



For Immediate Release  
April 21, 2014

Contact: Michael Borges, Executive Director  
mborges@nysasbo.org / 518-434-2281 ext. 231

## NYSASBO Releases Report on School District Mergers

The New York State Association of School Business Officials (NYSASBO) recently released a report that examines the history of school district mergers, current trends, obstacles and recommendations for the future.

The report looked in depth at the 30 school districts that explored merging since 2010 but failed to accomplish reorganization. Some of the commonalities among this cohort of school districts are small student populations, community wealth below the state average, and staff losses over the last three years.

“While school district mergers may generate some savings for school districts of less than 1,500 students, the chief benefit is student access to a wider array of educational opportunities, that would not be available at a smaller school district,” stated Michael J. Borges, NYSASBO Executive Director.

Included in the recently adopted 2014-15 State Budget, was a provision that would ameliorate one of the obstacles to consolidation, the disparity in tax rates among merging districts. The new laws would allow school districts with disparate tax rates after the merger to have the impact deferred for a one-year period and/or phased-in over a period of time up to 10 years as determined by the participating school boards.

For example, if School District A merged with School District B, School District A would see a 10% hike in their tax rate and School District B would see a 5% decline in their tax rate. To make the merger more attractive to voters the changes in tax rates would be phased in over a period not to exceed ten years.

“Although we welcome this common sense change to the consolidation process, other steps can and should be taken to further encourage communities to implement mergers when students will benefit. Recommendations include updating merger aid, removing the need for a straw vote before having a binding vote, and returning to previous practice that allowed area wide votes instead of separate approval votes in each district,” continued Mr. Borges.

“Ultimately, if state policymakers want to reduce the burden on taxpayers, they must address state mandates that drive a majority of school spending”, concluded Mr. Borges.