

No One Wins When Our Children Lose

Key Challenges to the 2012 New York State Budget

By the Alliance for Quality Education

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**PUBLIC POLICY AND
EDUCATION FUND** OF NEW YORK

NYS Commissioner of Education Dr. John King testified at the Joint Legislative Hearing on the Executive Budget 2012-13 and warned that some school districts are in danger of “educational insolvency.”

“There are districts that do not have a promising trajectory over the next few years.”

--Dr. John King, NYS Commissioner of Education, January 23, 2012

Major Findings

- Over the past two years New York State has cut school funding by \$2.7 billion. Under the 2012 Executive Budget proposal school districts can only expect 1 in 5 dollars of these cuts to be restored. As a result many school districts are expecting to make more classroom cuts next year.
- Due to these cuts school districts have cut art, music, sports, Advanced Placement courses, and more and 63% have increased class sizes. In some cases they have reduced kindergarten from full-day to half-day, a move more districts are considering. All of these cuts have led the State Education Commissioner to warn that districts are in danger of “educational insolvency.”
- The 2012 New York State Executive Budget proposal would provide \$805 million in new education funding compared to last year’s budget. Only \$555 million is allocated to school districts to restore classroom cuts, the rest would be distributed through competitive grants.
- Of the \$805 million 52% is allocated to high need school districts, 14% is allocated to average need school districts, 2% is allocated to wealthier low need school districts and 31% is allocated to a new competitive grants program.
- No additional funding is allocated to pre-kindergarten programming despite the fact that the New York State Board of Regents proposed that \$53 million should be used to expand quality pre-kindergarten programs instead of putting these funds into competitive grants. Pre-Kindergarten is proven to be successful in raising student achievement and graduation rates, increasing students’ income as adults, and reducing incarceration rates.
- If the funds proposed for competitive grants were redistributed through the progressive school aid formula used in the Executive budget then 71% of the \$805 million would go to high need districts, 19% to average need districts, 3% to wealthier low need districts and 7% to pre-kindergarten.
- Redistributing the competitive grants combined with the restorations proposed in the Executive Budget would restore \$574 million for high need districts, \$153 million for average need districts and \$21 million for wealthier low need districts and \$53 million for quality pre-kindergarten.
- Redirecting the competitive grants into classroom aid would help, but would still only restore 1 in 4 dollars that have been cut from classrooms and may not be enough to stop further classroom cuts. The Legislature must find additional funding sources.

Recommendations

- **Redirect the \$250 million from competitive grant programs to classroom restorations.** Or at least redirect \$225 million while allowing the existing program to be tested before it is dramatically expanded.
- **\$53 million of the competitive grant funds should be redirected to expanding quality pre-kindergarten as recommended by the Board of Regents**
- **Add additional funds for classroom restorations.** Even after redirecting the competitive grant funds into classroom restorations, only one in four dollars that have been cut from schools in the past two years would be restored.
- **Institute cost savings initiatives** recommended below and designate savings to classroom restorations.

Cost Saving Initiatives

Among the cost saving options the Legislature should consider:

- Restructuring building aid in ways recommended by the Board of Regents would create long terms savings for the state which could be used to increase classroom aid.
- A single source statewide contract for school district bus purchases as proposed by Governor Cuomo.
- Using the state's Green Jobs initiative to reduce energy consumption in schools by 25%.
- Allowing for reverse auction bidding by school districts in purchasing.

\$2.7 Billion in Classroom Cuts in Two Years: What Our Schools Have Lost

A recent report from the NYS Council of School Superintendents notes that the impact on instruction was greatly felt: 63% of school districts increased their class size because of the budget cuts, 36% reduced summer school, 22% reduced art classes, 24% reduced music classes, and 17% reduced the number of honors or advanced placement courses they offered. In 2011, over 11,000 educators and other school personnel were lost and over the last three years, New York State schools lost 30,000 educators and other school staff.

