

TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2018-2019 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Our thanks to Senator Young, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Marcellino, 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.

All of New York's students deserve the chance to reach their full potential. Afterschool, summer, community schools, extended learning time programs, and other expanded learning opportunities play a crucial role in supporting youth success for New York families and students. We are grateful that Governor Cuomo has proposed expanding the Empire State After-School Program by \$10 million in this year's Executive budget, and we support the continued investments in struggling schools through the \$200 million in Community Schools Aid included in the Executive Budget. However, these funding opportunities should be available to all students and schools that want them, and the funding provided is still short of meeting the need.

The 2014 *America After 3 PM* survey of parents and guardians found that an estimated 1.1 million New York students would attend an afterschool program if one were available.¹ The need for afterschool programs in New York far outweighs the availability. For every student enrolled in an afterschool program in our state, two more students who would participate simply lack access. In rural areas, this number increases to three children in need of a program for every one child enrolled.

Empire State After-School Program

While the demand for afterschool and expanded learning programs remains high, we are pleased to see a clear recognition of the need to increase investments in these programs, and we request that the legislature **support the \$10 million proposal to increase the Empire State After-School Program in the Executive Budget. This will expand afterschool programs to serve an additional 6,250 students across the state.**

The Empire State After-School Program was funded at \$35 million in the FY17-18 state budget to bring high-quality afterschool and summer programs to the state's highest poverty areas. Positive youth outcomes require consistent, long-term participation; therefore, this program must be continued and expanded this year. These programs are an important part of a comprehensive set of services to address the needs of high-poverty communities, and expanding the Empire State After-School Program would serve more students with vital expanded learning opportunities that can help working families, support academic and social and emotional development, and provide a safe place for students during the peak hours of juvenile crime.

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

As proposed by the Governor, these programs can provide high-quality enrichment and learning opportunities for homeless youth between the end of the school day and the time their parents finish work and can bring them to a shelter. They can also provide a supportive environment for youth and engage them in productive activities that build positive relationships, safe from gang activity. With the many dangers currently facing students, families, and communities, safe and productive activities cannot end at 3pm. These afterschool programs are a crucial component to ensure that all of New York's children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Additionally, the Governor's proposal opens up this funding to both school districts and community-based organizations; last year's funding was only available for school districts. This change is a needed improvement to the Empire State After-School Program as it allows all providers interested in offering high-quality afterschool programming to apply. Both schools and community-based organizations have proven track records of running such programs in New York, and allowing all applicants to be eligible to apply will ensure the highest quality programs are funded.

Potential Impact

The Empire State After-School Program will provide a number of positive benefits to students that will support their success. 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.² Regular attendance at a high-quality afterschool program over several years can close the achievement gap in math for low-income students.³ 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.⁴ Program participation also increases engagement in school-day learning, resulting in higher attendance rates, a decrease in behavioral issues, and an increased motivation to learn.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 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 them for success in college and career in the 21st century.⁶

Researchers are also finding that the challenges of achieving the American Dream are partially due to the opportunity gap. ExpandedED Schools estimates that gap is 6,000 hours before children

² New York State Network for Youth Success, *Top 10 Reasons You Should Support Expanded Learning Opportunities*, <http://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/top-10-reasons-draft-5.6.16.pdf> (2014).

³ Deborah Lowe Vandell, *The Achievement Gap is Real*, <http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf> (2013).

⁴ Wallace Foundation, *Building Our Understanding of Summer Learning* <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Knowledge-in-Brief-Building-Our-Understanding-of-Summer-Learning.pdf> (2014).

⁵ A Compendium of Expanded Learning. Afterschool Programs that Follow Evidence-Based Practices to Promote Social and Emotional Development are Effective. http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg_Final.pdf%20

⁶ Robert Halpern et al., *Realizing the Potential of Learning in Middle Adolescence*, <http://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/Realizing-the-Potential-of-Learning-in-Middle-Adolescence.pdf> (2013).

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 future. 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.

To build an innovation-focused economy, ensure our children are graduating high school ready for college and career, and keep them on track for healthy adult lives, New York needs to increase investment in high-quality afterschool and summer learning experiences. These programs help all of our students, no matter where they live, engage in hands-on learning, avoid risky behaviors and involvement with the juvenile justice system, and stay on track to develop into active citizens, and effective employees and entrepreneurs. They can be crucial for working families, who need to know that their children are safe between the end of the school day and the end of the work day. These programs may stand alone, or they may be integrated into a community schools strategy that incorporates afterschool or expanded learning time.

