of increase as poverty level was accelerating.

What effect did this have on the District? Below is an actual comparison to a neighboring district:

| Wealth Factor | Cheektowaga-Sloan | Neighboring District | Percentage Difference |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Adjusted Gross Income | \$ 253,581,712 | \$ 277,895,339 | 9.6% |
| Adjusted Gross Income Per Pupil | \$ 163,390 | \$ 171,012 | 4.7% |
| Adjusted Gross Income Per Pupil (TWFPUP) | \$ 191,816 | \$ 203,735 | 6.2% |

Our neighboring district has wealth factors higher than Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD

If the neighboring district has higher wealth factors why would they have a higher adjusted Foundation Aid per pupil (these are actual numbers):

| | Cheektowaga-Sloan | Neighboring District | Percentage Difference |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Section II of Foundation Aid Calculation Line 7 - Adjusted Foundation per Pupil | \$ 12,082.31 | \$ 12,722.27 | 5.3% |

The neighboring district has a higher adjusted Foundation Aid per pupil because they did not apply for and become Community Eligible until very recently. Despite having lower wealth, what would the District's aid be if the District had this same aid per pupil? The following chart displays what Cheektowaga-Sloan aid would be using the neighboring district's adjusted Foundation Aid per Pupil:

| | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|--|
| Section II of Foundation Aid Calculation Line 7 - Adjusted Foundation per Pupil | | \$ 12,722.27 | |
| Line 3 - Expected Minimum Local Contribution | | <u>3,334.72</u> | |
| Foundation Aid per Pupil | | \$ 9,388 | |
| Section IV - Line 24 - Selected TAFPU for Foundation Aid | | <u>1,605</u> | |
| Projected Foundation Aid | | <u>\$ 15,067,018</u> | |

The Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD would have received \$15,067,018 if they used the neighboring district as an extremely conservative estimate. So how does this compare to the Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD actual calculated Foundation Aid?

| | | | |
|--|--|----------------------|--|
| Projected Foundation Aid | | \$ 15,067,018.00 | |
| District's Actual 2024-2025 Foundation Aid | | <u>14,284,677.00</u> | |
| Foundation Aid per Pupil | | <u>\$ 782,341</u> | |

The Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD is to receive \$782,341 less because they feed children under Community Eligibility? We believe this projection to be **very conservative** as the District's wealth is lower than this neighboring district and their FRPA for 2024-2025 was .6166; whereas, the District's is projected to be at least .6815.

The District has attempted exhausted methods to have families file FRPL applications with only minor success. Some of the steps take include:

- ✓ Information in newsletters and texts to parents / guardians
- ✓ Flyers sent home with students
- ✓ Tables set up at open houses and information session held
- ✓ Applications provided as part of registration package
- ✓ Portions of applications pre-completed
- ✓ Chances for prize drawings for completing an application (hand in an application and receive a ticket for drawings for gift cards – this is ridiculous)

The Cheektowaga-Sloan UFSD has been and continues to be harmed by this factor in the Foundation Aid formula. **Feeding children should not reduce Foundation Aid.**