Sources: NYS Council of School Superintendents. (2011). *At the Edge: A survey of school superintendents on fiscal matters and NYSUT fact sheet 2011 Consequences of New York State Education Cuts*

Cuts have disproportionately hurt students from high and average need districts. On average these districts have absorbed cuts that were two to three times larger per pupil than wealthy districts. In some cases the cuts have been more than ten times as large in high and average need districts.¹

These are Cuts to the Classroom, not to a Bureaucracy

- **Poughkeepsie** (Dutchess County): Reduced kindergarten program from full day to half day, eliminated alternative program for disruptive students, cut recess time because of layoffs to teachers' aides.
- In **New York City**, 74% of schools increased class sizes, 56% of the schools reduced Academic Intervention Services, 21% of schools reduced services to English Language Learners and 20% of schools lost their art and music classes. For instance at the Mosaic Prep Academy in East Harlem classes that used to be 18 to 20 students have risen to 31 and 34 with 28 in kindergarten.
- **Central Islip** (Suffolk County)--Cut 85 teaching positions which resulted in larger class sizes at all grade levels.
- **Yonkers** (Westchester County) cut pre-kindergarten from full to half day, reduced career and technical education, arts and music, sports. They have no elementary school librarians. As a result of cuts in guidance counselors, there are now 650 students for each high school guidance counselor.
- **Canton Central School District** (St Lawrence County) cut the high school's Advanced Placement environmental science course and several other electives. Foreign language classes that formerly started in seventh grade now begin in eighth grade because a Spanish teacher was eliminated.
- **Brunswick-Brittonkill School District** (Rensselaer County) cut its Advanced Placement Physics, its Honors English and Social Studies classes, replacing them with an Honors Seminar held every other day during lunch period.
- **Massena** (St Lawrence) is only able to offer two Advanced Placement courses to their high school students and **Scio** (Allegany) can only afford one Advanced Placement course.

¹ Alliance for Quality Education, *Back to Inequality*, <http://www.aqeny.org/ny/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Back-to-Inequality-November-15-Final.pdf>

Wealthier Districts have also Been Harmed by Cuts, but Have the Resources to Maintain High Quality Educational Programs

While high need and average need schools have seen by far the largest cuts, all schools have suffered cuts. We do not believe the solution is to cut the quality of education in wealthier schools. Their high opportunity curricula and student supports lead to successful student outcomes. The high quality programming in these school districts offers excellent educational opportunities that produce graduation rates from 94% to 96% and college and university enrollment rates exceeding 90%. The types of programs that lead to these levels of success include many of the same types of programs that have been cut to the core in needy schools. The state has an obligation to see that all students have access to quality educational opportunities – the wealthy districts, which are often the highest spending districts, have demonstrated that money does matter to educational achievement. Some examples of the high quality programming that lead to excellent results include:

- **Scarsdale** (Westchester) high school is able to offer 15 AP courses and another six college and SAT preparation courses, 21 art classes, 28 performing arts classes, 4 foreign languages, 21 sports teams, and an intensive college preparatory process that includes annual guidance counseling, college planning and a college testing program for 9th to 12th grades.
- **Rye** (Westchester) is able to offer 22 Advanced Placement courses, 27 sports teams, high school programs such as Performing Arts (Drama, Vocal, Dance), Tutoring, and Writing Mentor Program. In the elementary schools class sizes are limited to 20 students and middle school classes are limited to 23 students.
- **Chappaqua** (Westchester) has only 1300 students and offers 72 sports teams, 2 student publications, 85 clubs and 50% of students take advantage of 18 Advance Placement courses (with an 81% success rate).
- **Jericho** (Nassau) high school offers 26 college or advanced placement courses (including Chinese, Business Law, and Civil Engineering), 26 arts and performing arts classes, 10 business classes, 6 foreign languages, and 20 sports teams. Course selections include many that are designed to grow students' career opportunities such as fashion design, advertising design, marketing, entrepreneurship, business law, civil engineering, and sports medicine.

Look at footnote for links to the school districts mentioned above.²

The Executive Budget

The 2012-13 Executive Budget proposes an \$805 million restoration to the \$2.7 billion cuts of the last two years. The amount proposed represents a step towards undoing the damage of these cuts

²Scarsdale http://www.scarsdaleschools.k12.ny.us/cms/lib5/NY01001205/Centricity/Domain/74/Complete_Course_Catalog_2012-13.pdf

Rye <http://ryecityschools.schoolfusion.us>

Chappaqua <http://www.ccsd.ws/district.cfm?subpage=1011147>

Jericho <http://www.jerichoschools.org/hs/department.asp?area=Exceptional+Opportunities>

and providing every student with an opportunity to learn as well as with their constitutionally granted right to a “sound, basic education.” While only \$555 million is allocated to school districts it is important to note that Governor Cuomo has emphasized equity in the distribution of this portion of the funding.

