

Alliance for Quality Education

2024 State Budget & Legislative Priorities

Maintain 100% of Foundation Aid to All Districts

Update the Foundation Aid Formula (\$1 million)

The Foundation Aid formula was created over a decade ago, and does not fully capture the current cost of educating students. It is time for New York State to conduct a new costing out study and update the formula. We urge leaders to provide the State Education Department with the resources to engage with education finance experts to evaluate and revise the Foundation Aid formula while maintaining the principles of equity. This process must be inclusive and collaborative by engaging parents, students, teachers and community members.

Ensure that students continue to have the programs they need so they have the opportunity to learn: Provide funding to avoid any funding gap created by the expiration of Federal Aid (est \$2 billion)

Students' opportunity to learn, and all the conditions, strategies that help them access that opportunity, must be at the center of our public education system. Over the pandemic, students' needs were illuminated and amplified. The trauma the students and their families experienced, even before the pandemic and through it, the resources that came to our state help some school districts to fund strategies and programs to address them. These resources must continue in all the school districts that need them so that students continue to have the opportunity to learn. Ensure that school districts in danger of cutting programs, services and staff because of the expiration of the federal relief funding have the amount they need to continue to fund those programs. We estimate that approximately a quarter of the federal funding that was provided to school districts between 2020 and 2021 is funding programs necessary to meet students' needs.

Move Closer to Universal Child Care (\$1.5 billion)

Advancing universal child care means investing in child care educators and program providers so they can have a thriving income, ensure stability and continuity for learning for ALL children, which in turn will preserve quality of care and learning.¹

Child care workforce challenges are severe and persistent. The average wage for child care workers in New York State—who are almost entirely women and predominantly people of color—is \$35,190, one of the lowest among all professions. The small bonuses New York has provided to much of the workforce in recent years, while helpful, fall far short of the permanent hike in compensation the sector needs to stabilize and expand to meet growing need.²

Another challenge: thousands of low-income families are unjustly prevented from accessing child care by immigration status rules, lack of non-traditional hour care, and other access barriers.³

New York must enact policies to ensure that all families can access high-quality, culturally-responsive care when they need it. All New York families need and deserve child care.

¹ [ESCCC 2024 Budget and Legislative Priorities](#)

² The economics of child care are such that market forces alone will never be able to adequately fund high-quality care and wages for the sector. *For our system to survive, government intervention is required to offer competitive compensation to child care professionals.* Modeled after similar initiatives in [Washington, D.C.](#) and [New Mexico](#), this wage enhancement program would offer significant and sustained wage supplements to all licensed and registered providers in New York State the NYS Child Care Availability Task Force works to develop a compensation scale and structure. (By way of example, in Washington D.C., the municipal government in 2022 directly paid eligible providers \$10,000-\$14,000 supplements; payments in subsequent years will be determined by a compensation scale based on education, experience, and responsibilities.)

³ Immigrants make up [22% of the state population](#) and are an increasing part of the population each year. Many of these immigrant New Yorkers are parents, and are a vital part of the state labor force, working in essential jobs that keep the state economy moving. In the last year in particular, New York has also become home to more than 100,000 asylum-seekers, many of whom are children. While CCDBG makes funds available for subsidies to children who are US citizens, regardless of their parents' immigration status, funds cannot be used to cover the subsidy costs for most non-citizen children. An estimated 23,250 income-eligible New York children are not "qualified" for subsidies under the existing system due to their immigration status, along with tens of thousands of asylum-seeking children. Based on current uptake, we project that approximately 5,000 New York children of working parents are denied child care due solely to their immigration status.³ Thousands more who are eligible for subsidies under the current system likely do not gain access because their parents cannot prove their employment status or because they fear interactions with government agencies may lead to deportation or other immigration problems. In addition, many children who are asylum-seekers and have endured tremendous upheaval and uncertainty, need and deserve access to the stability and enrichment of a child care program.

Finally, with New York projecting a budget shortfall and economic headwinds, investing in child care must be recognized as critical to righting New York's economy. There are few investments with a greater public return than child care, estimated at [18% by the Minnesota Federal Reserve](#). This is because the impacts of insufficient access to high quality, affordable child care are dramatic. Unpaid family caregiving sharply reduces parents' earnings, which in turn reduces the amount of tax revenue they generate. A [2023 ReadyNation report](#) on infant-toddler child care determined that families with children under 3 years lose an average of \$5,520 per working parent annually in lost earnings and in time spent looking for work. Business also loses out due to productivity hits and the costs of turnover - an average of \$1,640 per working parent per year. *New York cannot afford to continue to underinvest in child care.*

- Increase compensation and benefits for all members of the child care workforce.
- Help ensure ALL New Yorkers can access child care.

Continue the momentum in full day pre-K (\$100 million)

- Focus on increasing rates for school districts that were early adopters of Universal Pre-K who continue to have programs that have to fund from local tax revenue. Currently, some school districts continue to receive from the state \$5,400 per child for full day pre-K, an amount that is inadequate to cover the cost of any quality program. In addition, school districts that contract with community based organizations to administer the pre-K program, do not provide an adequate amount for teachers to be paid a thriving wage, contending the teachers that work for these CBOs to wages that do not cover the basics.
- Ensure equitable distribution of pre-K funding to community based organizations and family child care programs to ensure continuity of learning for children that honors families' choice.
 - Potentially increase the minimum percentage of funding that needs to be contracted with community based organizations.
- Ensure that teachers' experience in all child care programs, with or without formal certification is considered appropriate for teaching pre-K.
- Ensure that preschool special education is adequately funded.

Increase revenues

Increase revenues to invest in public education, early education, and all the programs and services that ensure that New York's children have the opportunity to thrive while the economy continues to grow. AQE fully supports the five wealth tax proposals put forward by the [Invest in Our New York](#) campaign which will ensure the wealthy are paying their fair share, and raise badly needed revenue to protect New York's children and families.

Continue Building a Positive School Climate

Invest in community schools (\$100 million in categorical aid)

A positive school climate begins with the investment in strategies that work. Community schools are a proven-to-work strategy that helps foster positive school climate and student success.⁴ Many school districts are implementing this strategy to bring resources and services to schools that address students' needs. New York State currently invests \$350 million in community schools, with \$250 million as a set aside within the Foundation Aid funding that schools receive. The state must ensure that community schools have their own separate funding stream, in the form of categorical aid so that school districts can implement and maintain community schools effectively.

End the school-to-prison pipeline

The research is clear that suspensions and more policing does not increase safety or foster any kind of positive school climate. The Solutions Not Suspensions Act (A.5691/ S.1040) is designed to reduce the over-reliance on suspensions and promote alternative approaches to handling students' misbehavior.

Lastly, following the guidance of the State Board of Regents and Attorney General Tish James in ensuring that dignity, respect and inclusion is at the center of the practices that school districts implement. Ensuring that curriculum and practices are based on cultural responsiveness, is one of the ways to create a positive learning environment.

⁴ <https://www.nyscsn.org/advocacy>