



VIEW FROM THE CLASSROOM

THE REALITY OF UNDERFUNDING
IN NEW YORK'S SCHOOLS



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



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We would like to thank all the schools, school districts and school personnel that opened their schools and classrooms to welcome the education equity tour and provide data to compile this report.

Report design by Julia Watson, Communications Coordinator, Alliance for Quality Education

The Alliance for Quality Education is a coalition mobilizing communities across the state to keep New York true to its promise of ensuring a high-quality public school education to all students regardless of zip code. Combining its legislative and policy expertise with grassroots organizing, AQE advances proven-to-work strategies that lead to student success and echoes a powerful public demand for a high-quality public school education for all of New York's students.

The Public Policy Education Fund was founded in 1986 to address critical social, economic, racial and environmental issues facing low and moderate income New York State residents. Our areas of work have included health care, education, after-school programs, voter participation, economic development and consumer issues. PPEF uses many tools in its work, including grassroots organizing, research and policy development, public education on a wide range of policy issues, and community outreach.

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VIEW FROM THE CLASSROOM

THE REALITY OF UNDERFUNDING IN NEW YORK'S SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

Schools in Black, Brown, immigrant and low income communities are doing many great things for their students. However, they do not have the resources they need to meet all their students' needs.

WHEN SENATOR ROBERT JACKSON AND THE ALLIANCE FOR QUALITY EDUCATION toured schools arounds the state, many schools they visited made this fact undeniably clear. Our high need schools need more resources.

School teachers, student support staff, administrators and parents work tirelessly to ensure that every child has access to everything the school can provide. Yet, as these professionals unequivocally reported time and time again, their students need so much more than they are receiving. This report shows that regardless of zip code, for schools in Western New York, Central New York, the Capital District, the Hudson Valley, on Long Island, in New York City or in the northern suburbs, the effects of the resource shortage are the same: too few school counselors (guidance counselors) and social workers; too few librarians; overcrowded classrooms; inadequate indoor and outdoor recreational space; outdated technology; and crumbling, inaccessible buildings.

What is NOT lacking at the schools we visited, however, is abundantly clear: the school staff's desire and effort to ensure that their students are provided with the best possible quality of education. Every child *could* receive a great education — if New York State would do its part, and fully fund public schools.

THE TOUR

AQE and Senator Robert Jackson went to schools and districts around New York State to document unmet student need. This report summarizes our findings. At many locations, local representatives in the Senate and Assembly joined the tour to talk with district officials and tour the schools. Senator Robert Jackson, a newly elected senator from Manhattan, was the lead plaintiff in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) lawsuit who sued the state in 1993. For over two decades he has fought for educational equity, twice walking from New York City to Albany to highlight the need to provide full funding to schools.

The tour stops included:

| SCHOOL DISTRICT | COUNTY | TYPE OF HIGH NEED DISTRICT | ENROLLMENT | FOUNDATION AID OWED |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| Albany | Albany | Small city | 9,500 | \$27,079,034 |
| Brentwood | Suffolk | Suburban | 19,052 | \$137,344,957 |
| Ellenville | Ulster | Rural | 1,572 | \$4,088,470 |
| New York City | Kings/ Queens/ New York/ Bronx | Large City | 1,048,617 | \$1,459,181,316 |
| Mount Vernon | Westchester | Small city | 7,850 | \$6,016,466 |
| Peekskill | Westchester | Small city | 3,312 | \$15,953,703 |
| Rochester | Monroe | Large City | 26,687 | \$96,975,585 |
| Schenectady | Schenectady | Small City | 9,251 | \$46,300,793 |
| Syracuse | Onondaga | Large City | 19,543 | \$45,430,046 |
| Westbury | Nassau | Suburban | 5,090 | \$41,170,730 |

At each school district and school we visited, the team met with administrators, school board members, parents and/or community members. Our meetings focused on the current needs of the district, and often included a tour of a school building to observe the direct impact that the chronic lack of resources has had on students and classrooms. Typically, each visit concluded with a press event during which members of the media asked questions and heard elected officials, parents and school administrators share the needs in their district. Tour participants were able to get a firsthand account of the needs of these schools.

HIGHLIGHTS

In every region of New York State, the high need schools we visited highlighted areas of tremendous unmet needs due to a lack of resources. Along the tour, we heard schools and school districts raise many of the same challenges resulting from systematic underfunding. Foundation Aid, basic classroom operating aid, is the largest part of school aid in the State budget. The State has not fully funded Foundation Aid since 2009, just two years after it first implemented it. District and school representatives said they felt that the State budget requires them to do more with less, but there comes a breaking point where districts' resources are stretched too thin, and there is no more they can do without an increase in funding.

Though New York's schools are attempting great things with the resources they have, the areas of need are blatantly evident.

Trauma unaddressed

Social and emotional supports and mental health services are desperately needed, especially as students are facing more and more trauma.¹

Expanded access to social/emotional and mental health personnel and programs was identified as a need in almost every school we visited. For instance, Ellenville Central School District has no social worker on staff for its 1,600 students. Schenectady City School District can only provide support to about one-third of the student population that needs access to social, emotional and mental health services. P.S. 95 Eastwood in Queens has a social worker just two days a week to address the needs 1,436 K-5 students.

Libraries without librarians

Many schools do not have a librarian, or share one librarian among several schools. Having a library but not a librarian means that the library cannot be fully utilized, and students miss out on important research and media skills and opportunities to be exposed to the joys and benefits of reading. Some school districts have a librarian that serves multiple schools across the district, allowing for less library time at each school.

Class sizes are too large

Most of the schools we visited had average class sizes between 25-35 students. For the early grades, this is particularly problematic as research notes.² In many schools, we toured classrooms so cramped that students were not able to move around. In Schenectady City School District, physical education classes have 40 students. In P.S. 95 Eastwood in Queens, most classes have 32 students.

No pre-K for you! Lack of pre-K programs for all students

Some school districts have no pre-K programs, while others can only offer a half-day program (2.5 hours per day) or a full-day program that is not large enough to enroll every eligible four-year-old. Due to a lack of space and funding, Ellenville Central School District offers two half-day pre-K programs, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The morning pre-K students take the bus to school, but they have to be picked up by their parents. The afternoon pre-K students need to be dropped off, but can take the bus home. With only half-day programming and mid-day bus service, the district saw a 25 percent drop in families that were able to participate in the school's pre-K program.

Every inch counts

In some districts, students attend classes in trailers, hallways, storage closets, locker rooms, the principal's office, in front of elevator banks or even off site, due to a lack of classroom space in the school building. Schools make use of every available space for instruction, with some converting basements into "spill over" cafeterias or "make shift" parent resource rooms. Many school buildings are in dire need of maintenance and expansion. Many buildings need renovations to become accessible.

Science without science labs

Many schools lack science labs and up-to-date equipment for students to be able to conduct experiments and learn-by-doing. One school reported using "paper labs," and another reported having science experiments performed by the teacher while students observed. One school did not have a science teacher at all. This leaves students at a disadvantage for state tests and college admissions requiring advanced science instruction.