Community Schools

We are pleased to see the Executive Budget maintains \$150 million in Community Schools Aid included in last year's budget and provides an additional \$50 million to expand funding this year. We ask the State to **maintain \$300 million in existing community school funding and support the additional \$50 million in Community Schools Aid to adequately fund and sustain community schools statewide.** These new funds will allow school districts to develop quality community schools, to strengthen and enhance their work, and to sustain successful community schools. The community schools strategy has been shown to be effective for increasing student achievement in New York.⁸

We also ask for the State to **increase the \$1.2 million investment in Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) by \$415,550 for a total appropriation of \$1.615 million.** School districts and community partners must receive the necessary support and implementation assistance to ensure their efforts are successful. An additional \$415,550 would provide funding for each of the three TACs to hire a dedicated staff member for on-site technical assistance and coaching and will allow for an annual “statewide” convening for community school directors or district representatives. Providing principals, superintendents, and district administrators with vital on-site technical assistance and capacity building support will be more effective and efficient in ensuring schools and school districts are successful in their community school efforts. Further, an annual statewide convening will provide networking opportunities and valuable resource sharing.

⁷ ExpandedED Schools, *The 6,000-Hour Learning Gap*, <http://expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.DhamOIOW.dpbs> (2013).

⁸ Coalition for Community Schools, (2009). Community Schools Research Brief 09. Retrieved from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

Expanded Learning Data System

Afterschool and expanded learning programs must also have access to the resources necessary to ensure quality programming that supports school-day learning. As afterschool funding expands, we request that the legislature **invest \$1.2 million in the acquisition of a data system for tracking participant outcomes from expanded learning opportunities (ELOs)**. This system would support afterschool, summer, expanded learning time, community schools, and other models that offer youth safety, learning, and enrichment beyond traditional school hours. A data system would also help support growth in program quality, simplify data collection and analysis for program providers, and inform New York State policymaking. The New York State Network for Youth Success estimates initial costs at approximately \$1.2 million and subsequent annual costs at approximately \$400,000. This would be a relatively small investment to help ensure the success of the Empire State After-School Program and to support the other, existing programs throughout the state.

Need for Expanded Learning Opportunities

As previously outlined, the state currently has fewer high-quality afterschool and summer programs than are needed, depriving over 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. During the summer months, 500,000 New York children are still in need of access to high-quality summer programs. The lack of funding for afterschool and summer programs puts an additional burden on schools to meet students' needs without additional learning time or community support.

The 2014 *America After 3 PM* survey of parents and guardians found that an estimated 1.1 million New York students would attend an afterschool program if one were available.⁹ This is the same number as when the *America After 3 PM* survey was conducted in 2009.¹⁰ 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 Ten.

Even while students and families suffer without access to programs, providers have the current capacity to increase the number of high-quality afterschool and summer programs dramatically, were the funding available. Recent grant competitions reveal that the demand for funding dramatically outweighs what is currently available in the state budget. In the 2012 competition for the Advantage After School program, set to expire this year without a new competition if funding is not restored, \$6.8 million was awarded to programs. The total funding requested by all applications that met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program was \$54.4 million, \$48 million of which went unfunded. In 2014, the amount of unfunded, but qualified, applications totaled over \$31 million for only \$10.9 million in available funding. In 2013, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) conducted a grant competition for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (federal funding administered by NYSED) to fund afterschool and summer programs. An additional \$122 million would be needed to fund all applications that met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program.

⁹ Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2014, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.

¹⁰ Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2009, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/AA3PM-2009.cfm>

Community Partners

Community partners are an essential element of successful community schools and expanded learning programs. Families, non-profit organizations, cultural institutions, and the rest of the community are crucial partners to schools in helping every youth reach their full potential. Community partners can connect these supports with youth and with the school. Community organizations are able to bring essential resources and expertise to schools, resources that could take the form of long-standing family relationships, teaching artists, culturally-competent educators, health and social services connections, or many other kinds of expertise as needed by a particular school or community. Likewise, schools bring valuable teaching and learning techniques that enhance the effectiveness and impact of supports provided by these partners.

Funding to support community schools, including community schools aid, should require the involvement of community partners. This requirement will keep schools from having to reinvent the wheel as they seek to implement the strategy. While community schools can be tremendous assets, they also can be complicated to put in place. Everything from regulatory compliance with governing agencies like the Department of Health or the Office of Children and Family Services that are mostly unfamiliar to your average principal, to the intricacies of scheduling thirty different activity options across a three-hour block of time will need to be carefully planned – and community organizations just down the street have already solved many of the challenges these schools will face.

Community partners also bring community relationships and knowledge that can help schools more successfully engage families, a factor widely acknowledged as key in long-term change for students and schools. A community-based organization can be perceived as less intimidating than a school, and thus may serve as a more accessible entry point for parents. Many community-based organizations are also deeply connected to providers of other social services, so that a strong community partner can bring elements of the referral and connections services provided by community schools.

Finally, the focus of most community-based out-of-school-time providers is on enrichment and overall youth development, not solely on academics. These programs foster the non- or extra-academic skills, from creativity to perseverance, that recent research has identified as equally as important to life outcomes as purely academic knowledge.¹¹ These programs also provide opportunities for students to develop confidence in areas beyond the academic realm that translate into increased success in personal expectations and goal attainment.

