

Submitted Testimony



TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2015-2016 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Our thanks to Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator Flanagan, and Assemblymember Nolan, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, and Education Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you today regarding the Executive Budget Proposal.

Afterschool, summer, extended learning time programs and other expanded learning opportunities play a crucial role for New York families and students. While we are grateful the Executive Budget maintains funding for Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention and that the funding New York City needs for its initiative to offer afterschool at all middle schools continues, we were very disappointed that there was no proposal for additional afterschool programs serving students outside of New York City. 1.1 million New York students want an afterschool program and do not have access to one. That number remains unchanged from 2009.

To build an innovation-focused economy and ensure our children are graduating college and career ready, New York needs to invest in high-quality afterschool and summer learning experiences. These programs help all of our students, no matter where they live, engage in hands-on ways with science, technology, and the arts, improve their academic achievement, and stay on track to develop into healthy adults, active citizens, and effective employees and entrepreneurs. Last year, Governor Cuomo had proposed \$160 million in additional funding for afterschool programs annually. This year, NYSAN recommended a statewide investment of \$178.5 million in new funding so 110,000 more students can benefit from these programs—as will the more than 600 schools that have been asked for afterschool program through grant competitions over the last three years but have not received funding.

We were disappointed that there was no new funding for afterschool programs in the Executive Budget, and we hope that the Legislature will work toward at least \$178.5 million in new statewide funds annually to allow 110,000 students to begin attending afterschool programs in schools and communities that have already expressed their need for a program. We hope that the Legislature and the Governor will begin to plan for continued investment to serve the estimated 1.1 million children who need an afterschool program and do not have access so that the benefits of afterschool and summer programs can be made available to all of the students and families across New York who need them.

Need

The state currently has many fewer high-quality programs than are needed, depriving more than a million students of support for their intellectual, social, and emotional development and their



families of safe, affordable places for their children to continue learning until the work day ends. The lack of funding for afterschool and summer programs puts an additional burdens on schools to meet students' needs without additional learning time or community support.

The *America After 3 PM* survey of parents and guardians found that an estimated 1.1 million New York students would attend afterschool programs if one were available.¹ This is the same number as when the *America After 3 PM* survey was conducted in 2009.² In 2009, New York was ranked third in the nation on a combined score for afterschool availability and quality. In 2014, New York did not even make the Top 10. Funding for afterschool remains 35% below pre-recession levels and substantially below need.

A review of recent grant competitions reveals that New York currently has the capacity to run additional programs utilizing at least \$170 million in additional funds. In 2012, OCFS conducted a grant competition for Advantage After School. An additional \$48 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. In 2013, NYSED conducted a grant competition for 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (federal funding administered by NYSED) to fund afterschool programs. An additional \$122 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. There is sufficient strength within existing community organizations and sufficient demand from schools and school districts—every application had a school partner—to launch a program at the scale NYSAN is recommending.

NYSAN is also recommending 5% (\$8.5 million) to support quality professional development and technical assistance for afterschool programs and their staffs. Much as we support the professional development of teachers and school leaders to ensure that our schools can provide the best learning experience for all our students, afterschool program educators and directors need training and support to ensure that all of New York's students have access to high-quality programs.

Potential Impact

The body of research on high-quality afterschool and summer programs has grown substantially in the last few years, and shows clear evidence that high-quality programs have significant effects.³ Regular attendance at a high-quality afterschool program over several years can close the achievement gap in math for low-income students.⁴ High-quality summer programs can help students improve their math achievement by the equivalent of 17-21% of what they would normally learn in a year.⁵ Afterschool and summer programs support the development of critical thinking and social skills needed for long-term success in the workplace and in life. Afterschool

¹ Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2014, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.

² Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2009, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/AA3PM-2009.cfm>

³ New York State Afterschool Network, *Top 10 Reasons You Should Support Expanded Learning Opportunities*, http://nysan.org/files/3992_file_Top_10_Reasons.pdf (2014).

⁴ Deborah Lowe Vandell, *The Achievement Gap is Real*,

<http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf> (2013).

⁵ Wallace study



programs typically include inquiry-based, applied learning that allows youth to take on worthwhile long-term goals and emphasizes collaboration, investigation, and problem-solving. Researchers have identified these types of activities as key for enabling youth to build the critical thinking and social skills that prepare youth for success in college and career in the 21st century.⁶

As featured in both *The Economist* and *The Atlantic* last week, researchers are also finding that the increasing difficulty of achieving the American Dream—children born poor are likely to remain poor throughout their lives [GET EXACT STAT]—is partially due to the opportunity gap. The After-School Corporation estimates that gap is 6,000 hours before children even leave elementary school.⁷ Children from well-off families play sports, learn an instrument, travel to museums and colleges, explore hobbies, and volunteer. Through these types of experiences, children become more likely to be engaged in learning because they can connect it to a real world situation and an opportunity for their futures. These experiences often make children from well-off families stronger candidates for colleges and employers—think of all the spaces on college applications for students to present themselves as having interests and experiences outside of school. All our children need such enrichment activities, and afterschool programs are an effective way to close the opportunity gap.

Just a few examples of the innovative opportunities provided by New York programs:

- The Comet Design Co. in Carthage, NY is an entrepreneurial program for high school students where participants write a business plan and then utilize 3D printers and other high-tech devices to create real products that are then sold to support the afterschool program.
- Family Services Afterschool Programs in Poughkeepsie has partnered with the Animal Farm Foundation, providing students an opportunity to engage in a hands-on way with animals in need of care and to learn how to prevent animal cruelty.
- The Children's Aid Society in New York City has been providing youth from high need neighborhoods the opportunity to intern in the offices of their elected officials, giving these youth the chance to gain valuable experience in a public service.
- The new Boys and Girls Club of Massena, NY, a community facing growing heroin and prescription drug addiction among youth, is working in concert with the local police department to provide a positive alternative for youth, through a that gives students a safe, educational place to go once the school day ends.
- Kiaran's Kids, a youth mentoring and outreach program at Belmont Park in Nassau County, gives students a behind-the-scenes look into what takes place at a race track, including demonstrations in horse grooming, blacksmithing, and horse riding, while teaching them about the many different careers available in horse racing.
- Youth Philanthropy Council, a program provided by the Northern New York Community Foundation in four local high schools in the North Country, provides youth the opportunity to learn how the grant making process works and recommend grants to assist non-profits organizations in enhancing the quality of life in their community.

⁶ Halperin study

⁷ TASC 6,000 hours



- The Garden of Fire is a summer program held in Steuben County for at-risk youth that offers camp goers the opportunity to participate in art activities, drum circles, and bereavement counseling, concluding with a glass blowing demonstration at the end of the camp.
- The Torch Club, part of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Albany, decided to give back to their community this year by taking part in the Joy Maker Challenge, where participants cooked and served a healthy, organic meal for the Albany Emergency Shelter.

As New York seeks to ensure that all students graduate college and career ready, it must invest in afterschool and summer programs as partners to schools in achieving that goal. NYSAN recommends that the Legislature work toward at least \$178.5 million in new statewide funds annually to allow 110,000 students to begin attending afterschool programs in schools and communities that have already expressed their need for a program. We hope that the Legislature and the Governor will begin to plan for continued investment to serve the estimated 1.1 million children who need an afterschool program and do not have access so that the benefits of afterschool and summer programs can be made available to all of the students and families across New York who need them.