Windows 97 still works, right? Technology is outdated

Some schools have technology, computers and software that is decades old. Most school district officials report that there is not enough funding to maintain or repair the devices their schools currently have, much less to purchase up-to-date devices for all students to accommodate the needs of the 21st century. Many schools also pointed out that even with updated devices, the network infrastructure at the building would be insufficient to support the students' needs if every student had access to a computer.

2019-20 STATE BUDGET

2019-20 marks the first year ever that both houses of the legislature have proposed, in their one-house budgets, a plan to fully fund Foundation Aid. Politically, the big change in Albany on school aid resulted from the dramatic change in the alignment of the state Senate. Not only did the Senate go Democratic by a large margin; the Independent Democratic Conference was rendered defunct by the fact that six challengers defeated incumbent IDC Senators. All of these new Senators, and several other new Senators, successfully campaigned with full funding for Foundation Aid as a central plank of their campaigns. The issue proved to be particularly potent politically.

The Senate's budget proposal includes an increase of \$1.2 billion in Foundation Aid, with a three year phase-in of the total amount owed in law. The total school aid increase proposed by the Senate is \$1.62 billion. The Assembly's budget proposal includes an increase of \$1.16 billion in Foundation Aid and a total school aid increase of \$1.6 billion. Both houses included a three year phase-in to fully fund the \$4.1 billion in Foundation Aid that is owed to students and schools based on current state law and in accordance with the statewide solution to the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

By contrast Governor Cuomo proposed a mere \$338 million Foundation Aid increase, even though two-thirds of the total unpaid Foundation Aid is owed to schools that are comprised of a majority of students of color. This was part of the Governor's totally inadequate proposed school aid increase of \$956 million. The Governor included no plan to ever phase-in the full Foundation Aid that is owed to students and schools, instead he dismissed this funding as "ghosts of the past and distractions from the present." This report details exactly how the state's failure to fund Foundation Aid is haunting our children's educational opportunities in the present day.

On another important issue, pre-K, Governor Cuomo proposed a \$15 million increase in pre-K funding, a small, but positive step. The Senate proposed to increase this to \$20 million. The Assembly proposed to double the Governor's proposal to a \$30 million increase in pre-K funding. Five years after the Governor made a promise to provide full-day, state funded pre-K to every four year old we remain several decades away from fulfilling this promise. The proposed \$30 million increase is important. In addition the Assembly proposed to allow pre-K transportation to be paid for by the state as a reimbursable expense for the first time ever. In many parts of the state, as documented in this report by the story of Ellenville schools, the lack of pre-K transportation makes pre-K inaccessible.

TOUR VISITS

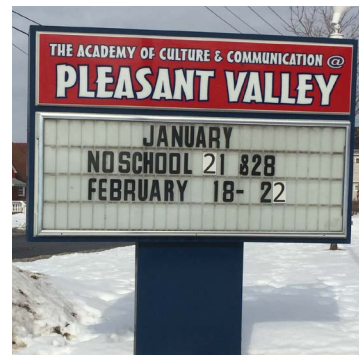
SCHENECTADY

| | | | |
|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| ENROLLMENT: 9,251 | | FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$46,300,793 | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0% | Multiracial | 6.1% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 17.2% | White | 24.2% |
| Black or African American | 31.7% | Economically disadvantaged students | 84% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 20.5% | Students with Disabilities | 18% |
| | | English Language Learners | 4% |

Needs identified:

- Schenectady students have been shortchanged for years, so much so that the district filed a civil rights complaint with the Office of Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, as a district that is predominantly Black and Latino, and economically disadvantaged.
- With eight out of 10 students identified as economically disadvantaged, the district is only able to provide mental health services to one third of the students that need them due to a lack of mental health professionals.
- The district needs more resources for extended day programs. Due to the lack of resources, it had to limit access to after school enrichment programs as it could not provide transportation, limiting access to those students whose parents' could provide their own transportation.
- There is a shortage of computers and up-to-date technology, forcing students to share devices.
- Pleasant Valley Elementary has a shortage of classroom space, so it utilizes non-instructional space including the elevator lobby, storage closets, and teacher offices as classrooms. Infrastructure updates are necessary to create more space for targeted instruction.
- There is a shortage of librarians, so library staff is shared among multiple school buildings, limiting students' access to the library once every two weeks.
- There are not enough music and physical education teachers, so they must be shared between schools.
- There is a shortage of speech, occupational, and physical therapy specialists and they are also shared between schools.

- Class sizes for all grades are too large, especially for subjects such as music, art and physical education. Physical Education classes currently have over 40 students because the district cannot afford to hire more personnel.
- The district has had to make difficult decisions to implement partial programs instead of full programs, due to the lack of funding.
- Pleasant Valley Elementary school has 500 students, approximately 90 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged. Many students come to school bearing the trauma of deep poverty and need social, emotional and trauma support. The school has a sensory room where students can go when they need a break or when the classroom environment becomes overwhelming. Some students visit the room as often as three times a week. This room is staffed by a paraprofessional who is extremely helpful to students. The program could be strengthened if the paraprofessional had access to the support of a therapist or other professional staff to help students address the underlying causes that lead the student to the sensory room.



PEEKSKILL

| | | | |
|--|--------------|--|-------------|
| ENROLLMENT: 3,312 | | FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$15,953,703 | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0% | Multiracial | 2.6% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 1.6% | White | 8.2% |
| Black or African American | 22.9% | Economically disadvantaged students | 84% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 64.7% | Students with Disabilities | 17% |
| | | English Language Learners | 22% |

Needs identified:

- One in five students is an English Language Learner in Peekskill. The school district does not have enough bilingual teachers, English as a new language teachers, and teachers and student support staff to address students’ needs in their native languages.
- Each year there are over 100 children who enter Kindergarten without having had the educational benefits of pre-K, because the district does not have the resources to provide universal pre-K to all four-year-olds.
- The district is unable to offer busing services to the Preschoolers it serves. Many parents do not have access to cars and are forced to walk to school, or spend as much as \$16 daily for transportation to get their children to school and back.
- The district does not have enough social workers, school psychologists and school counselors to serve student needs. Despite this shortage, next school year it will be forced to cut two school counselors due to lack of funding.
- The district does not have enough math and literacy teachers, and cannot provide targeted academic interventions for students who are struggling. In addition, it needs additional math and literacy coaches to help provide guidance and training to teachers.
- Class sizes for Kindergarten through third grade are around 25 students, when best practice indicates they should be between 18 and 20 students.³
- Currently, the district cannot run daily after school or summer enrichment programs, which is a lost educational opportunity for students and creates challenges for working parents. Robust after school programs and summer enrichment programs are needed to ensure continuous learning. The district needs to have a program 4 to 5 days a week for 2 hours for every grade level.



