

Syracuse City School District



Joint Legislative Public Hearing 2025-26 Executive Elementary & Secondary Education Budget

Anthony Q. Davis, Sr.
Superintendent

January 29, 2025

Board of Education

President Tamica Barnett, Twiggy Billue, Nyatwa Bullock, Karen Cordano,
Mary Habib, Gwendolyn Raeford, Ranette Releford

Good afternoon,

I am Anthony Davis, the Superintendent of the Syracuse City School District and I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Executive Budget from the perspective of the Big 5, more specifically our students in Syracuse.

We are thankful that the Governor has taken into consideration the Rockefeller Report on the Foundation Aid formula and has incorporated some of the recommended changes in the allocation of funding for Syracuse. This change has had a positive effect on our funding but we recognize that there are more changes that are needed in order for this formula to be equitable for all school districts and students in New York State. We have over 20% of our students in need of Special Education services and almost 20% of our students are identified as English Language Learners so further revisions need to be made to equitably account for this student population.

Due to the expiration of federal stimulus funding through sources like ARPA, we will need continued state aid increases and funding to adequately address the academic, social-emotional, and technological needs of our students. Post-covid our District has experienced a dramatic change in the needs of our students and families. Our schools are looked upon by our community as a safe place to go for assistance and we have an obligation to do all we can to assist them, whether it's through community schools, after-school and summer school programming or partnerships with mental health providers.

As you may know, Syracuse continues to be the poorest community in the state. In fact, based on recent census data, Syracuse's children have struggled for years with some of the worst poverty rates in the entire nation. We strongly believe that education is the way to break this cycle of generational poverty, but we need students to be in school in order for them to excel. We request that additional funding is allocated to districts that are experiencing chronic absenteeism which is an issue facing many of our schools today.

As our district embarks on the first regional STEAM High School in the state with a cohort of 9th grade students in September of 2025, Special Services Aid and additional Career and Technical Education funding must be allocated in our education funding. We have expanded our CTE programming into all of our high schools, even implementing exploratory programs in our middle schools and it's critical that these programs receive additional funding. A state aid formula that excludes 9th graders in the calculation needs to be evaluated and adjusted.

Finally, I want to touch on our reading intervention initiatives. As the governor has continued to champion a focus on literacy, it's important that we continue to support our students with reading interventions. We need to ensure that our students have the necessary skills to succeed in today's world, and reading is a critical part of that. By continuing to invest in reading interventions, we can help our students achieve their full potential and succeed in school and beyond.

On behalf of the children and families of the Syracuse City School District, I thank you for your continued support in helping us achieve the level of funding required for us to continue the work of educating and supporting our students and their families. Working together we can maximize your education investments for the benefit of all the children and families in New York State.

Anthony Q. Davis, Sr.
Superintendent of Schools