



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Brings Education Chair to Tour Possible Regional High School Site

CATHARINE YOUNG December 1, 2011

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MAYVILLE - At the invitation of Senator Catharine Young, the state Senate Education Committee Chairman visited a potential regional high school site at Chautauqua Lake Central School Thursday.

Senator John Flanagan, whose committee has jurisdiction over Senator Young's regional high school legislation, traveled from Suffolk County on Long Island to meet with local teachers, school board members and administrators.

"Senator Flanagan is a recognized leader and education policy expert. He has been very supportive of innovative ideas to help students succeed, and his willingness to journey 460 miles from the other end of the state to listen firsthand is outstanding," Senator Young said.

"Regional high schools can be a solution to expand excellent academic opportunities for our young people, especially in rural areas such as ours. Technology, advanced placement and other courses, team sports and extracurricular activities could be added and enhanced. We must be creative to meet students' needs while being as efficient as possible," she said.

Locally, the Chautauqua Lake, Westfield, Brocton and Ripley school districts have been exploring establishing a regional high school at the site.

“Each of these districts works hard to provide quality education, but shrinking enrollments and tax bases make it more difficult every year. The beauty of this building is that it is attractive, up-to-date and large enough to accommodate all of the students with few renovations,” Senator Young said.

Earlier this year, Senator Young passed a bill that would allow districts in her Senate District to form regional high schools. Assemblyman Andrew Goodell is championing the matching Assembly bill.

Senator Young said information gathered from the listening sessions will allow her to tweak the legislation into a final product that should pass both houses and be signed by Governor Cuomo.

“The challenge is coming up with a model that works, and gaining statewide support. That’s why Senator Flanagan’s participation is so vital,” she said.

The Senate Education Chair said that regional high schools are a timely topic.

“I thank Senator Young for providing me with the opportunity to hear directly from area education leaders about the need for regional high schools. This dialogue will be very useful over the coming months as our state works to make the needed changes all our children deserve, so that they have the best educational opportunities possible. By bringing this discussion from Albany right to the community, we can make sure that those who make local decisions are properly heard,” he said.

The 2008 Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness Study led by Chautauqua County resident and former Lt. Governor Stan Lundine recommended establishing regional high schools.

Recently, the State Board of Regents supported the concept in its 2012 Legislative Priorities proposal.

“It is encouraging that State Education Commissioner John B. King Jr. and the Board of Regents are embracing our initiative. I think everyone is starting to realize that it cannot be business as usual if our children are going to succeed. We need to think out of the box for their sake,” Senator Young said.

Under Senator Young’s legislation, local school boards would be given the authority to enter into regional high school contracts after following an open process that requires public input. Contracts would need to show projected cost savings and would be subject to final approval by the state education commissioner.

Comprehensive plans for curriculum, finances, staffing, special education, building use, enrollment, cost savings, transportation, athletics and extracurricular activities would be required.

In addition to her local bill, Senator Young sponsors regional high school legislation that would apply statewide.

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