- The district does not have enough computers for all students, and many students lack home computers. Students have limited access to this essential technology because the district must shuttle computers between classrooms via carts.
- The district does not have resources to provide a staff person dedicated to engaging families at each school. Family engagement is essential to education and, in high need districts, schools must invest resources in family engagement.
- Peekskill students have to play sports on a field that is in desperate need of repairs. The estimated renovation would cost upwards of \$1 million.

BRENTWOOD

ENROLLMENT: 19,052

FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$137,344,957

DEMOGRAPHICS

| | | | |
|--|-------|-------------------------------------|------|
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0% | Multiracial | 0.5% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 2.2% | White | 3.8% |
| Black or African American | 9.9% | Economically disadvantaged students | 88% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 83.4% | Students with Disabilities | 13% |
| | | English Language Learners | 33% |

Needs identified:

- Brentwood City School District is the sixth largest school district in New York State. Over the last few years, it has seen a dramatic increase in enrollment, but continues to be underfunded by the state.
- Due to a lack of funding, the district had to cut back from 9 to 8 periods a day. This prevents English Language Learners and special education students from taking any electives.



- The district has drastically reduced student support staff, such as social workers, school psychologists, drug counselors and school counselors due to the lack of funding. It needs more student support staff at the elementary, middle and high school level, so that staff do not have to be shared across multiple buildings and can develop consistent relationships with students.
- With one out of three students classified as English Language Learners, there is not enough bilingual student support staff to address students' needs in their native languages.
- Elementary school students take art and music on a schedule rotation (e.g. music one semester but no art, and art the next semester but no music).
- The district is no longer offering after school transportation at the elementary level, leaving these critical programs unavailable to many students.
- Most after school clubs at the secondary level have been eliminated.
- Due to budget shortfalls, the district eliminated elementary school librarians.
- The district reduced embedded teachers who assist with at-risk student populations, including English Language Learners and students in special education.
- The district needs to increase information technology training for both staff and students so students can be adequately prepared for the 21st century.
- The district has made cuts in math coaches who are needed to provide guidance and training to teachers to implement the district's math curriculum.
- The district does not currently have enough assistant principals.
- The district has made significant cuts across the board, including staff reductions in every operations department, leaving fewer Information Technology specialists, maintenance and grounds personnel, custodians, accounting and business office personnel, etc.

“New York State was mandated to adequately and predictably provide funding to public school districts based on a simple formula that accounted for student needs. It is time that New York State be held accountable. Brentwood is a school district of more than 19,000 students with a range of needs. Without proper funding, each of our students suffer – that is unacceptable.”

— School Board President Robert Feliciano

WESTBURY

ENROLLMENT: 5,090

FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$41,170,730

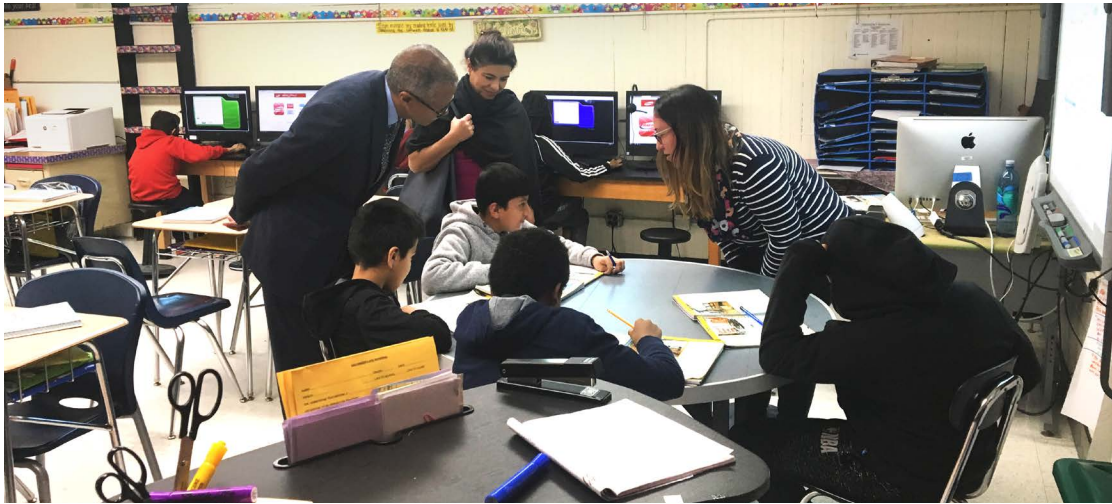
DEMOGRAPHICS

| | | | |
|--|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0% | Multiracial | 0.2% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 1.3% | White | 1.4% |
| Black or African American | 24.7% | Economically disadvantaged students | 85% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 72.3% | Students with Disabilities | 9% |
| | | English Language Learners | 35% |

Needs identified:

- Westbury Union Free School District has experienced a 30 percent increase in enrollment over the last eight years.
- The middle school is built for 700 students, but currently has 1,200. The high school was built for 1,200 students, but currently has 1,600. To accommodate all the students, the middle school's first lunch period starts at 9:25AM. Every inch of space is being utilized for instruction, including the principal's office and the school library. Ninth graders have to attend classes at a local community college. At the middle school, the principal often acts as a traffic officer during period changes to prevent traffic jams in the hallways.
- With just five school counselors, each counselor has a caseload of 320 students. At the middle school, school counselors each serve 400 students. The ratio the state recommends is one school counselor for 250 students.
- Across the district, class sizes are between 24 and 34 students. The district needs more teachers so class sizes can be reduced.
- The district continues to grapple with the effects of having to eliminate 18 teachers last school year, which impacted its ability to offer foreign language, business classes and Advanced Placement courses.
- The district had to cut the music program at early childhood and elementary schools. In addition, students would benefit from enrichment opportunities in the arts that the district is unable to provide.
- There are not enough reading services to ensure all students can receive Tiered Intervention Services if they fall behind grade level.
- The district does not have self-contained classrooms that can accommodate differently abled students within the school district.

- Classrooms lack up-to-date materials, technology and resources.
- Transportation cannot be provided to all students, resulting in middle school students walking a mile to school in the dark early-morning hours.
- The district's "Beyond the Bell" programs, what the district calls its enrichment programs and its clubs, are not available to all students and can only be provided for part of the school year.
- The district does not have adequate custodial staff to maintain and sustain the cleanliness of the schools.



“If we had the funding, we would increase our offerings in the area of coding, STEAM, high level elective courses that support students’ transcripts, applying for the health sciences, business entrepreneurship, pedagogy, and technology fields. Our elementary schools would have sessions for those that are in need of intervention and additional courses to enrich the experience of those that would benefit from sessions that lead to exploring their creative minds. Our students would have available transportation for field experiences that are availed to other districts. Yet, we are forced to limit these experiences to areas within a five-mile radius. Our students require additional support in the area of social emotional learning/mental health. This is critical for the Westbury UFSD, as many of our students present critical traumatic experiences that inhibit their minds to focus on academics. This would require additional guidance counselors, social workers, and psychologists.”

