



SPECIAL EDITION E-News MARCH 2015

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EDUCATION BUDGET

Dear Neighbor,

Yesterday, I voted in favor of putting **Families First** in the [Assembly Budget Proposal](#). I have received so many phone calls and emails from parents and educators about the [Governor's](#) proposed Opportunity Agenda for 2015-2016 and his suggested education reforms, which are directly linked to education funding, the Education Investment Tax Credit, releasing school aid runs, and delivering an on-time state budget.

As a strong advocate for public education, I share many of these serious concerns. I believe that all children, no matter their background or income level, from Pre-K through college, are entitled to a quality education. Funding public education is a top priority because everyone benefits. I stand committed to increasing funding for education, improving our schools, sustaining our middle class families, and reducing the shameful inequality that exists in school districts across our state, so that all children are given the best possible opportunities to learn, to succeed, to become all they are capable of being. Spring is around the corner.

Warmest Regards,
~Ellen~

[Assembly Education Budget Increases Education Funding](#)



I am pleased to announce that I helped craft an [Assembly Education Budget Proposal](#) that would provide a total of **\$23.95 billion in education funding, an increase of \$1.8 billion for the 2015-16 school year**. That's over \$830 million more than the Governor's Education Budget Proposal and represents the largest increase in school aid since 2008-09.

The Assembly Budget Proposal would remove the Governor's requirement that any increases in school aid be tied to his proposed changes to the teacher evaluation system, to increases in testing, raising the charter schools cap, and to teacher preparation, certification, dismissal and tenure.

Boosting Funding for Early Education

The Assembly's Budget Proposal increases funding for full-day universal pre-kindergarten (UPK) programs outside of New York City by \$40 million and eases the financial burden on those same school districts by allowing them to receive reimbursements for full-day UPK programs in the current year rather than waiting for state reimbursements after the programs have been implemented. This funding will help provide high-quality early education, which is vital to closing the achievement gap, a critical first step toward educational equality and our children's future success.

Repeal GEA, Increase Foundation Aid

I have been a vocal advocate for **repealing the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA)**, which continues to reduce the state's financial obligations to all public schools. The Gap Elimination Adjustment, was first enacted in the 2010-11 fiscal year to help close New York's budget deficit. New York's schools have collectively lost billions of dollars to the GEA. Now, there is a budget surplus of over \$5 billion. It's time to end this built-in reduction in aid to our schools.

That's why I have sponsored and joined with my Assembly colleagues in sponsoring legislation that would eliminate the GEA rate for the 2015-16 school year and thereafter, providing our schools with much-needed funding and saving taxpayer's dollars.

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While the Assembly's Budget Proposal doesn't eliminate the GEA it does **provide 50% or \$456 million in restoration to the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA.)** It also increases **Foundation Aid by over \$1 billion for the 2015-16 school year**, the largest increase in Foundation Aid since 2008-09.

[Higher Education Road to Success Initiative](#)

This multi-faceted approach to increase access to college, tackle the ever-rising costs of higher education and expand opportunities for students across New York (E.203) is aimed at increasing the number of students enrolling in, and completing degrees at, colleges and universities. It would also increase both SUNY and CUNY community college base aid funding by \$50 for a total of \$2,547 per full-time equivalent (FTE.) It also invests in skill-development programs to help all students become qualified candidates to fill good-paying jobs in New York's changing economy. I will continue to advocate for additional funding in the final budget.

Dream Big

The Assembly's budget proposal includes the [DREAM Act](#), which would allow children of immigrants the opportunity to apply for a variety of state tuition-assistance programs to help them realize the goal of a college education. The Assembly's proposal rejects the Governor's attempt to link the **DREAM Act** to a new **Education Investment Tax Credit** to benefit private schools as well as to **TAP**.

Opposing the Education Investment Tax Credit, Saying No to Raising the Charter School Cap

I strongly oppose the **Education Investment Tax Credit (A2551)**, which is similar to vouchers and a tax loophole that would benefit wealthy New Yorkers. It would not only finance non-public school education, but also divert millions of state dollars away from our public schools. I also oppose **raising the charter-school cap** and **removing regional restrictions** to allow remaining charter schools to be located anywhere in the state. Our energy and dollars must be focused on building a robust world-class public education system.



Revisions of the Teacher-Evaluation Law (APPR)

I oppose the proposed **revisions of the teacher-evaluation law (APPR), changes to teacher preparation, certification, dismissal and tenure** and reject the Governor's proposal to require school districts to use independent evaluators. In effect these revisions are an attack on both teacher tenure and due process.

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[Applause for Judith Johnson Election to Board of Regents](#)



Congratulations to Judith Johnson on her election to The Board of Regents representing the 9th Judicial District. I was honored to sponsor Judith as a candidate for the vacant Regent position. I have known her for many years, first as a professional colleague in the education field. I am proud to call her a friend. Her background, from being a 'free lunch' public school student to a national leader in education not only serves as a role model to our youth, but also gives her a unique perspective. Judith has a deep understanding of both the teaching and learning process as well as grasp of the controversial issues in education today. She 'gets it.' I have no doubt that she will represent all of our children, our families, our schools, and communities in the best possible way. Judith will be honored at the [11th Annual Women of Leadership and Vision Brunch at the Nyack Center March 14, at 10 AM.](#)