



LOWER HUDSON EDUCATION COALITION

450 Mamaroneck Ave Harrison, NY 10528 • phone (914) 345-8737 • fax (914) 345-8761 • email—lhec.info@gmail.com

January 18, 2018

Dear Superintendents and Board of Education Members,

As the 2018 Legislative Session gets underway and the Governor presents his executive budget, the Lower Hudson Education Coalition (LHEC) Steering Committee is pleased to present this update on our efforts to develop and lead a cohesive, sustainable regional advocacy plan that will address the public education issues that are critically important to our school districts.

By way of background, the LHEC Re-visioning Taskforce was formed in the spring of 2017 to analyze our regional public education advocacy organizations, activities and needs. Our goal was to launch a strategic initiative to re-think the region's public education advocacy and determine how the LHEC could serve as a regional leadership hub and spearhead a defined, comprehensive advocacy approach. As previously communicated, we hired Peter Mustich (retired Rye Neck Superintendent and regional public education advocacy leader) and Mr. Michael Conte (worked with schools on communications services as CEO of Syntax and recently launched M. Conte Consulting) to undertake an in-depth regional analysis and develop specific recommendations.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY:

The consultants have now completed Phase I of this work, which included:

1. Research and Consensus on Desired Outcome(s)
2. Definition of the Advocacy Message
3. Creation of the Strategic Advocacy Plan

Their work included individual and group discussion with superintendents, school board association leaders, business officials, legislators and other regional advocacy leaders. They also conducted a written survey of the superintendents and the three school board association board of directors (DCSBA, RCSBA, WPSBA).

PROCESS FOR 2018 AND BEYOND:

The consultants' Phase I report emphasizes the need to develop a more formal structure for regional advocacy to create a true paradigm shift. We intend to appoint a new LHEC Advocacy Coordinator/Legislative Director by this summer (job description under development) who will spearhead our four county advocacy efforts and be a clearinghouse and resource for our school districts. The report also reiterates the "collective responsibility" of the individual school districts. To "effectuate change, we need to build capacity among individual superintendents and boards so that they take ownership of the advocacy agenda." With this in place, individual districts will be able to enhance their community outreach regarding public education advocacy messaging.

We also need to rethink our advocacy approach. Based on its findings, the report recommends a more utilitarian, simple and politically "realistic" approach to our regional advocacy thinking and practice. What does that mean? From a utilitarian perspective, we should focus our regional effort on those issues that serve the greatest good for the greatest number, and be specific about our legislative "asks." Education issues are complex and often difficult to explain. In order to be more effective, we will need to keep our messaging simple and targeted. In that regard, there is much we can learn from the incremental successes of charter and private/parochial schools. The report reminds us of the political reality that, "legislative advocacy can take multiple cycles before outcomes are realized, and that small victories over time eventually bear fruit."



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2018 Advocacy Priorities:

Regarding our 2018 regional priorities, the underlying message is the need for “flexibility” for local empowerment (aka, “local control” better messaged!). The report states that “each of the following four priorities for the 2017-18 school year call for some type of flexibility that provides greater autonomy for local districts to manage their financial future.”

The four advocacy priorities are:

1. Preserve and fix the Foundation Aid Formula
2. Allow for Pension Reserve uniformity (allow ERS Reserve to include TRS)
3. Make sound adjustments to improve the Tax Levy Cap
4. Improve APPR evaluation measures

Details on these advocacy priorities will be presented along with talking points in the soon to be released, multi-prong LHEC Advocacy Toolkit.

The LHEC Steering Committee thanks you for your continued support during this LHEC transition year. The stakes are high, and we are approaching this process methodically and diligently. As we enter Phase II of this re-visioning process, we are focused on how to revamp our organizational structure and communications and outreach, and thereby implement a new paradigm that will better position us for regional advocacy success.

We welcome your feedback throughout this process.

Sincerely,

LHEC Steering Committee Members

Chair: Kelly Lappan - DCSBA
Ileana Eckert – LHCSS
Jose Carrion - LHCSS
Mary Fox-Alter - LHCSS
Rita Golden - WPSBA
Leeann Irvin - RCSBA
Ray Sanchez - LHCSS
Frank Schneckner - WPSBA
Victoria Tipp - WPSBA
LHEC Administrator: Lisa Davis

LINKS TO LHEC REFERENCE DOCUMENTS:

- [June 2017 LHEC Re-visioning Committee Letter to Districts](#)
- [October 2017 LHEC Membership Letter and Update](#)
- [December 2017 LHEC Consultants' Presentation: process, findings, and recommendations](#)