

Jeff Leb: 'If public school get these things, private schools should too'

Traditionally, Jewish day schools, like their other parochial partners, have received limited government funding and services, such as busing and aid for special education.

But Jeff Leb of Cedarhurst, the New York director of political affairs for Orthodox Union Advocacy, and others like him, say things are changing.

Leb oversees the OU Advocacy Center's Teach NYS Initiative, which consults with day schools to help them get the most benefits possible from government. The organization works with HAFTR.

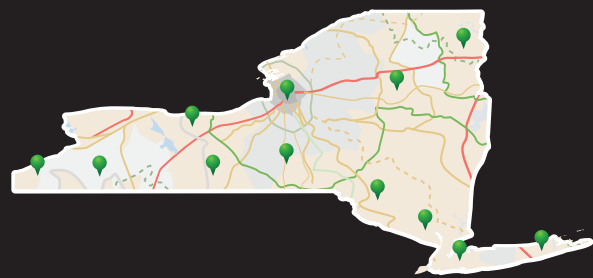
Leb and his organization have succeeded in getting more state money for Jewish day schools like

HAFTR and others through such state-funded programs as the Comprehensive Attendance Policy (CAP), and Mandated Services Reimbursement (MSR).

All schools are required to take attendance and they are reimbursed for the cost of doing so. MSR compensates day schools for such state mandates as testing and maintaining health records. Reimbursements are for the time, effort and expense required to comply with the state mandates.

The OU got funding for CAP increased to \$43.5 million, from about \$32 million around two years ago. In the current state budget being negotiated by the legislature, the OU is trying to get funding for

Jewish Schools + Elected Officials = A Great Shidduch!



A portion of an ad placed by the OU Advocacy Center.

CAP raised to \$59 million.

For MSR, the OU has gotten \$90 million in funding, up from about \$80 million a few years ago.

"It's all a constitutionally permissible funding stream for private schools," said Leb. "I understand the church-state [separation] thing. But if public schools get these things, private schools should too." The OU is also working with the Catholic Conference on some educational issues to make sure funding is available by the state.

Leb said he is also studying
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Leb

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whether Jewish day schools could benefit from proposals by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and Gov. Andrew Cuomo to fund pre-K programs. The proposals are generating considerable heat in New York City and Albany.

Cuomo has proposed a \$2 billion state technology grant for schools. The grant would require voter approval in a referendum. "We're working very hard to include private schools in this," Leb said.

David Pollock, associate executive director and director of gov-

ernment relations and security at the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, said several Jewish day schools in the New York metro area — he declined to name them for security reasons — have received funding for security equipment from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

On its Web site, JCRC-NY says U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), said that the appropriations bill for 2014 includes \$13 million in federal funding to help protect high-risk non-profit institutions from terrorist attacks. That is a \$3 million increase over funding in 2013. The appropriations bill has passed the House of Representatives and is being debated by the Senate.

—James Bernstein

Education

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day school education takes a commitment of time and money, and a certain willingness to live in a counterculture world. It may feel like a risk. But if we listen to our graduates, it becomes clear that the parents' investment of time, energy and money in their children's Jewish education reaps great benefits.

A Jewish day school education anchors children to a set of values and practices that are at once thou-

sands of years old and as new as each generation. That education not only teaches children how to learn, who they are, where they came from and what is expected from them in the world, it provides them with the skills to act on those expectations.

Can you afford not to investigate this option?

Susan Cobin is the principal of the Talmud Torah of St. Paul Day School in Minnesota. This article originally appeared in The American Jewish World. Reprinted with permission.

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