

Another masterpiece in the works

Sophia Mazzocchi, 6, paints as her sister Isabella Mazzocchi, 11, watches her Saturday at The Painted Canvas in Wading River. Both girls are from Manorville.



JESSICA ROTKIEWICZ

Call for more school aid

LI lawmakers say Cuomo's plan is less than needed

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND
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"Show me the money!" was the theme of a regional educators' conference in Middle Island on Saturday, where a succession of state lawmakers — Democrats and Republicans alike — blasted Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's latest school-aid proposal as the lowest increase in seven years.

Those lawmakers, however, were short on details of how much additional school funding they might be able to provide for the coming 2019-20 school year. The governor's budget division has said revenues from New Yorkers' personal income taxes are down \$500 million from last year's projections as of December.

Final agreement on a statewide school-aid package, due by April 1, requires approval by the governor, the State Senate and the Assembly.

"Two of my districts are losing money — they're not getting more," said Assemb. Andrew Garbarino (R-Sayville), re-

ferring to the local impact of the governor's proposal on East Islip and Connetquot. "These are probably the worst budget numbers I've seen."

State Sen. Monica Martinez (D-Brentwood) was equally emphatic that school interests in Nassau and Suffolk counties needed to be protected in the annual tug-of-war for money between the Island and New York City. "You have my full commitment that I'm going to fight for you," Martinez said.

The legislative breakfast at Longwood Middle School served as an annual kickoff of lobbying efforts by Long Island school systems, teacher unions and other groups to extract additional financial support from Albany. Leaders among the more than 300 school administrators, board members and others who attended said they were heartened by the bipartisan criticism of Cuomo's funding plan.

"It was nice to see some agreement across party lines," said Kenneth Bossert, superintendent of Elwood schools and president of the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association.

For next year, the governor has proposed distributing an extra \$59.17 million in state operating aid to school districts

across the Island, bringing the region's total to \$2.97 billion.

The proposal, which amounts to a 2.03 percent increase, is the lowest percentage increase put forward by Cuomo in seven years.

Figures were calculated by Newsday, drawing on the state's computerized "runs," which include the bulk of state financial assistance used to support annual school operations and to reimburse expenses from past years.

Those numbers do not include state money used in school-building construction or renovation. Nor do the figures include special programs such as expanded preschool and after-school instruction.

Next year's aid increase has been described by the governor as a 3.6 percent, billion-dollar hike statewide.

Morris Peters, a spokesman for the state Division of the Budget, said total aid to the Island's 124 districts would actually rise \$99.3 million next year.

Peters added that, since 2012, statewide support for schools has expanded by \$8.1 billion, "strengthening educational outcomes and increasing access to high-quality learning for all students."

Obtaining some additional money for next year shouldn't

be a heavy lift for local legislators.

Education analysts noted that the governor's budget includes \$157 million in unallocated statewide "fiscal stabilization" money that lawmakers essentially can distribute among districts. Whether Senate and Assembly members can expand beyond that figure is an open question.

Long Island has entered uncharted territory in terms of its ability to compete with New York City and other regions of the state in obtaining additional funding. Until this year, the State Senate had long been controlled by Republicans, whose leadership hailed largely from Nassau and Suffolk counties. All that changed in stunning fashion in the November election, when Democrats captured eight additional seats in the Senate, including four on Long Island.

Democrats now in charge of the Senate acknowledge they have something to prove.

"That's one of the questions — whether we can deliver in the same way as the Republicans did — and we have to answer that question resoundingly," said State Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach), a leader of the region's reshaped Senate majority.

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THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1690 The first paper money in America was issued by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to finance a military expedition to Canada.

1913 The 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, providing for a federal income tax, was ratified.

1917 The United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, the same day an American cargo ship, the SS Housatonic, was sunk by a U-boat off Britain after the crew was allowed to escape.

1959 Rock and roll stars Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson died in a small plane crash near Clear Lake, Iowa. An American Airlines Lockheed Electra crashed into New York's East River, killing 65 of the 73 people on board.

1966 The Soviet probe Luna 9 became the first man-made object to make a soft landing on the moon.

1995 Discovery blasted off with a woman, Air Force Lt. Col. Eileen Collins, in the pilot's seat for the first time.

1998 A U.S. Marines plane sliced through the cable of a ski gondola in Italy, causing the car to plunge and killing all 20 people inside.