

Dear Rye Neck Parents:

Public education in New York State has reached a critical juncture. As you undoubtedly know, the state legislature passed a “tax cap” law last June with the overall goal of limiting property tax increases. The law, as written, places many school districts throughout New York – Rye Neck included – under added financial stress, resulting in the very real possibility of having to eliminate important programs and services that students have come to depend on.

While we applaud the legislature’s efforts in trying to provide relief to taxpayers, it is our strong opinion that in order to balance the impact the tax levy cap will have on school districts, the state must provide meaningful mandate relief, as well. By doing so, districts will retain the ability to satisfy local educational needs, priorities and values. It is up to us, as parents and citizens, to encourage our elected officials to support legislation that allows school districts to eliminate unnecessary and onerous mandates.

Rye Neck has partnered with a consortium of lower Hudson Valley school districts to push for mandate relief. Several burdensome and costly mandates have been identified as a starting point for reform. These mandates are related to transportation, special education and pension/healthcare fiscal reform.

Did you know...

17% of Rye Neck’s 2011-12 school budget - or approximately \$6 million - resulted from state mandates.

Presently, local taxpayers fund 204 New York State special education mandates that exceed federal law. Over the last five years, special education costs in New York have skyrocketed 40% as a result of these mandates.

In the four years ending 2011-12, the annual defined pension costs in Rye Neck are projected to increase from approximately \$1.4 million to \$2.4 million.

In addition to special needs students, Rye Neck is required to transport private and parochial school students within a 15-mile radius of our district at a budgeted cost of \$865,353 for this school year. The state used to cover 90% of these mandated transportation costs; now funding is at less than 10%.

What does the above mean for community residents? Quite simply, the financial burden of these mandates is passed onto the taxpayer at the local level. It is time to tell Albany ENOUGH!!

How you can make a difference:

It is critical that taxpayers communicate with our elected officials. In the coming weeks, Rye Neck’s *Parents for Public Education* will send a series of emails informing you on specific mandate reforms and provide links to prepared letters that you can forward via email to your legislators.

Participate in the democratic process and have your voice heard! Change will come if the voices of taxpayers who value public education and fiscal responsibility are active and strong. Your children’s education will benefit greatly from your thoughtful participation.

Respectfully,

Parents for Public Education Mandate Relief Committee