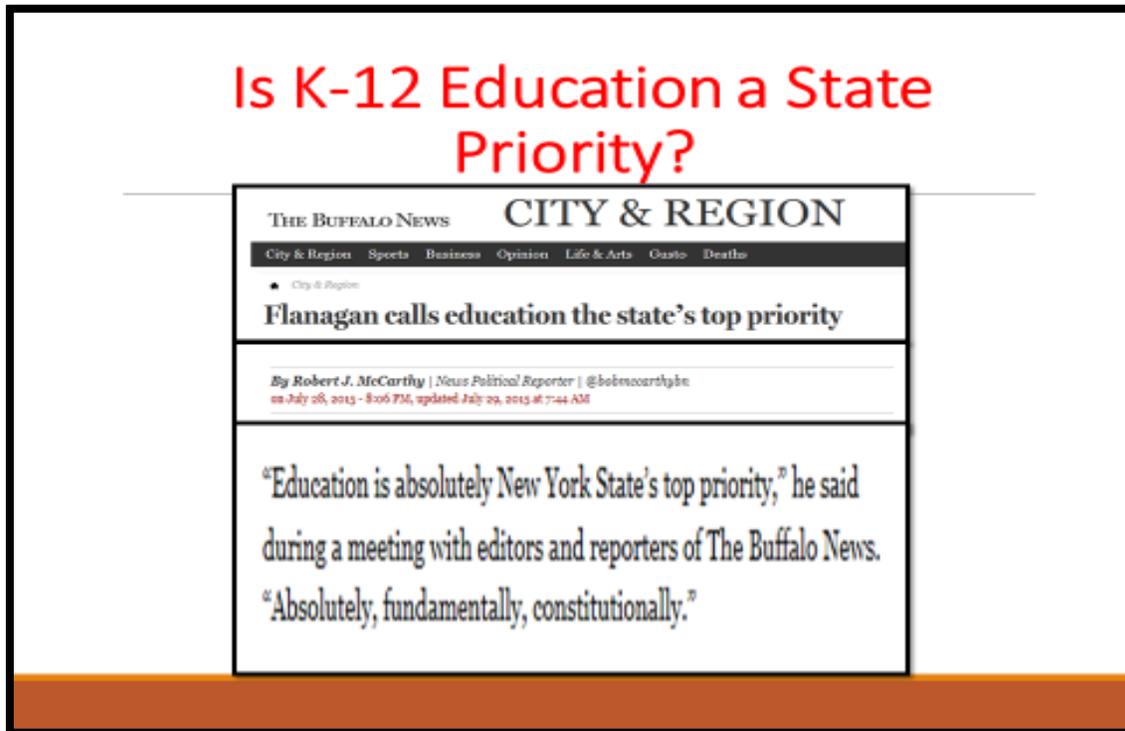


Is Education a Priority for New York State?

While being interviewed by a group of **Buffalo News** reporters and editors, John Flanagan, the NY State Senate Majority leader was asked if education was New York State's top priority. Senator Flanagan, who until recently chaired the Senate Education Committee responded, **"Education is absolutely New York State's top priority. Absolutely, fundamentally, constitutionally."** Certainly, our legislators spend more time fighting over school aid than any other topic—but, has education remained a priority for the state over the past twenty-five years? Let's closely examine that question!



K-12 Education as a Share of Total State Expenditures

One metric for determining if K-12 Education is a fundamental priority for NY State is to analyze how the percent share of the state's total expenditure that is returned to local school districts as state aid has changed over time. Expenditure data published annually by the **National Organization of State Budget Officials** show that in 1990 NY State sent 23.8 cents of every dollar the state obtained in revenue back to localities to support K-12 instruction—or hold down local tax rates. In 1990, New York's support for public education exceeded the US Fifty State Average by 1.3% (or by 1.3 cent spent from every dollar of revenue). Over twenty-five years the percent share of each dollar of New York State revenue returned to local school districts has been reduced by just under a nickel (4.8 cents) per dollar of state revenue. By 2015-16, New York was only sending 19 cents of every dollar taken in as revenue back to local school districts. Benchmarked against the fifty state average—New York had fallen a half-cent below that average. **When an important function like K-12 education receives almost a nickel less of every dollar of state expenditure than it had in the past it is impossible to conclude that K-12 Education has been "Absolutely, fundamentally, constitutionally the state's top priority!"**

Is K-12 Education a State Priority?

K-12 Share of Total State Spending			
By Major Function (%)			
Year	NY	50 State Ave.	Difference
1990	23.8%	22.5%	1.3%
2000	22.0%	22.5%	-0.5%
2010	20.4%	20.5%	-0.3%
2015	19.0%	19.5%	-0.5%

Data Source: *State Expenditure Reports*-National Organization of State Budget Officers

Trend Not Attributable to Declining Enrollment

Recently, New York State K-12 enrollments have shown a declining trend. Lest NY's current declining enrollments be cited as an underlying contributor for the State's declining share of NY State revenue directed to support of local education—we should examine enrollment trends over the past twenty-five years. Notably, enrollment is actually up by forty-two thousand students over the twenty-five-year period of our comparison. ***Enrollment decline cannot be cited as the cause for spending almost a nickel less of every dollar on K-12 Education!***

Public K-12 Enrollments are Up Statewide Since 1990!