The amount of restoration is *inadequate*.....

The Executive Budget Proposal Only Restores 1 in 5 Classroom Dollars that were Cut over the Past Two Years

The Executive Budget proposes \$805 million in increased school aid. However, by proposing to divert \$250 million from classroom restorations into competitive grants this leaves only \$555 million for school aid restorations. This amount would not even cover the 3% to 4% cost of inflation and does not begin to replenish the damage done over the last two years as a result of record school cuts.

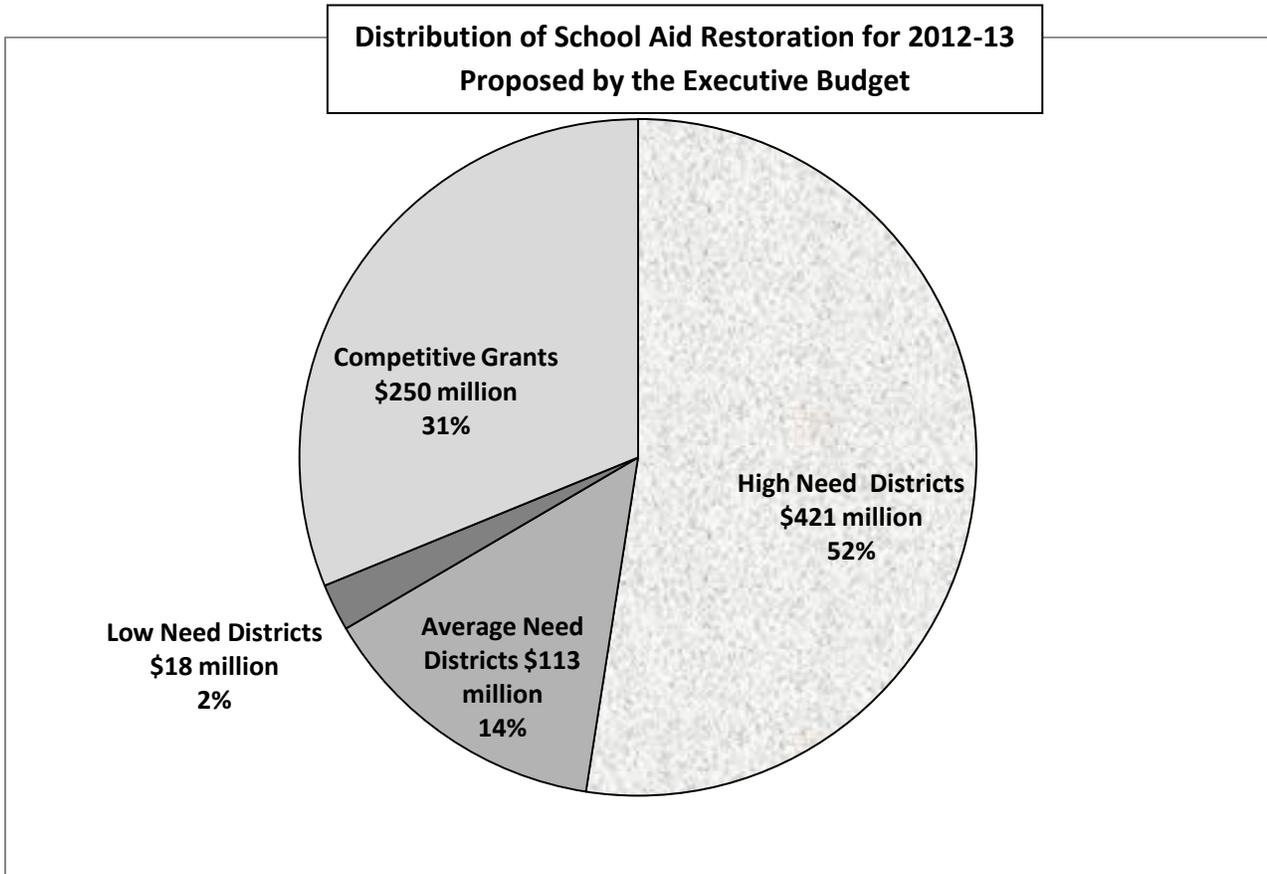


The Executive Budget Restores only 1 in 5 dollars of the \$2.7 billion cut.