— Superintendent Eudes Budhai

ELLENVILLE

ENROLLMENT: 1,572

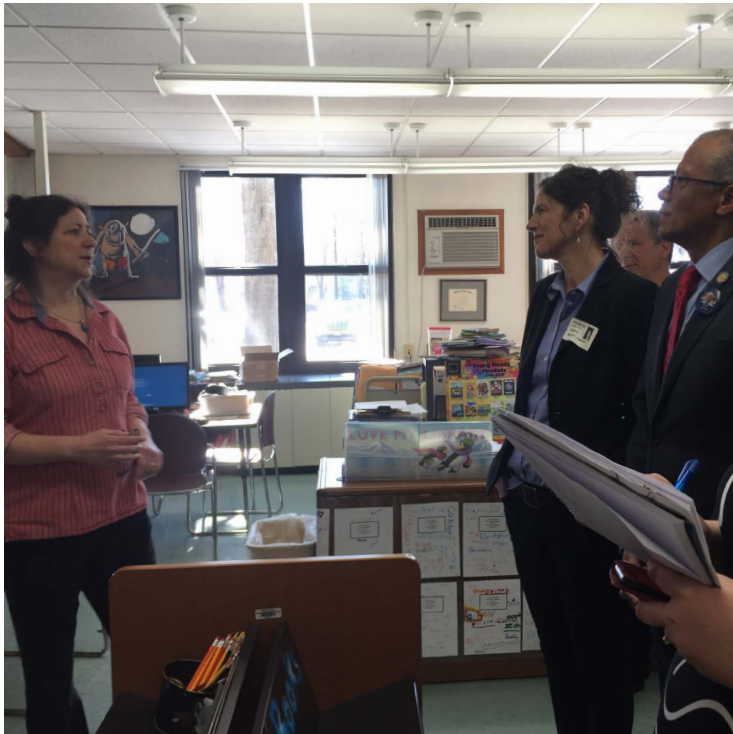
FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$4,088,470

DEMOGRAPHICS

| | | | |
|--|-------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0.6% | Multiracial | 3% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 2.7% | White | 47.8% |
| Black or African American | 12.1% | Economically disadvantaged students | 71% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 33.8% | Students with Disabilities | 18% |
| | | English Language Learners | 5% |

Needs identified:

- Ellenville Central School district is one of the very few rural school districts that is racially diverse; students of color make up half of its student population. The primary employers in the area are a state prison, Walmart and local farms. Ellenville is in dire need of more resources that support the whole child, particularly as poverty in the area increases.
- The school district has NO social workers.



- There is a significant shortage of student and family support staff, such as school counselors and psychologists. Despite the high poverty rate and cultural diversity, the district has no parent liaison.
- There are not enough academic intervention specialists.
- The middle school does not have a librarian and has been without one for the last nine years.
- Due to the lack of resources, the district has a limited selection of electives. For instance, while there is a television studio in the high school, it can only serve 26 students and has only a handful of computers.
- Over 90 percent of students in special education or with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) scored very low on the English Language Arts and Math State tests the last two years. There is a need for a specialized reading and math program for students in special education or with an IEP.
- The district lacks the ability to offer literacy training for teachers, to adapt their teaching to small groups of students and different skill levels of reading and writing.
- There is no summer program at the middle school. Summer programming is vitally important to ensure that students do not experience “summer learning loss.”
- Ellenville used to offer transportation to and from its part-day pre-K program. Due to budget cuts it can now only offer transportation one-way (to school for the morning session, and home from school for the afternoon session). When mid-day transportation was available, the pre-K program was at capacity, educating 60 children. The reduced transportation has resulted in a 25 percent decline in enrollment. The district currently can only offer pre-K for 2.5 hours per student, and cannot afford full-day pre-K.
- The district is only able to offer one foreign language, Spanish, only to high school students. Yet students must compete in college admissions with New York public school students who have access to multiple languages at more grade levels, including Advanced Placement language courses.
- The first lunch period starts at 10:25 AM to accommodate all students, as there is not adequate space in the elementary school building.
- Poverty affects attendance, literacy and the social, emotional and mental health of students. The district faces difficult choices that it should not need to face. Superintendent Lisa Wiles and her team asked, “What do we do? Do we hire a counselor or another special education teacher?”

“We should not have to make tragic choices of what to cut, [but rather] to give everyone the same opportunity.”

—School Board President Philip Mattracion

ROCHESTER

| | | | |
|--|--------------|--|-------------|
| ENROLLMENT: 26,687 | | FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$96,975,585 | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0% | Multiracial | 0.2% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 3.8% | White | 9.9% |
| Black or African American | 57.5% | Economically disadvantaged students | 90% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 28.4% | Students with Disabilities | 20% |
| | | English Language Learners | 15% |

Needs identified:

- Rochester is one of the largest cities in upstate New York, but also one of the poorest cities in the nation. What used to be a thriving city and industry hub for corporations such as Kodak and Xerox has been devastated by the migration of industry elsewhere. The impact of poverty on students is immeasurable. Nine out of ten students in Rochester City School District (RCSD) experience the impact of poverty on a daily basis.
- RCSD, along with the parents, community members and experts, pushed to have a progressive code of conduct enacted and implemented. The result has been a 33 percent reduction in suspensions and a 28 percent reduction in courses failed by students, with no negative academic consequences for other students.⁴
- Part of this process was the creation of a team called RocRestorative, which is also a part of a larger department that addresses the needs of the whole child. The RocRestorative team relies on five social workers who are devoted to training other staff and school professionals in restorative practices as the alternative to school suspensions. The team develops and offers learning opportunities for school staff, parents, community members and students. The result of this approach has not only been the reduction in suspensions, but also the change of mindset to recognize issues, address them appropriately and reach for help when it is necessary.
- These highly successful school climate reforms, including the RocRestorative team and the social and emotional supports they provide for students, are currently threatened by potential budget cuts. The RocRestorative team is supported by the My Brother’s Keeper grant, which ends in August for Rochester city school district.
- Even with a dedicated team to provide social/emotional supports, there still is need for additional social workers and trauma experts. Rochester continues to lack adequate numbers of social workers and school counselors. More social workers are needed to implement play therapy across all elementary schools.