K-12 Share of Total State Spending			
With Enrollments			
Year	NY		Enrollment
1990	23.8%		2.598M
2000	22.0%		2.882M
2010	20.4%		2.734M
2015	19.0%		2.640M

Data Source: *National Center for Educational Statistics*

Reasons for K-12 Education's Reduced Share of State Expenditures

A close examination of the *National Association of State Budget Officer's Expenditure Report* data makes clear that one governmental function has increased the percent share of state expenditures it represents over the past twenty-five years. Medicaid was supported by 17.7 cents of every dollar of NY State expenditures in 1990. By 2015 Medicare's share of NY State revenue had grown to consume 31.7 cents of every dollar of state revenue. In fact, Medicare's growth has "crowded out" funding directed to support five governmental functions (K-12 Education, Higher Education, Public Assistance, Corrections and Transportation) in relation to the share of each dollar NY State revenue each function is allocated. Only the catch all category "Other" joins Medicare in having an increased share of state revenue support. ***Budgets reflect priorities and It is clear that K-12 Education has not been New York State's "top priority" over the past twenty-five years!***

Twenty-Five Year Comparison: NY State Spending by Major Function 1990-2015 Expressed as Percent of Total State Expenditure							
	Elem & Second. Ed.	Higher Educ.	Public Assist.	Medic.	Correct.	Transport.	Other
2015	19.0%	7.4%	2.6%	31.7%	2.2%	6.6%	30.5%
2014	19.3%	7.6%	3.2%	29.1%	2.3%	6.5%	32.0%
2013	19.3%	7.6%	3.0%	29.1%	2.5%	6.4%	32.1%
2012	19.8%	7.6%	2.8%	29.4%	2.3%	6.2%	31.8%
2011	20.7%	7.1%	2.8%	29.1%	2.4%	6.4%	31.4%
2010	20.4%	7.5%	3.0%	28.7%	2.7%	6.1%	31.5%
2009	21.5%	7.0%	3.0%	26.7%	2.7%	5.7%	33.3%
2008	20.9%	7.1%	3.1%	26.7%	2.9%	5.6%	33.6%
2007	20.1%	7.0%	3.0%	28.7%	3.0%	5.2%	33.0%
2006	20.2%	6.6%	3.2%	29.0%	3.2%	5.2%	33.0%
2005	19.7%	6.8%	3.4%	29.2%	2.9%	5.0%	33.0%
2005	19.3%	6.5%	3.6%	28.3%	2.8%	4.9%	34.5%
2004	20.3%	7.0%	3.5%	28.4%	3.0%	5.5%	32.2%
2003	20.3%	6.8%	2.2%	25.7%	3.1%	5.2%	36.8%
2002	20.5%	7.2%	3.3%	25.3%	3.3%	5.5%	34.9%
2001	20.7%	7.0%	4.8%	34.5%	4.0%	6.0%	22.9%
2000	22.0%	8.8%	9.1%	19.6%	5.3%	8.1%	27.1%
1990	23.8%	9.1%	8.0%	17.7%	5.0%	8.0%	28.4%

Data Source: National Association of State Budget Officials State Expenditure Report

Another Set of Data Calls into Question Whether Education is NY State's Top Priority

New York spent just under \$66 billion dollars supporting K-12 Education during 2015-16. Unfortunately, about 53% of that money was generated through the highly unpopular, local property tax—with only 44.2% of the funding coming as state aid. Looking at another set of data we note NY State ranked *thirtieth (at 44.5%)* when comparing the share of total K-12 Education costs supported by state aid. This means NY State falls below the US average (46.4%). Neighboring Vermont funds education with over 87% of the costs paid for through state aid. ***With NY State providing education through approximately 675 local school districts—and those districts have wide variations in the property wealth and income behind every student funding equity issues emerge when the state is not a full partner in funding K-12 Education!***

Is K-12 Education a State Priority?

Percentage of Revenue for Public Schools			
From State Government			
Year	NY (%)	Rank & US Ave.	Difference
1990	41.8%	34 (48.7%)	-6.9%
2000	45.7%	32 (50.5%)	-4.8%
2010	45.0%	29 (45.3%)	-0.3%
2015	44.2%	30 (46.4%)	-1.9%

Data Source: NEA Ranking of the States

Shouldn't New York State Become A "Full Partner" In Funding K-12 Education

It is clear that New York State is committing a smaller share of the revenue it obtains to supporting K-12 Education expenditures than it has in the recent past. Over the past twenty-five years we have seen K-12 Education's share of New York's expenditures decline by almost a nickel of every dollar the state spends. This trend has contributed to higher property taxes being paid by homeowners at the same time districts were reducing staff and curtailing program offerings. It has been a difficult time to be a school board member in NY State—trying to explain annual budgets that cut staff and programs but called for large property tax increases. ***The evidence is clear that New York State has not been a full partner in supporting local schools over the past twenty-five years.*** New York State residents send larger amounts of money off to Albany every year—and see fewer cents of every dollar returned to support their local school district. In response to burgeoning discontent from taxpayers New York State imposed the Local Property Tax Cap. The ECASB points out that the solution to local property taxes is for New York State to become a full partner in funding local schools—moving promptly over the next several budget cycles to where state funds support a full fifty percent of K-12 Education costs statewide. ***This will be a multi-year goal—but if legislators are going to claim education is their top priority we should expect to see significant progress toward a "Full Partnership" each year!***

If education is a NY
State priority...

**Shouldn't we ask our
partner to fund a full
50% of the cost?**