

EDUCATION

- POLICY STATEMENT -

New York State Grange supports public education. We believe in the importance, value, and significance of traditional and non-traditional academic programs. We strive to promote and to ensure equal appreciation and validation of, as well as respect for agricultural, vocational, skilled trades and specialized training in our schools, including support of programs such as the FFA Blue Jacket Program. We support the continuation of a Career and Technical Education (CTE) diploma endorsement.

We support actions to promote agricultural literacy from pre-K through high school and in college-level agricultural degree programs. We support expansion of Pre-K and Kindergarten to better prepare children in these significantly important formative years.

We support increasing capacity for New York State Agricultural teacher education and certification. Further, we support community-based lifelong agricultural awareness programs.

The New York State Grange recognizes that education does not stop at the end of formal schooling. We also support community-based, lifelong learning opportunities.

Maintaining a safe school environment is essential. The elimination of verbal, emotional, cyber, and physical abuse and bullying is needed. We support the implementation of a curriculum for all students and staff that would improve interpersonal relationships. We support the expansion of civic education to teach dispute resolution. We must be certain that enacted changes are fair and equitable for all school districts and school district residents.

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

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 and Democracy-Ready New York Coalition. By working with these associations and other like organizations, we can influence positive changes in our educational system in all districts. We support the work of the New York State 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, both vocational and academic, as options for our members and their families. We will continue to make Grange scholarships and loans available and encourage their use.

October 2023

BOARD OF REGENTS/CURRICULUM

AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

We continue to support funding in the state budget for the Agricultural Education Outreach Program housed at Cornell University, which coordinates pre-K through 12 agricultural education through Agriculture in the Classroom, RRA, professional support to the New York Association of Agricultural Educators and Urban Agricultural Education. (2020)

Agricultural Programs offer relevance to core academic concepts as they are applied to the food, fiber and fuel systems and prepare students for high demand, high wage careers and higher education in agriculture. (2020)

We support continuation of the funding program established that assists school districts and career and technical education centers to establish new or expand existing agricultural education and FFA programs guided by the Agricultural Education and New York FFA Strategic Plan. (2020)

We recommend that New York State Education Department continue to have flexibility so that agricultural education courses fulfill high school distribution requirements (Career and Technical Education {CTE} course replaces one core subject Regents requirement), as well as the 1-3/4 credits in agriculture to meet the middle school CTE requirement. (2020)

We support continued agricultural education at local schools and career and technical centers (BOCES). These students can choose from over three hundred careers in the agricultural industry and will be our next biotechnologists, environmental engineers, and feed scientists that will improve our food supply by producing high yields with greater food safety standards. (2020)

We recommend that high school career counselors include promotion of agriculture careers and post-secondary agricultural education. (2020)

We encourage the New York State Department of Education to require the inclusion of agriculture education in schools at each grade from level K–12 and encourage use of relevant STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) based curriculum that meets and exceeds current state education standards. (2020)

We support increasing the capacity of all agriculture education teacher certification programs in New York State to recruit, train and retain agriculture teachers to meet the growing demand for agriculture education in New York's public schools. (2020)

We support comprehensive agricultural education programs that include classroom/lab instruction, supervised agricultural experiences and FFA chapters. FFA is integral to the instruction of agricultural education by developing premier leaders, personal growth and career success. (2020)

We support the importance of agriculture education in schools to prepare our youth to take the reins and guide the agricultural industry and that any and all current or proposed legislation to ensure state and local budgets adequately fund agricultural programs in school. (2022)

BOARD OF REGENTS

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. (2021)

CAREER/TECHNICAL EDUCATION

We support legislation that would establish a Career and Technical Education (CTE) diploma, based on a curriculum designed to provide students with technical skills to prepare them for a career for those who do not intend to go to college and are seeking their education through trade training. (2020)

CIVICS IN THE SCHOOLS

We support the re-introduction of active civics education in all public schools across the curriculum and that we support the efforts of organizations like the Democracy-Ready New York Coalition to develop new methods for New York State for civic education in public schools (2023)

CURSIVE WRITING INSTRUCTION

We support cursive writing instruction in third and fourth grades in New York State's public schools. (2023)

DRIVER EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

We support 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. (2021)

LIFE SKILLS CLASS

We support the continuation of Life Skills classes. (2022)

LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

We support the continuance of the local diploma for any student who wishes to obtain one. (2022)

PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM

We support the removal of curriculum, testing and personal data from private company control and returning control to the school boards, highly trained professionals actively involved in education, along with representatives of the New York State Education Department. (2019)

STANDARDIZED TESTING FOR ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

We oppose mandating a fixed role for the use of student test scores in public school accountability systems including the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). We support using multiple forms of assessment, which do not require excessive standardized testing, to reflect student learning, school quality, and accountability more accurately. (2023)