- There are only two social workers to address the needs of homeless students, serving a population of 3,100 identified homeless students in the district. Additional staff is needed.
- Rochester welcomed about 700 students and their families from Puerto Rico, after they were displaced by Hurricane Maria — more than any other district in the state. These students and families need trauma-informed instruction and support, but the district has received no additional funding to meet these families' needs.
- One example of successful school climate reforms is School 8 Roberto Clemente School, which educates students from Kindergarten to Eighth Grade. This school was in receivership just three years ago. The principal described the climate of the school as severely negative, with teachers feeling hopeless and burned out, students feeling disconnected and indifferent toward the school and their education. The school climate reforms have caused a complete transformation of the school. With the implementation of a Help Zone in the school, a place where students can cool down and talk with the appropriate adult, and with training and implementation of protocols that prioritize student dignity and address their needs, the school was not only able to be out of receivership, but it is a welcoming, positive place where students thrive. Suspensions in the school went down by 77 percent in just two years. Students offer hugs to the hallway monitor and the principal as they meet them in the hallway. With clear expectations and protocols that delineate the process for any potential challenging behavior, the school is thriving as a place where the needs of the whole child are addressed. It is also a place where teachers want to teach. All these programs are now in danger of being cut due to inadequate state funding.
- The approach the RCSD has taken on social, emotional and mental health supports, has led to the creation of other programs as well. There is now a dedicated program for English Language Learners, and especially those displaced by the hurricane in Puerto Rico. There are programs dedicated to families in transition (homeless families), mental health support at the elementary level, school counseling program to create a college-going culture early on in the academic life of a student, a crisis and grief response team, the Disconnected Youth project which is a program for students who are at risk of drop out or has dropped out and a school violence prevention program which includes student support centers.

SYRACUSE

| | | | |
|--|---------------|--|--------------|
| ENROLLMENT: 19,543 | | FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$45,430,046 | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 1.1% | Multiracial | 5.6% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 7.9% | White | 22.5% |
| Black or African American | 49.85% | Economically disadvantaged students | 82% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 13.1% | Students with Disabilities | 18% |
| | | English Language Learners | 20% |

Needs identified:

- Syracuse is one of the 10 poorest cities in the nation, and Syracuse City School District does not have adequate resources to maintain its mental health services.
- Syracuse schools depend on vital social, emotional and mental health services that Onondaga County provides. The state provides a portion of this funding to the counties, but the district is uncertain of the future of these services as state and county funding may be cut.
- Schools identified in need of academic improvement, some of which are under receivership are faced with the fact that there are fewer improvement grants available for them.
- Some parents note that their children's schools lack up-to-date books and other basic resources.
- In a district where 84 languages are spoken, the district lacks programs to address the needs of English Language Learners or Multi Language Learners.



MOUNT VERNON

| | | | |
|--|--------------|---|-------------|
| ENROLLMENT: 7,850 | | FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$6,016,466 | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0 | Multiracial | 0.7% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 1.4% | White | 4.8% |
| Black or African American | 71.2% | Economically disadvantaged students | 78% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 21.8% | Students with Disabilities | 18% |
| | | English Language Learners | 9% |

Needs identified:

- Mount Vernon’s vision seeks to prioritize student social/emotional needs and promote academic excellence and enrichment, but the district lacks the resources to fully implement it.
- The district lacks the resources to restore many programs that were previously cut, including foreign language programs, sports programs, transportation for field trips or events, and parenting workshops to enhance family engagement.
- The district cannot provide adequate mental and physical health resources, and does not currently have school nursing staff in every school building or a health center.
- Career and Technical Education programs cannot serve all students who wish to participate — barber, auto shop, dental, TV production, cosmetology, woodworking, metalworking, tech labs, and print shop. The district places a high value on offering science and technology and career and technical programs to students to create multiple pathways after high school to college and career certification, but lacks the funding to implement them.





- Plans for the restoration of the culinary program had to be put on hold due to budget constraints. Currently, the kitchen used for the culinary program does not meet codes and the space is currently not in use in spite of the districts vision for the space
- The Greenhouse/environmental program needs to be expanded, including rain irrigation, hydroponics and solar power. Students in this program grow vegetables to donate to the food bank for low-income and homeless students, as well as flowers for the school's graduation ceremony and prom and fundraisers.
- The district lacks resources to expand the International Baccalaureate program so students can access college level credits.
- The district cannot address issues with building safety including updated sprinklers, stair railings that need to be replaced, stair treads, windows.
- Elementary school buildings are overcrowded, and are currently making use of makeshift classrooms in the library, hallways, and the faculty lounge.
- IT infrastructure does not currently meet the capacity of learning needs for all students.
- Before and after care is not available for all children and their families who need it.

ALBANY

ENROLLMENT: 7,850

FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$6,016,466

DEMOGRAPHICS

| | | | |
|--|-----|-------------------------------------|-----|
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 0 | Multiracial | 5% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 9 | White | 20% |
| Black or African American | 48% | Economically disadvantaged students | 58% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 17% | Students with Disabilities | 13% |
| | | English Language Learners | 14% |

Needs identified:

- Albany City School District does not have updated technology in every school and classroom. Additional funding is necessary to enhance the technology infrastructure to meet increasing needs and support blended (online and in person by an instructor) classrooms, as well as instructional technology needs.
- Most schools in the district do not have a dedicated school nurse and a social worker. With the increasing needs of Albany students, every school must have its own school nurse or social worker.
- The district is implementing community schools, one component of which is a dedicated health clinic within each school. Health clinics serve the health needs of students and their families and make learning possible for many students living in poverty. Health problems directly interfere with student learning. Currently, only a few schools have a health clinic.
- The enrollment in English as a New Language (ENL) programs has tripled in the past five years to nearly 1,300 students – approximately 14 percent of the total student population. The district lacks adequate staff that is dedicated to providing services to the ENL and refugee population.

NEW YORK CITY

| | | | |
|--|--------------|---|--------------|
| ENROLLMENT: 1,048,617 | | FOUNDATION AID OWED: \$1,459,181,316 | |
| DEMOGRAPHICS | | | |
| American Indian or Alaskan Native | 1% | Multiracial | 1.3% |
| Asian or Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander | 15.9% | White | 14.7% |
| Black or African American | 26% | Economically disadvantaged students | 74% |
| Hispanic/Latino | 40.6% | Students with Disabilities | 19.7% |
| | | English Language Learners | 13.5% |

The New York City Department of Education has taken some significant steps toward ensuring that all students get the high quality education they have a right to.

New York City has implemented its Equity and Excellence for All agenda in order to provide historically underserved schools with the resources they need to put students on the pathway to success. One example is the Advanced Placement (AP) courses for All initiative, which has increased both the number of schools that now offer Advanced Placement programming and the number of courses at all schools. Because of this initiative, there was a 11.4 percent increase in the number of students taking AP exams in 2017-18, as well as a 10.7 percent increase in students passing AP exams from the year before and since the initiative was implemented in 2016. Three quarters of high school students now have access to at least five AP classes. Yet, more funding would enable the district to increase access to more AP courses and other initiatives of Equity and Excellence for All agenda, which includes Computer Science for All, College Access for All and Algebra for All. New York City currently offers middle schoolers the opportunity to take part in after school programming. With the \$ 1.5 billion owed to New York City schools, the same could be offered to elementary school students. Access to sports teams and to summer programming is another area that could be expanded with added resources.

New York City has implemented a strategy named Comprehensive School Supports (CSS) which provides investments to enable quick identification and response to students' and schools' needs, with a focus on equity. Within CSS, schools may receive a range of supports based on their needs, with more resources directed to the highest-need schools, including professional development and in-school coaching, enhanced curriculum, after-school activities, enhanced parent engagement efforts and investments in restorative practices.

