



MARCHING THE PATH TO EDUCATION JUSTICE IN 2025

PUBLIC EDUCATION K-12

Public education, from birth through college, has always been at the heart of the fight for civil rights in this country. Today, perhaps more than ever, public education is the battleground for the liberation of all people.

Public education is a key pillar of a just society, the surest path to dignity and opportunity for all. Underfunding public education has been the most commonly used tool to deny an equal education to Black and brown children, immigrant children and working class children, AND to deny opportunities to dismantle racism and generational poverty, while upholding the structure benefiting white supremacy.

Education justice is not just about what happens in the classroom, but about what can happen in a society where all children — regardless of race, class, or status — have all the opportunities to learn, grow, and ultimately lead.

From birth to graduation, here is how we will be fighting for education justice for New York's children in 2025.

School funding - Revise the Foundation Aid formula to meet ALL students' needs and allow for improvement, while fully funding it.

The Foundation Aid Formula needs to be updated as advocates and the Rockefeller Institute report identified. Rockefeller did a series of hearings and engaged administrators, teachers, community members and parents, as well as some youth across the state. The charge that Rockefeller was given by the governor was to engage with the public and experts within 8 months in order to propose changes to the Foundation Aid formula that would be “fiscally sustainable,” ignoring any condition and need for improvement that would require additional funding. The Foundation Aid formula uses 20-year-old data, a low per-student amount on which additional funding is added depending on the particular characteristics of the student, and it does not consider the wide range of special education students' need or the fact that more

children are now experiencing housing insecurity. The report addressed each component of the formula separately, providing a menu of options for the governor and legislature to choose from. Any changes to the formula need to ensure that no district is adversely impacted by loss of funding. Changes to the formula must also take into account how each component affects the final output of funding. AQE is in full support of the recommendations that the Board of Regents made in their State Aid proposal for 2025-26.

Revising the formula and ensuring adequate funding is crucial for FY 26.

Cost: Expected increase for FY26 under current law \$1.6 billion

End Jim Crow Education in East Ramapo: The state budget should incorporate the reforms contained in A10407 to empower public school families, fix crumbling infrastructure, hire bilingual educators, ensure access to quality classroom instruction and materials, and end the systemic racism that defines school governance and finance.

Solutions Not Suspensions Bill (A118/S134): Requires schools to use proven alternatives to suspension that correct misbehavior and keep kids in the classroom. The state budget should invest at least \$5 million in training for educators and school personnel, and ensure that there is full **Foundation Aid funding** to address all the needs of all students.

EARLY CARE AND LEARNING

Universal Pre-Kindergarten: NYS has made significant strides in expanding full-day pre-K to all four-years-olds and to some three-year-olds, yet some issues persist. These include the lack of transportation, wraparound services, and, more importantly, the lack of adequate pay for teachers working in community-based organizations that contract with school districts to provide pre-K programs. Many of these issues persist partly because of the low per-child rates that some school districts receive to implement UPK, the number of different pre-K programs with the different requirements, and the siloed approach the state has toward early care and learning.

The evidence is overwhelming. It shows that pre-K and early care and learning programs are not only some of the most effective educational strategies for addressing inequality, they also are some of the best ways to ensure that parents and guardians can be part of the workforce. For every dollar invested in early care and learning and pre-K, the return on investment is \$3 to \$7. Every year, the state spends an enormous amount of funding in special education, in remediation, and in incarceration, all of which are decreased when children have access to a quality full-day pre-K program. By raising rates to at least \$10,000 per-child to all districts that need to implement pre-K, particularly for those districts who implemented pre-K decades ago and saw no increase since, the state can begin to ensure that children are put on a path of success early on. In addition, the state should move toward updating the per-student amount for pre-K based on the amount that each school district receives from basic operating aid (Foundation Aid). Pre-K functions as another grade in the education system, and should be funded as such. With more than half of all pre-K services offered in community programs, the

state, in collaboration with local districts, needs to do more to promote equity in funding between public school and community-based programs.

Cost: \$25 million

Universal Child Care

Early care and education is a right, not a privilege. High quality early childhood education creates long term benefits for children, families, and communities. It is an essential part of our early education system, and critical to our state's economy. Yet early childhood educators earn poverty wages and are leaving the workforce for better paying jobs. Parents can't afford to pay more for child care, but programs can't afford to charge less. This impacts both the quality of care and how many families can access it.

Invest \$1.2 billion to increase compensation for every member of the child care workforce so they have a significant boost of wages in order to continue to care and support children and families.

All families in New York must be able to access child care assistance, prioritizing low income families.

- Make child care a state-funded right/entitlement for families making less than 250% of the federal poverty threshold.
- Increase state funding for the Child Care Assistance Program by \$300 million to account for growth in CCAP enrollment

Children with special needs must face NO barriers to accessing child care.

To do so, reimbursement (enhanced) rates for children with special needs must be increased to be 30% above the market rate. The state must also take steps to make it easier for child care programs to receive the enhanced rate.

Cost: \$1.6 billion

REVENUES

All of us work hard so our families and communities can thrive. But corporate politicians and their ultra-wealthy donors have spent decades protecting the very rich at the expense of government services and community resources. When lawmakers stand with the many over the one percent, we can ensure our communities and public schools have the resources they need, and help all of us build a foundation on which we all can thrive.

Pass legislation so millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share, and highly profitable corporations pay what they owe. The Invest in Our New York campaign offers a menu of options that raise enough revenue to address the needs of New Yorkers.

We call on the New York State Senate and Assembly to prioritize New York's children and families in this year's state budget by ensuring our **public school students** are getting the resources they need to succeed and supporting New York's **child care educators and families**.