



## **No More Excuses: Educate Every Student Campaign**

# **2014 Legislative Priorities**

**The Alliance for Quality Education is calling for:**

- ✓ **\$1.9 billion in new School Aid.**
  - \$ 1 billion in new classroom operating aid distributed equitably
  - \$225 million for full-day pre-K
  - \$110 million for college-ready community schools
  - \$300 million for curriculum restoration and improvement
  - \$20 million for supports and interventions to build a positive school climate
  - \$250 million in expense-based aids
  
- ✓ More teaching and learning, less testing.
  
- ✓ Raise NYC's millionaires' tax to pay for quality full-day pre-k for all New York City four-year-olds and after-school programs for all middle school students.

## No More Excuses: Educate Every Student

New York State ranks a lowly 44<sup>th</sup> among the states when it comes to educational equity.<sup>i</sup> In fact, the funding gap between New York's 100 wealthiest and 100 poorest school districts is \$8,601 per pupil.<sup>ii</sup> The 2007 settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) was designed to close the educational opportunity gap. For two years the state fulfilled its commitment to the CFE settlement, but since then New York State has turned its back on educational equity and on ensuring all students have the opportunity for a quality education.

Governor Cuomo recognizes the problem. In his own words:

*"I think the inequity in education is probably the civil rights issue of our time. There are two education systems in this state. Not public private. One for the rich and one for the poor and they are both public systems."*

*"The way we fund education through the property tax system, by definition is going to be unfair. And it is. The state is supposed to equalize or come close to equalizing with its funding. That's the CFE lawsuit that the state is yet to fully fund."<sup>iii</sup>*

Yet under Governor Cuomo, CFE has been gutted and educational inequity has grown.

### Campaign for Fiscal Equity

The state still owes schools \$5.5 billion in Campaign for Fiscal Equity funding. In 2007, the Governor and the legislature decided to settle the lawsuit on a statewide basis, promising to provide \$5.5 billion over four years to all school districts, targeting most of the funding to high need districts which had been chronically underfunded. Only two years of increased funding was provided to schools in 2007 and 2008. Then, in 2009, the state froze funding. In 2010 and 2011, the state cut \$2.7 billion from education funding—reversing the progress made under CFE. Schools have never recovered from these cuts. In 2012 the state added \$805 million and in 2013 the state added \$962 million, but these amounts were not enough to prevent school districts from making more cuts let alone restore programs that were lost.<sup>iv</sup>

# THE REALITY NEEDS TO MATCH THE RHETORIC

## The Policy

**Full-Day Pre-K:** The Governor's program only serves 1% to 2% of four year olds.

**Community Schools & Expanded Learning Time:** The Community Schools program serves less than 1% of schools in the state. The expanded learning time program serves only one half of 1% of students in New York State.

### **Death Penalty for Low Performing Schools:**

The Governor has called for a "death penalty" for low-performing schools. Instead of a "death penalty" he should offer schools and students a lifeline by turning these schools into models for school improvement combining his proposals for community schools to provide students with vital social, emotional and health services, and more and better learning time that provides a diverse, high quality curriculum.

## The Commitment

Governor Cuomo's  
2013 State of the State

"Every expert will tell you that early education makes a difference and it makes the difference for life. The statistics are overwhelming... We should provide real pre-k for all our children... We will expand the pre-k program to full-day pre-k, five hours. And we will start with students in the lowest wealth school districts. Let's do it today."

"We want to create community schools in distressed communities, where that community school becomes the hub of all the services that that child and that family needs to survive. It's not about just providing an education; it's about health care, nutrition, family counseling, a medical clinic. Put it all in that school and call it what it is. These are distressed communities. These are high need pupils. Let's get them the services they need."

"We need more learning time, my friends, if we really are serious about improving education... an option for every school district in the state, if they want to opt in and how they want to opt in - longer day, longer year, combination. It's up to them. But if they do it, the state would pay 100% of the additional cost to give them the incentive to actually do it."