Innovative Practices in New York's Afterschool and Summer Programs

- *Off The Street*, an Advantage After School program at Hamilton Elementary School in Mt. Vernon, employs local teens from Thornton High School and provides them with the opportunity to give back to their community by mentoring the younger children.
- The 21st Century Community Learning Center/Extended School Day program at Thomas R. Proctor High School in Utica hosts an annual blanket drive that collects over 2,200

¹¹ Robert Halpern et al., *Realizing the Potential of Learning in Middle Adolescence*, <http://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/Realizing-the-Potential-of-Learning-in-Middle-Adolescence.pdf> (2013).

blankets, which are distributed to all 12 Utica City District Schools, local hospitals, and the humane society.

- The Advantage After School Program at Boys & Girls Harbor in East Harlem, an arts focused afterschool program, recently performed the hit song, “Rise Up,” with Andra Day on the Billboard Women in Music 2016 Awards and at Colin and Alma Powell’s Americas Promise National Summit 2017.
- The Comet Design Co. in Carthage is an entrepreneurial program for high school students where participants write a business plan, utilize 3D printers and other high-tech devices to create real products, and then sell the products to support the afterschool program.
- 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 Boys and Girls Club of Massena, a community facing heroin and prescription drug addiction among youth, is working with the local police department to provide a positive alternative for youth, through a program that provides a safe, educational place after school.
- The Garden of Fire is a summer program held in Steuben County for at-risk youth that offers campers the opportunity to participate in art activities, learn to drum, and receive counseling, concluding with a glass blowing demonstration linked to one of the region’s major industries.

Community Schools Initiatives

- The Food Bank for NYC, funded by the New York City Council, created 16 new school pantries in NYC schools across the five boroughs to serve the growing population. Currently, 13 of the 16 pantries are part of the DOE’s Community Schools Initiative, serving more than 3,200 individuals.
- The Broome County Promise Zone, a county wide effort led by Binghamton University and Broome County, has seen dramatic increases to the number of families engaged in the school system, growing from 100 families in 2014-15 to 642 in 2016-17. These efforts have also resulted in increased academic outcomes among students, as 32% increased their English grades and 46% increased math grades.
- Windsor Promise Zone located in Broome County partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension’s Nutrition Educator to educate elementary students on healthy food choices and to teach basic cooking skills and recipes for the students to prepare at home with their families.
- Action NYC adapted legal services for 27 Community Schools with 70 legal clinics for students, parents, and staff in New York City. Nearly 900 students and family members have been screened; about 30% of individuals screened may be eligible to apply for immigration benefits. The most common forms of relief seen in the schools are Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (for abandoned, abused, or neglected children), naturalization, asylum (and similar humanitarian claims including withholding of removal and claims under the Convention Against Torture), and family-based visa petitions.
- The Raising Educational Achievement Coalition of Harlem (REACH) program sponsored by Teachers College at PS 36 partnered with Children’s Health Fund to provide vision

screenings to all students. Approximately 21% were found in need of follow-up care and were provided with additional examinations and two pairs of glasses as needed.

- Wellsville Central School District and Auburn School District have both implemented mobile dental clinics that provide dental services to students and families.
- The New York City Community Learning Schools Initiative at PS 83 includes an afterschool program for English language learner (ELL) students and their families to give students and families the opportunity to learn English and American cultural traditions in a risk-free setting.

As New York seeks to ensure that all students graduate high school ready for college and career, it must invest in expanded learning programs. The New York State Network for Youth Success recommends that the Legislature:

- **Support Governor Cuomo's proposed \$10 million increase for the Empire State After-School Program, providing 6,250 more students across the state with access to afterschool programs.**
- **Maintain \$300 million in existing community school funding and support the additional \$50 million to adequately fund and sustain community schools statewide.**
- **Increase the \$1.2 million investment in Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) by \$415,550 for a total of \$1.615 million.**
- **Invest \$1.2 million in the acquisition of a data system for tracking participant outcomes from expanded learning opportunities (ELOs).**

We hope that the Legislature and the Governor will take this opportunity to not just meet the immediate need, but to also **create a plan for future investments that will work towards serving the estimated 1.1 million children who need an afterschool program and do not have access** so the benefits of afterschool and summer programs can be made available to all of New York's youth who need them.

Additional Recommendations

Maintain funding at \$24.3 million for the Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Program. Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention programs provide critical before school, afterschool, and summer programming to students across the state, and the continuation of these grants is necessary to the success of the programs and students.

Support \$21.59 million in funding proposed to extend current Extended Learning Time grants. The Extended Learning Time program began in School Year 2014-15 as an initiative of Governor Cuomo to lengthen to school day with supplemental programming and supports. Participating schools involve community partners to provide enrichment activities and additional learning time to students throughout the extended school day, supporting their academic and social and emotional development. Maintaining funding will allow current grantees to continue providing additional learning time to students.