The schools visited during the equity tour provide tangible examples of the need in New York City schools in these and other areas of programming, facilities, personnel.

P.S. 95Q EASTWOOD

GRADES K-5 | JAMAICA, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 1,436

Needs identified

- With 27 languages spoken at the school, there are only 3 bilingual teachers total. The school needs at least 2 bilingual teachers in each grade to be able to meet students' needs. The principal noted that the school's 1,500 students represent six out of the seven continents.
- Because the parent community is very engaged in the school, early grades have volunteers/mentors to help with additional time of task and targeted instruction. There are over 20 parents and community members volunteering at the school, who in addition to helping in class, they have established dance programs, raise funds for field trips and are in the school for as long as they are necessary.
- The school has insufficient resources for social workers and psychologists. Currently, the social worker is at the building only two days a week to attend to the needs of all 1,500 students.
- The school lacks up-to-date technology, and the few computers it has operate Windows 97.
- The school building's electrical system cannot accommodate all the computers that students use at once, so students use computers in a staggered manner to avoid blowing the circuits. The electrical system needs to be updated.



- Currently, the first lunch period starts at 10:40 AM due to inadequate space in the cafeteria. The school needs to expand the building to provide more cafeteria space.
- The parent resource room is currently in the basement, and is a temporary room that includes multi-language resources to help families find additional resources they may need. There is no staff to provide these services for parents, but the room is staffed by a volunteer.
- The school uses "transportables" for classroom space. For over 20 years, the school has held classes in these temporary structures. These structures are only accessible by leaving the main school building.
- The school lacks a library media center to integrate literacy and technology for students.
- The school lacks a permanent STEAM lab (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics), to replace the provisional or "make shift" one it currently uses.
- With so many high need students and English Language Learners, the school lacks adequate after school programming to address the needs of the whole child.
- Music, art and STEAM lab are on a schedule rotation, because the school cannot provide adequate staff to ensure all students have these subjects every week. Up until 2017 school year, physical education, a required subject, was also on rotation, meaning the semester that students physical education, they did not get music. More teachers are needed for Music and Art and STEAM, so they are not on rotation.
- All classes are too large to fully support student learning: an average of 32 students for 1-5th grade classrooms, and 25 in Kindergarten classrooms.

P.S. 330 HELEN M. MARSHALL SCHOOL

GRADES K-5 | CORONA, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 590

Needs identified

- Due to overcrowding, every inch of space is used for instruction. The school had to eliminate the music room, the teacher workroom and the teachers' lounge to create more classroom space. The school needs more space and more teachers to alleviate overcrowding of classrooms.
- The school cannot provide Academic Intervention Support and Response to Intervention services to all struggling students that need them.
- The school has just two part-time monolingual psychologists, who are each at the school one day a week. Most students are native Spanish speakers and would benefit from school psychologists who can provide services in Spanish.
- The school does not have the resources to provide after school, music, and technology enrichment opportunities.

- The school does not have enough targeted staff, such as Response to Intervention and Academic Intervention Service teachers, to provide necessary academic supports for students who fall behind grade level.
- The school is unable to provide chorus for students, and would need funding for another music teacher to do so.
- The school does not have adequate internet bandwidth to accommodate appropriate and adequate use of technology by all students. It also does not have enough ChromeBooks for all students to use.
- The school needs an age-appropriate playground space for older students, as the current play space is designed for K-2nd graders, leaving the 3rd through 5th without appropriate play space.

P.S. 019 MARINO JEANTET

GRADES K-5 | CORONA, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 1,950

Needs identified

- The school needs more ChromeBooks so that every child has access to a computer.
- The school is 92 percent Latino/Hispanic, with 60 percent of the students English Language Learners, but it does not have enough bilingual teachers and staff.
- With 83 percent of the student population classified as economically disadvantaged, the school does not have enough social workers, psychologists and school counselors. The school specifically needs student support staff who also speak Spanish.
- After school programs cannot currently serve all students.
- Music and art are on a schedule rotation (one semester students take music, and the following semester they take art.)
- The school lacks outdoor space for play and sport activities, and does not currently have a multipurpose room.
- The school is overcrowded and cannot hire additional staff to reduce class sizes.

P.S. 16 NANCY DEBENEDITTIS SCHOOL

GRADES K-5 | CORONA, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 1,658

Needs identified

- The school lacks a school yard or outdoor space for students to have recess.
- The school lacks enough English as Second/New Language teachers, with 47 percent of the student population classified as English Language Learners. The school also lacks adequate student support staff to provide services to English Language Learners.
- The school does not have enough Response to Intervention teachers to ensure that students who are below grade level receive the necessary academic supports.
- The school is not able to provide before and after school programs to all students who need them.
- The school had to cut extracurricular activities and school clubs due to the lack of funding.
- The school is so overcrowded that it had to close its science lab to make room for an additional Kindergarten class.
- Currently, there is only one science teacher for all the students in the building.



P.S. 211 ELM TREE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GRADES P-5 | CORONA, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 271

Needs identified

- The school lacks outdoor play space and programming
- STEAM programs are only available to Kindergarteners.
- The school lacks bilingual teachers and staff to serve the 95 percent of students who are Latino.
- The school does not have a computer lab, and needs funding to convert unnecessary locker space into a computer lab.
- Parents need English classes to fully engage with their children's education.
- The school cannot offer enough targeted tutoring to assist students who are academically behind.
- The school is not able to provide enough after school programs and Saturday academies.
- The school lacks adequate student support staff such as social workers, psychologists, and school counselors to meet student needs.

CORNERSTONE ACADEMY FOR SOCIAL ACTION MIDDLE SCHOOL (CASA)

GRADES 6-8 | BRONX | ENROLLMENT: 266

Needs identified

- With eight out of 10 students living in poverty, CASA is facing many challenges related to inadequate funding to provide the individualized attention needed to students from the most challenging circumstances. The school does not have enough school counselors, social workers, and child psychologists to ensure the social, emotional, and psychological health of the students and families.
- CASA students do not have the opportunity to experience a holistic curriculum that includes music, the arts, foreign languages, and STEM.
- The school lacks a reading specialist and an academic intervention specialist in mathematics to help students do better academically.

- Students' math scores have recently dropped because the school does not have enough math instructors to meet the complex needs of its students.
- The school lacks video cameras to develop the school's film and production course.
- The school's English as a New Language teacher and a school counselor work out of a locker room. The school lacks storage space and physical fitness space, because it shares a building with two other schools. The school needs more instructional space.
- Teachers lack technology training to implement the computer science curriculum.
- The school lacks enough teachers to provide individualized attention to students.
- The school cannot afford to hire an assistant principal or a dean of students.

“We would like to expand the adult learning opportunities in our school community. We have many parents who have not completed their high school equivalency, and many other parents who would like to learn new 21st century skills so that they can get promotions at their jobs, and find new jobs. Studies show that improving the quality of life of parents leads to improved life and academic outcomes for students. We need reading and math specialists to help our students close the academic gaps that they have. We need entrepreneurship courses to prepare students for a 21st century economy.”