YOUNG FARMER APPRENTICE PROGRAM

We support legislation that would amend Section 1950 of the Education Law, which encompasses the power, duties, and responsibilities of Boards of Cooperative Education Services to establish a young farmer apprentice program under the auspices of BOCES. (2019)

BUILDINGS: RENOVATIONS/REPAIRS

GREEN BUILDING METHODS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

We support legislation that would encourage school districts to use green methods when building new or renovating existing school buildings as established by the New York State Department of Education (NYSED) in the department's manual of planning standards appendix, NYCHPS (most current version) High Performance School Guidelines. (2023)

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

PROHIBITION OF MARKSMANSHIP AND/OR SHOOTING PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We are opposed to any additional amendments or legislation that would prohibit marksmanship and/or shooting programs for public school students. (2021)

FINANCIAL AID/GRANTS/LOANS

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. (2020)

STUDENT LOANS

We support the Bank of Students Emergency Loan Refinancing Act or other similar legislation that would allow any student loan to be refinanced at lower interest rates. (2019)

We support legislation that would allow parents or students to be able to utilize all student loan interest as an adjustment of income on their federal tax return. (2020)

TEACHERS LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM

We support legislation that would establish a loan forgiveness program for teachers who agree to teach in designated underserved areas, as determined by the Commission of Education, for a minimum of five years and that the Commissioner of Education also establish a loan recapture program that would recover funds for loans that were forgiven should the teacher fail to complete the five-year agreement to teach in the underserved rural school. (2019)

FUNDING/TAX CREDITS

ADEQUATE BROADBAND ACCESS

We urge all levels of the New York State government to support equitable funding, on an emergency basis, to supply the necessary broadband internet access and other instruction resources for communities who lack adequate internet access. (2020)

LOTTERY FUNDING

We support apportioning the state lottery money for education, so schools receive the promised amount of the lottery funds in addition to state aid appropriations. (2023)

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

We appeal to 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
6. regain lost tax revenue from the above actions through income tax. (2020)

PUBLIC LIBRARY FUNDING

We request that the New York State Legislature provide adequate funding for operation of our public libraries. (2019)

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. (2021)

SCHOOL AID RUNS

We support legislation that would establish a hard deadline for school aid runs to be released annually, no later than January 31. (2020)

SCHOOL FUNDING EQUITY

We support the School Funding Equity Act or similar legislation that would address aspects of the school aid formula so it will provide fair distribution of school aid throughout the state to ensure that children in the most disadvantaged parts of our state receive a basic education. (2023)

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

We support legislation that would establish a method of apportioning school aid for students with disabilities at any time throughout the school year and allow for the apportionment to follow the student when changing school districts within New York State throughout the school year. (2023)

WEALTH ADJUSTED FORMULA FOR EDUCATION

We support a true “wealth adjusted formula” model that includes the following points: (1) elimination of the .65 floor that is built into the Income Wealth Index as most small and rural school districts have a wealth index well below .65, thus the Income Wealth Index penalizes High Need Rural Districts. It does not acknowledge the true level of need; (2) elimination of the “shares” approach to the current distribution of school aid, to address the higher levels of poverty and a greater disparity between poor and affluent school districts. It is an issue of fundamental fairness, and a true wealth adjusted formula should be based on the ability to pay. (2020)

HIGHER EDUCATION

AGRICULTURE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

We support Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences increasing its recognition of agricultural education and work towards reinstating an Agricultural Education degree program. (2019)

We support increasing the capacity of all agriculture education teacher certification programs to improve recruitment, training and retaining agriculture teachers to meet the growing demand for agricultural education and FFA programs in New York's public schools. (2022)

We support the development and creation of an agriculture education teacher certification pathway through a collaboration with State University of New York College System allowing colleges to provide technical coursework required for certification, as well as work with SUNY Empire State College with dual enrollment of student to begin graduate coursework in education while completing undergraduate requirements at other state universities and that we advocate for this initiative with State University of New York (SUNY) Chancellor and support state funding for this initiative. (2019)

We support designation of agricultural education as a critical teacher shortage area thus making Agricultural teachers eligible for the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL), Federal Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS) and for cancellation of up to 100 percent of debt under the Federal Perkins Loan Program (23 DFR 674.53 ©), and teaching obligation fulfillment for recipients under the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program (34 CFR 686). (2022)

COMMUNITY BASED LIFELONG LEARNING

We support Cooperative Extension and other programs that provide community-based lifelong learning and awareness programs. (2019)

LANGUAGE

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AS A SECONDARY LANGUAGE

We support the teaching of American Sign Language (ASL) as a secondary language for students who do not use ASL as their primary form of communication for graduation credits and we support securing the funding for certified teachers and materials to teach ASL as a secondary language. (2019)

CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

We support legislation that would direct the New York State Education Department and other agencies to develop resources for assessing language development in children's language and communication methods from birth to 5 years for the deaf and hard of hearing and we also support extending this policy to children with other underlying causes of language delay. (2021)

LITERATURE

CLASSIC LITERATURE PROTECTION

We oppose any changes in the language of classic literature as it was written. (2021)

LUNCH/FOOD PROGRAMS/POLICIES

KEEP KIDS FED ACT

We support the continued extension of the Keep Kids Fed Act. (2022)

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

We support funding for the school food service program to ensure that children have a better foundation for learning. (2019)

SCHOOL MILK NUTRITION ACT

We support legislation that would require adjustments to child nutrition programs as necessary to promote better consumption of milk by the nation's students and to permit schools to offer all varieties of milk consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including low-fat flavored milk containing no more than 150 calories per 8-ounce serving, as well as provisions for meeting the needs of lactose-intolerant children. (2021)

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. (2023)

MANDATES

EDUCATIONAL MANDATES

We oppose all new state educational mandates placed on local school districts which are not fully 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. (2023)

SCHOOL DISTRICT ELECTIONS

We support legislation that would allow school districts to use lever voting machines indefinitely, where available and in working order, and that for those school districts using the optical scan voting machines, that the county of the school district would be required to provide their machine(s) for school district elections or that state funding be provided to schools to purchase their own. (2020)

PLEDGE/PRAYER

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE IN SCHOOLS

We support the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in our schools. (2021)

PRAYER IN SCHOOLS

We support the right of children to voluntarily participate in prayer in schools. (2021)

PRESCHOOL

HEAD START PROGRAM

We support the preservation of the Head Start Program. (2020)

PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN EXPANSION

We support the expansion of Pre-K and Kindergarten to better prepare children in these significantly important formative years. (2023)

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMS

We seek changes in state law entitling school districts and BOCES to full reimbursement for approved preschool (3 - 5-year-old) special needs programs within the next school year. (2020)

SAFETY

BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

We support Jacobe's Law or similar legislation that requires school districts to notify parents of bullies and victims, after receiving reports of harassment, bullying or discrimination. (2023)

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 and bullying on individuals and the possible end results of violence, injuries, and death. (2020)

PRIVATE SCHOOL CONCUSSION PROTOCOLS

We support the introduction of legislation that would require private schools to follow the same rules and regulation as established for public schools in the Concussion Management and Awareness act as it pertains to concussion protocols for students involved in athletic activities. (2022)

SAFE SCHOOL SCIENCE LABORATOIRES

We support legislation that would require the New York State Education Department to establish standard guidelines for elementary school science laboratories to ensure the safety of faculty and students when conducting scientific experiments. (2022)

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS/FUNDING FOR

We support federal legislation that would provide funding for no less than one (1) School Resource Officer (SRO) per school building. (2023)

SCHOOL SAFETY/SECURITY

We recommend that there should be less emphasis on banning guns and more action by school students and staff to stop the bullying by improving the welcoming of those who are disenfranchised, promote counseling, and increase positive attention for at risk students. (2023)

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. (2021)

SCHOOL DAY/YEAR

LONGER SCHOOL DAY

We oppose legislation that would allow school districts to operate with a shorter school year achieved by longer school days. (2019)

MANDATED SCHOOL START TIMES

We are opposed to any statewide mandated start time to the school day, thereby leaving it to the individual schools to determine start times for their own school districts. (2019)

TEACHERS

FIX TIER SIX

We urge the New York State legislature to work with the New York State United Teachers Union and other similar organizations and unions to make Tier Six more equitable to Tier Four or Five in the New York State Retirement System to keep teachers in the classroom, class sizes smaller, and decrease the teacher burnout rate. (2023)

TEACHER CERTIFICATION

We support changes in the administration of the New York State Teacher Certification Examination Program that would return it to the auspices of the New York State Education Department. (2019)

We support the establishment of agriculture education teacher certification programs at SUNY Cobleskill and/or SUNY Morrisville and that we support the use of existing SUNY financial resources to fund start-up costs for these two institutions associated with establishing agriculture education teach certification programs. (2019)

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION/BOCES

HIGHSCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

We request the State Education Department strongly encourage schools to develop apprenticeship programs with local businesses to provide experiential opportunities for high school students. (2020)

SUPPORT OF BOCES

We oppose any cuts in BOCES funding. (2018)

TRADE/TECHNICAL PROGRAMS

We encourage school districts to present, throughout the K-12 curriculum, a full range of career options and paths to attain training in trades and technical programs as well as academics. (2020)

We recommend that trade schools that prepare students to enter the work force be included in the Rebuild America Schools Act or similar legislation, including upgrades to existing buildings, information on these schools, and the opportunities offered to graduating students and that those students would be allowed to attend trade schools tuition-free as an alternative to community college should those students wish to pursue a different education opportunity. (2021)