

Alliance for Quality Education

Legislative Priorities 2020- 21

Year after year, students, parents and community members advocate that the state finally commits to fulfilling its constitutional obligation to all students by fully funding schools, especially the schools that educate students of color and low income students. This election year, it is more important than ever to show our youngest New Yorkers that their future matters, that Black, Latinx, immigrant and students whose families live in poverty will not be denied the opportunity to succeed by experiencing all the resources that fully funded schools have.

In 2007, the governor and the legislature provided a statewide settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit ruling by the NYS Court of Appeals by implementing in law a four year commitment of \$5.5 billion in operating going to all schools, but mostly to low income schools and schools that educate students of color. While the law remains, Governor Cuomo has refused to provide the necessary funding to meet that commitment. Currently, the New York State Board of Regents estimates that the state owes \$3.8 billion in operating aid, also known as Foundation Aid.

The parents, students, and community members of the Alliance for Quality Education demand that this year the state invests a total of \$2.4 billion.

Fully fund Foundation Aid. The formula that was created in 2007 to provide a predictable, stable and transparent method of delivering large sums of funding to the school districts that needed it the most has not been fully funded or used since 2009. Currently, the state is \$3.8 billion behind the commitment it made in law to provide Foundation Aid. Quality education has been put on the back burner for over a decade. We need the Governor and state legislature to fully fund the formula this year and commit to a two year phase –in (\$2 billion in year 1 and \$1.6 billion in year 2).

In addition, provide the following updates to the Foundation Aid formula:

- Use updated data for poverty, such as direct certification data. This data is more up-to-date and is verified by government agencies that provide public assistance.
- Eliminate the restrictions in the Pupil Needs Index to accurately capture student need.
- Eliminate the floor in income wealth index to fully capture poverty at the district level and accurately factor in the expected minimum local contribution. The floor in the income wealth index is arbitrary and does not allow districts with wealth lower than that floor to have a lower local contribution to the Foundation Aid. The

same is true for wealthier districts. Those with more wealth than the cap to the income wealth index are not expected to contribute enough.

- Update the regional cost index to reflect the higher costs that school districts such as Yonkers, Peekskill, Ossining and others in the lower Hudson Valley have to endure to provide educational services to their students. Currently, these higher cost areas are grouped with lower cost areas further north. Being grouped with lower cost areas results in lower operating aid.
- Increase weights in key categories in order to help district cover the true cost of education students with the greatest needs.
 - Add a weighting for high concentrations of English Language Learners.
 - Add a weighting for students with more severe disabilities

Invest \$50 million to implement Culturally Responsive Education

New York State public schools should offer a variety of classes, curricula, projects, books and resources that are grounded in the rich diversity of the New York State student population. Students should be learning about the histories and cultures of African, Latino, Asian,

Middle Eastern and Native heritage people in New York City schools, and the intersections with gender, LGBTQIA and religious diversity. Every child should have access to anti-racism and anti-bias education.

Invest \$50 million to implement positive climate strategies and practices that break the school-to-prison pipeline

All students deserve a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property, a school bus and/or at a school function. Educators need training on a variety of topics, including how to identify bullying; and school employees' duties concerning the reporting, investigation, and documenting of alleged incidents of harassment, bullying, and discrimination. We support increased investment in restorative justice practices as an effective alternative to punitive responses to wrongdoing. School-based restorative justice offers a more sustainable, equitable, and respectful alternative to dealing with misbehavior, from minor infractions to violence. It can also be used as a proactive strategy to create a culture of connectivity and care where all members of the school community can thrive.

Every child deserves to attend a safe, high quality school where students, teachers, and staff are treated with dignity and respect. The Safe and Supportive Schools bill (A3873) will help local schools create fair and equitable discipline policies that will address racial disparities and disparities related to disabilities.

Invest \$100 million to have Sustainable Community Schools

We want strong schools with curricula that are engaging, relevant and rigorous; support high-quality teaching and not high stakes testing; social, emotional, health and mental health services as well

as wraparound supports for every child; student-centered school climate, and transformative parent and community engagement.

Invest \$150 million to expand quality full day Pre-K

New York needs to fulfill its promise to provide full-day Pre-K for all 4- and 3-year-olds across the state. Instead of decreasing child care subsidies, we should be increasing support for children and families. High quality early childhood education creates long terms benefits for children, families and community. For every \$1 invested in early learning, taxpayers save \$7-\$11 in future cost. We need to invest in our youngest New Yorkers.

Invest \$25m in NYSED Funding for Adult Literacy Education (ALE). (Maintain last year's \$7.8m investment and increase ALE by \$17.2million).

Adult Education programs are critical to enabling New Yorkers to get and keep jobs, continue on their career paths and give parents tools to support their children's academic success.

Changes to the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act have resulted in a **loss of funding for English Language and Civics instruction** in NYS- this funding has transitioned to supporting a new Integrated English Literacy Program focused on post-secondary and employment outcomes for students.

The requirement for programs to demonstrate employment outcomes in order to maintain WIOA Title II funding has **created a barrier for thousands of learners with lower levels of English language proficiency or lack of work authorization.**

ALE is one of the few state funding streams able to address the current and expected new need for flexible adult education services by supporting community-based English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Adult Basic Education (ABE) and High School Equivalency (HSE) preparation programs. Expanding ALE would allow the State to help fill the gap created by changes to WIOA-funded programs.

Invest \$100 million in the child care system

Our child care system is in crisis. There are simply not enough investment in the system to make it accessible and affordable to everyone. In addition, most of the workforce in the system are women and in particular women of color. The average median wage for a child care educator in New York is \$12.38 an hour or \$25,760 per year. Fewer than 20% of the low income families in New York who are eligible for a subsidy are able to access it.

New York must commit to achieving universal access to quality, affordable child care by 2025.

New York must also make significant investments in child care this year by investing \$40 million to create a fund to increase workforce compensation and improve child care quality.

And, New York must also invest \$60 million to take meaningful steps toward achieving universal access to quality, affordable child care by 2025 by incrementally increasing the guaranteed eligibility levels and decreasing the copayment multiplier.