—Principal Jamaal Bowman



I.S. 285 MEYER LEVIN SCHOOL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

GRADES 6-8 | BROOKLYN | ENROLLMENT: 655

Needs identified

- Most incoming students do not have the basic skills needed to be successful at this level. Most of their sixth grade year is spent working to get them on grade level. Without sufficient funding, there is not enough time in the day to give these students the academic interventions they require: more time on task and intervention specialists to ensure that students have grade level skills are needed.
- To further address this issue, the school needs a summer bridge program for all sixth graders, and more targeted group enrichment.
- The school operates a Saturday program that is only available to the sixth graders, because there is not enough funding to cover all the students that need it. The school needs to expand access to the Saturday enrichment program to the seventh and eighth graders.
- The principal noted that they had to make a choice between the after school program and an additional school counselor, when they are both necessary.
- The school's psychologist, social worker and family worker work at multiple schools and are only available part-time at this school. An additional school counselor is needed, as the school only has one for all 655 students.
- There is currently only one laptop cart for all students, so students have to share computers. More laptops are needed. Yet if the school did have a laptop for all students, the internet bandwidth would not be sufficient.
- The school recently partnered with Hip Hop is Green, the first national hip hop health and wellness organization in urban communities. The school would like to increase its health and wellness programming to include healthy food choices and the practical skills of preparation and cooking to promote health lifestyles to its students. An upgraded home economics space would give the school an additional resource that it could extend to parents and the community.



FOOD & FINANCE HIGH SCHOOL

MANHATTAN | ENROLLMENT: 403

Needs identified

- The school used to have 22-24 students per class, but now there are at least 32-34. It needs to hire more staff to lower class sizes and address each student's needs.
- Students have to observe science teachers perform experiments and document their observations, without ever conducting it themselves. Students are unable to complete the Regents requirements for Chemistry and Living Environment because there is no science lab at the school.
- The school only has two computers and one printer in each of its 28 classrooms. There are 10 computers in the teachers' workroom with printers/scanners. There are two laptop carts, with 30 laptops each, and one cart with 30 Chromebooks. All of these machines are out of warranty. The school simply does not have the funding to upgrade them.
- The school is supported by the Food Education Fund, a 501(c3) organization whose mission is to provide staffing and financial support for the senior internship program, enrichment programs such as the visiting chef program, and college access program. However, the school is still in need of additional funding to provide students with more enrichment after school and weekend programs.

- Currently, and for the past several years, the school was unable to provide any clubs and after school activities due to lack of funding. It does not have enough art offerings. The school cannot offer a theater or music club, something that used to exist and that students much enjoyed.
- The building has no library due to a lack of space, but also because there is not enough funding for adequate staffing.

“Depending on the funding, we are in desperate need of a science lab. We have been for years offering living environment and chemistry and our students have only been able to complete the Regents requirements by doing ‘paper labs.’ We have not been able to solicit and raise enough capital funding to get the lab built.”

—Principal Roger Turgeon

FACING HISTORY HIGH SCHOOL

MANHATTAN | ENROLLMENT: 428

Needs identified

- The school is housed in a building with five other schools, including Food and Finance High School (above). It has to share a large auditorium that seats about 800 with all five schools. The auditorium sound system needs updating, and only a few of the lights work (the spotlight has not worked in years). There are no podiums, working curtains, technology or risers for events such as graduations.



- The school does not have a computer lab or a media lab. Classrooms do not have computer printers, so students and staff often struggle to find a place to print.
- Most of the students enter 9th grade below grade level. The school lacks adequate staff for intervention classes, enrichment and Saturday academies so students can catch up and academically succeed.
- A full time restorative justice coordinator is needed to work with students on behavioral issues and to work on school climate.
- The school would like to work with community-based organizations to support student leadership and community building as well as to provide teachers with professional development and coaching on Culturally Responsive Education and how to better develop curriculum that meets the academic, social, emotional and cultural needs of the students. This type of professional development and coaching in Culturally Responsive Education is needed.
- The school needs more art electives for sophomores and juniors and more music.
- The school does not have a functioning school library or a librarian. Students have limited access to updated books, including newer young adult literature.
- Currently, only one elective coding class is offered, taught by a science teacher. The school needs a full time Computer Science teacher that could build out a computer science program for the school.
- The SAT class is currently available to just 29 percent of 11th graders.
- The science lab has no working gas, no shower, no emergency shut offs, no sinks at the workstations, no fume hood, no outlets, and no ventilation. The need for a working science lab is critical.

“Last year, we had to excess 4 staff members, including a social worker and a science teacher who had both been at the school for 7 years. Additionally, we had to reduce our art studio electives, which resulted in less art opportunities for our 10th and 11th graders. We have one SAT class paid for through grant funding (that ends this year) but can only afford to offer it to 30 11th graders even though there are about 105 current 11th graders.”

—Principal Dana Panagot



GROVER CLEVELAND HIGH SCHOOL

RIDGEWOOD, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 1,761

Needs identified

- The school does not have adequate teaching staff for its high needs students, English as a New Language and students with disabilities, or guidance staff to reduce the caseload for the counselors and enable them to provide more social and emotional support for the most vulnerable students.
- Students reported needing more counselors on staff at the school. When a student is in crisis or needs someone to talk to, the therapist and counselors are overbooked.
- All bilingual student support staff, including the school psychologist, the social worker, and the psychologist, are shared with other schools. The school needs full-time bilingual support staff at the school.
- The school does not have laptop carts for each classroom, including all self-contained Special Education classes, and ENL classes.
- The students in the school take Chemistry and the Chemistry Regents, but the school does not have a science lab.

P.S. 166Q HENRY GRADSTEIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

GRADES P-5 | ASTORIA, QUEENS | ENROLLMENT: 1,124

Needs identified

- The school needs eight more teachers to reduce class size. Students reported that they do not feel safe during lock down drills (mandated by the state) due to the number of students in a room, leaving no space for everyone to hide.
- The school lacks extracurricular programs such as theater and sports.
- The school has an inadequate amount of medical supplies.
- Classrooms and common areas do not have air conditioning.
- The school lacks enough academic intervention specialists or instructors to meet the needs of students who are behind grade level.
- The school does not have enough student support staff, such as school counselors, social workers and school psychologists, including bilingual staff.
- The school's technology out-of-date, including printers and computers.
- The school is not able to provide after school programs to fully meet student needs.