# No More Excuses Budget Proposal

## \$1.9 billion including:

- \$1 billion in **Classroom Operating Aid** to be distributed through the foundation aid formula. An increase in foundation aid takes the burden off local property taxpayers. A portion of these funds could be used to restore the GEA so long as the method of distribution is the foundation aid formula.
- \$225 million for first phase of **Universal Full-Day Pre-K**.<sup>v</sup> This will significantly expand Governor Cuomo's commitment to universal high quality full-day pre-K by providing the first year of a four year phase-in of full-day pre-K for all four year olds.
- \$110 million for **Urgent Action for College-Ready Community Schools**. Governor Cuomo endorsed community schools and expansion of school day and school year to improve the quality of education. This proposal combines both ideas to provide dramatic interventions to improve 100 low-performing schools.<sup>vi</sup>
- \$300 million for **Curriculum Improvement**. This includes raising the quality of the curriculum to prepare students to be college and career ready and restoring programmatic cuts that have narrowed the curriculum. Funds can be used for curricula focused on critical thinking and college readiness in accordance with higher state education standards. Funds can also be used to restore courses in Arts, Music, physical education, Career & Technical education, Advanced Placement courses, college credit courses and other areas. Distribution of funding should be based on the foundation aid formula.
- \$20 million for **supports and interventions to create a positive school climate**, including progressive discipline practices and restorative justice to keep students in schools and solve behavioral issues.
- \$250 million in **Expense Based Aids**<sup>vii</sup> (transportation, BOCES, high cost special education, hardware, software and textbooks, etc.) and **Building Aid**<sup>viii</sup> This estimate is based upon the amount included in the 2013 state budget. The actual amounts fluctuate annually. If the total is greater than \$250 million, then the total education budget allocation should be increased accordingly.

## Focus on Teaching and Learning, Not Testing

In the current climate of insufficient funding and raised standards, more harm than good is done if we do not address the misuse on standardized testing. Specifically, the Alliance for Quality Education supports:

- A moratorium on high stakes consequences associated with testing for all students, teachers, and schools until there is adequate funding and adequate time to gain deep understanding and knowledge of new material.
- A ban all Pre-Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade standardized testing. In these early grades, the focus should be on learning through developmentally appropriate methods rather than test in ways that are inappropriate.
- A reduction of the amount of testing in schools so there is more teaching and learning rather than testing.
- Strong opposition to InBloom or other data sharing proposals and strictly ensure the protection of student and family privacy.
- Students with disabilities and English Language Learners should be not subject to developmentally inappropriate testing.
- Equitable funding to ensure all students have access to a high quality education, which includes access to art, music, etc, college preparatory and college level classes.

## New York City Millionaires' Tax to Fund Full-Day Pre-K and After School Programs

AQE supports Mayor-Elect de Blasio's proposal to raise taxes on New York City residents earning \$500,000 a year or more so that NYC funds full-day pre-kindergarten for all its four-year olds and after school programs for all its middle schoolers.

These proposals provide models for the statewide initiatives contained in our New York State Budget proposal.

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<sup>i</sup> Baker, Bruce, David Sciarra and Danielle Farrie, *Is Funding Fair? A National Report Card*, Education Law Center and Rutgers University Graduate School of Education, 2012.

<sup>ii</sup> Marcou-O'Malley, Marina, *Confronting the Opportunity Gap*, Alliance for Quality Education, 2013.

<sup>iii</sup> Excerpts from the gubernatorial debate, October 19, 2010 on Capital Tonight, YNN

<sup>iv</sup> Calculations for the chart above were based on the amounts of Foundation Aid as reflected in the School Aid Runs provided by the NYS Education Department. Since Foundation Aid constitutes 79% of total school aid, we multiplied the total enacted cut by 79% to find the cut to Foundation Aid for 2010 and 2011 respectively. Then, we subtracted that cut from the Foundation Aid amount that was reflected in the enacted school aid runs. To calculate the amount that should have been in Foundation Aid we added the \$5.5 billion in statute to the base amount (2006 amount).

<sup>v</sup> This amount is taken from the Campaign for Educational Equity and Center for Children's Initiatives proposal "Making Pre-K Truly Universal." The report can be found at <http://www.centerforchildrensinitiatives.org/> This is for statewide, state-funded pre-k, there is overlap between this proposal and the proposal by Mayor DeBlasio for NYC to fund its

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own full-day pre-k. We support both proposals—the implementation of either one may reduce the costs of the other.

Full-day Pre-K: The methodology used is described in *Making Prekindergarten Truly Universal in New York State: A Statewide Roadmap*. The \$225 million cost is based on the New Jersey Abbott districts per pupil. This amount is adjusted for NYS to reflect regional costs and need. This amount also includes cost for quality standards such as small class sizes, master teachers, family workers and social workers.

<sup>vi</sup> College Ready Community Schools: The estimate is based on the annual amount available to schools through the competitive grant the governor issued in 2013-14, which provides schools in high need districts \$166,666 (or a total of \$500,000 over three years) added with the amount necessary for the extended learning time (\$1,500 per pupil) for those schools using an average of 600 students per school.

<sup>vii</sup> Amount taken from 2013 enacted budget school aid runs

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