Graph 1

The Executive Budget proposal would distribute 52% of the \$805 million to high need schools and 14% to average need schools. By contrast the Board of Regents proposed to give 68% to high need schools and 22% to average need schools.



Graph 2

While the effects of the state education budget cut were felt in regions across the entire state, high needs and average need urban, rural, suburban and small city schools saw cuts at disproportionate levels in comparison to wealthy or low needs school districts.

More Classroom Restorations are needed

Two-Year Total Cut \$2.7 Billion

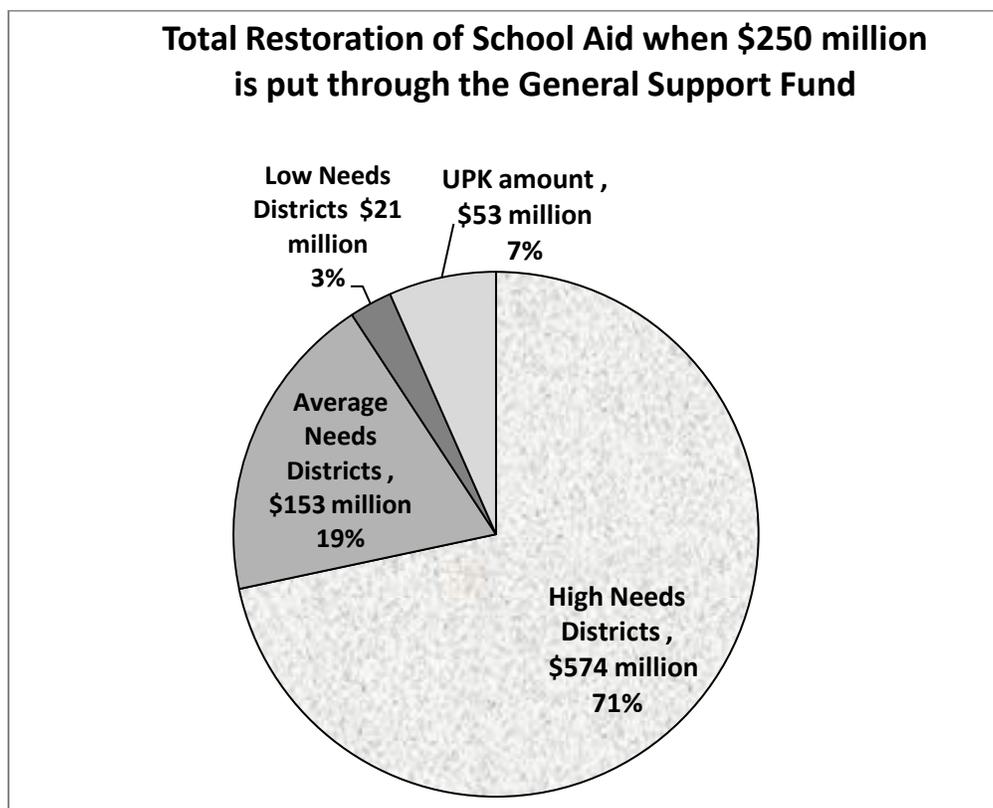
Executive Budget Proposal would restore only one out of every five dollars or \$555 million in allocations to school districts

Quality Pre-Kindergarten: A Reform that Works

The Board of Regents recommended that \$53 million be added to pre-kindergarten programs statewide instead of putting this money into competitive grants. This can be paid for by redirecting these funds from the competitive grants proposal. Doing this would allow an additional 14,000 4-year olds to have access to pre-kindergarten. Pre-kindergarten improves students' success in school, and raises graduation rates. Ultimately, people who attend quality pre-kindergarten make more money in their careers and are less likely to go to jail³.

Reprogramming Competitive Grant Funds into Classroom Restorations

If the amount of funding dedicated to the Competitive Grants is redistributed through the funding formula contained in the Executive Budget, high and average need school districts will receive 90% of the funding—as proposed by the New York State Board of Regents.



Graph 3

At present, the State Education Department is accepting applications to compete for grants from a \$25 million funding pool. This grant pool is currently scheduled to be in place for three years. Another option for the legislature, rather than reprogramming all \$250 million in new competitive

³ HighScope Perry Preschool Study <http://www.highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=282>

grant funds for 2012-13 would be to only redirect \$225 million, leaving \$25 million annually for the current competitive grants program. This would allow the state to assess the success of this program rather than eliminating it or dramatically expanding it before it has been tested.

