

NYS Coalition of 853 Schools

2021 PRIORITIES

853 schools are private, not-for-profit state approved schools for students unable to be served by the public school system. 853 Schools predominantly serve school aged children involved in the foster care, juvenile justice and special education systems. Many students receive an individual educational plan.

During the past year, these schools have been subject to the same re-opening guidance as public schools to ensure the safety of their students, teachers and staff.

In addition, the tuition rate methodology for 2020-21 has yet to be approved - since the fiscal year began in July 2020. Schools are operating on interim rates (last year's tuition).

While mindful of the state's fiscal situation, these priorities reflect the challenges faced by these schools.



COVID-19 Unanticipated Expenses

Towards the end of 2019-20 and throughout the 2020-21 school year, 853 schools incurred costs associated with the pandemic. Expenses included, for example, increased cleaning, personal protection equipment, signs, barriers, & other classroom equipment, remote technology and additional staff to assist in maintaining social distancing. The tuition rates do not account for these additional expenses. If Federal or State resources are earmarked for COVID-19 related expenses for education, the Coalition hopes that those resources would be available to the 853 schools without negatively impacting future tuition rate calculations.



Impacts of COVID-19 expenses on the tuition rate methodology

The tuition rate methodology is inflexible to year to year changes especially when no growth is permitted. As such, our schools are very concerned that, due to the unpredictable response to the pandemic, spending in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years will be inconsistent with the previous years. We recommend that tuition rates are held harmless to any fluctuation that would have otherwise negatively impacted rates - and - that expenses related to COVID-19 be incorporated into the rate and fully reimbursed.



Short & Long-Term Reforms to the Tuition Rate Methodology

The tuition rate setting methodology does not adequately support the diverse and changing needs of our students. The reconciliation process tends to inappropriately reduce tuition rates resulting in lengthy waiver or tuition appeal requests. This burdensome process is inefficient and ineffective in the funding of the schools. The Coalition recommends proposals suggested by the New York State Education Department to eliminate the annual reconciliation process, and encourages comprehensive reforms to the overall methodology.



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Visit the Coalition at www.853coalition.org or follow them on twitter [@853schools](https://twitter.com/853schools)