Even After Redirecting Competitive Grants to Classroom Restorations only 1 in 4 Dollars of Classroom Cuts would be Restored . . .

More needs to be Done

Redirecting the competitive grants would produce an additional \$197 million in school aid restorations and \$53 million in pre-kindergarten funding. The \$197 million, added to the \$550 million in school aid restorations contained in the Executive Budget would allow for a total of \$747 million in classroom restorations. This still would only restore 1 in 4 dollars that has been cut from our classrooms. The legislature needs to find additional options to restore funding.

Even with the amount from the Competitive Grants reprogrammed into the General Support Fund for Schools, only 1 in 4 dollars is restored from the \$2.7 billion cut.

That's NOT Enough!



Graph 4

New York is #3 in the nation in overall educational quality according to the Quality Counts report by *Education Week*, the nation's leading education periodical.

New York State is just behind Maryland and Massachusetts in overall educational quality out of all states in the nation.

CAMPAIGN FOR FISCAL EQUITY

- In 1993 a group of parents from New York City, led by Robert Jackson, formed the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) and sued New York State for failing to provide students with the quality education that is their right under the New York State Constitution.
- Thirteen years later, after multiple appeals and delays by the state courts at every level, the New York State Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, ruled that the state was failing to provide students with the classroom resources necessary to receive the "sound basic education" or "meaningful high school education" that is their constitutional right.
- While the CFE case was specific to New York City, the CFE plaintiffs argued for a statewide solution because students in many schools faced the same lack of adequate classroom resources-- whether upstate or downstate, rural or suburban, in large cities or small cities. In fact the Court of Appeals recognized that the State, in formulating a remedy to CFE, "may of course address statewide issues if it chooses."
- In 2007 the New York State Governor and Legislature enacted a statewide resolution to CFE. The statewide CFE resolution enacted in 2007 converted over 30 different school aid formulas into one formula based on student need and school district wealth. The state committed to add \$5.5 billion in basic classroom operating aid, or foundation aid, over 4 years with 72% dedicated to high need districts and 23% for average need districts.
- The CFE funding was tied to effective classroom reform strategies through the Contract for Excellence which prioritized pre-kindergarten, class size reduction, middle and high school reform, programs for English language learners, effective teaching, and more time on task (longer school days or school years, tutoring, etc.).
- For two years the state met its obligations, increasing classroom aid by \$2.3 billion which resulted in effective reforms in classrooms around the state.
- But then in 2009 as a result of the fiscal crisis school aid was frozen. Then over the following two years the state enacted over \$2.7 billion in cuts, including over \$2.1 billion in classroom cuts, in effect reversing CFE.
- Now the state is finally adding back some of the funds that were cut, but none are being added to get CFE restarted.

Conclusion

In 2007, New York State made a commitment to finally close the funding gap between rich and poor school districts and to give all students access to the quality education that is their right under the New York State Constitution. This was done as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. But, this promise of educational opportunity for all remains far from fulfilled. For two years, as a result of the 2007 school funding reform, the state kept its obligation to our students and over \$2 billion in new classroom aid was invested in classroom improvements. Over the past two years the state has cut \$2.7 billion from our schools and these cuts have widened the educational opportunity gap between wealthy and poor districts. These cuts have come directly out of the classroom, hurting students' educational opportunity by raising class sizes, eliminating over 30,000 positions of teachers and other educators, cutting arts, music, sports, advance placement and career and technical courses, tutoring programs and in some cases reducing kindergarten from full-day to half-day. The 2012-13 Executive budget proposes \$805 million more in school funding than was contained in last years' budget. But only \$555 million are allocated to restoring cuts because \$250 million is diverted to competitive grants. As a result the Executive budget would restore only 1 in 5 of dollars in classroom cuts. Reprogramming the competitive grants into classroom funding would restore 1 in 4 dollars of the classroom cuts as well as restarting New York's commitment to pre-kindergarten as called for by the Board of Regents. Plain and simply the \$805 million is a step in the right direction, but are not adequate. The state legislature needs to redistribute the competitive grant funds as classroom aid and add additional funding to get New York back on track with the promise of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.