C.S. 55 BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

GRADES P-5 | BRONX | ENROLLMENT: 622

Needs identified

- The school does not have enough funding for after school programming, music and arts.
- The school does not have enough school counselors and mental health supports. This year one of the school's school counselor is retiring and they will only have one school counselor next year to serve over 600 students.
- The school lacks up-to-date instructional materials and updated technology.
- Because the school has such high needs, students often come to the school behind on reading skills. The school is constantly playing catch up with the students as a result of limited teachers to pull out of classrooms to meet these needs.
- The school does not have a real gym; students are at times using the school auditorium as a gym space due to the constraints in space.
- The school has seen an increase in the number of Muslim students. The students have requested a space to be able to pray during the school day and a place to fast while their fellow classmates are at lunch.
- C.S. 55 has an award-winning Step Team. Due to the limited resources, the school often has trouble paying for uniforms or transportation for the students. Often, the team has to use multiple modes of transportation to get to and from performances.
- Principal Luis Torres notes that they should not have to choose between academics and enrichment and providing for the social, emotional and mental health needs of the students.

“We have a nice after school program, but we could be doing more. We need funds for a high quality arts and music program. We do not want recreational art, we want a program that will prepare children for the future. We do not want a program that just exposes the children, we want a program that will teach children how to read and play their own music. We want our children to be able to continue in High School. But the question is always: “What do we invest in? Mental health, arts, or academics?”

—Principal Luis Torres

P.S. 8 LUIS BELLIARD

MANHATTAN | ENROLLMENT: 519

Needs identified

- The laptops at the school are outdated or obsolete. It needs new laptops or tablets for all their students. The school also needs computers for the Parent Resource room.
- The school needs assistive technology for students with disabilities (SWDs) and text-to-speech and/or audio books for newly arrived English Language Learners (ELLs).
- The school lacks a full-time parent coordinator; it currently has a part-time one.
- The school psychologist is available just two days a week. The school needs additional social emotional & mental health support staff, such as social workers, a full time psychologist and intervention specialists.
- With almost four out of ten students identified as ELLs, the school needs smaller ENL and dual language classes.
- The school would like to add a STEM/Robotics program, and a classroom with hands on material for the STEAM program.
- The school cannot offer after school programs and sports to all students.
- To keep students engaged and interested in reading, the school needs new high interest/low level books for struggling readers.
- Every year, the school is forced to make difficult decisions due to funding constraints: excessing teachers, combining 2-3 positions into one role, consolidating 2 classes into one, or reducing intervention/support for students.

J.H.S. 259 WILLIAM MCKINLEY

GRADES 6-8 | BROOKLYN | ENROLLMENT: 1,901

Needs identified

- The school building is meant to for 1,500 students, but currently has 1,900.
- The school makes use of every inch of building space. It converted an open area into a temporary classroom, and it has converted locker rooms into a classroom to be able to accommodate all students.
- Class sizes average 30 students. The school has no additional space it can use to reduce class sizes. Three classes have more than 30 students, and the school has to hire a paraprofessional as a teaching assistant.
- Part of the building was built in 1938, and part in 2010. The older part of the building requires many updates including refurbishing the gym, the electrical, cooling and heating systems, internet bandwidth and security.
- Student support staff, including the Occupational and Physical Therapist, social and family worker and school psychologist are all shared with other schools in the district. The school has to raise its own funds through the Parent Teacher Organization to keep the family worker and psychologist at the school full time.
- Technology is outdated. Many of the computers operate with Windows 7. Even though the software is being updated, the hardware cannot support newer updates, which will lead to losing 400 machines. Keeping technology current is a constant and expensive challenge.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CAMPAIGN FOR FISCAL EQUITY

After the New York State Court of Appeals issued its final ruling in the landmark school funding lawsuit that parents brought against New York State, *Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) v. State of New York*, the state enacted into law a statewide solution to funding inequity. The Education Reform Act of 2007 (the legislative solution to CFE) included a four-year commitment to increase the state's investment in basic classroom operating aid, also known as Foundation Aid, by \$5.5 billion. The vast majority of these funds were to be provided to high need schools. For two years this commitment was met, but since taking office, Governor Cuomo has consistently opposed funding for high need schools. According to data from the State Education Department, the state is still \$4.1 billion behind in fulfilling that investment, following the 2018-19 enacted budget.

Just before the beginning of the 2019 legislative session, Governor Cuomo stated:

“The CFE lawsuit was resolved 12 years ago under George Pataki,” Cuomo said in Monday’s speech on his 2019 priorities. “The Foundation Aid program was stopped by Eliot Spitzer, who started it in the first place 10 years ago. These are ghosts of the past and distractions from the present.”⁵

Yet as a result of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, the Foundation Aid formula remains the only needs-based, wealth-equalizing basic classroom operating formula that exists under current New York State law. The state's commitment to invest \$5.5 billion through the formula over four years remains unfulfilled. When Governor Cuomo was a candidate for the governorship in 2010, he stated:

“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.”⁶

However, since Governor Cuomo took office he has pushed for budgets that would have negated CFE or even repealed Foundation Aid. His attempts were countered by the intense pressure that parents and community members put on their elected representatives to affirm their commitment to public schools. Unfortunately, over the last eight years, the funding increases to public schools have not been adequate for districts and schools to improve the quality of education. In most cases, districts have been able to maintain services and programming, or make modest additions; but schools are nowhere close to being able to fully meet their students’ needs and improve the programming.

It has been twelve years since the historic Education Reform Act that replaced over 30 formulas with New York's current wealth equalizing, needs-based funding formula. In 2007-08, schools received an infusion of \$1.767 billion, including \$1.1 billion of Foundation Aid. The following year,

schools received another large sum of funding, \$1.7 billion, including \$1.2 billion in Foundation Aid. Since then, the state has balanced the budget on the backs of schoolchildren, making cuts or increases so small, they barely kept up with inflation and allowed for little improvement at local schools.

In 2019, superintendents report that their students' needs are increasing, particularly for mental health and social, emotional supports. In high need districts, superintendents note an overwhelming concern about their students' well-being and school readiness. Across the state, student poverty is increasing, creating higher concentrations of poverty.⁷ School districts in those areas are more dependent on the state to provide adequate school aid.

Yet, over the last ten years, the state has decreased the level of school aid it provides to districts. With increasing costs and need, high need schools are faced with hard choices, between providing academic programming to equip students for college or careers, or providing adequate social and emotional supports. As the governor's rhetoric around school spending continues to center around "waste," the need to paint the picture of what inadequate funding for schools became clear.

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.nyscoss.org/img/uploads/file/2019-02-NYSCOSS-SURVEY-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>
- 2 <https://gspp.berkeley.edu/research/featured/the-class-size-debate-what-the-evidence-means-for-education-policy>
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 After a two year fight and pressure by local parents and community members led by AQE, Citizen Action of New York and Teen Empowerment, Rochester City School district implemented a new code of conduct that spelled out the process and appropriate ways of addressing student misbehavior and the underlying causes of it. See the report at http://www.aqeny.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/rochester_schoolclimatereport.pdf
- 5 <https://www.newsday.com/long-island/politics/spin-cycle/spitzer-cuomo-school-aid-1.24773236>
- 6 <https://www.nystateofpolitics.com/2010/10/debate-cuomo-gets-specific-on-education/>
- 7 <https://www.nyscoss.org/img/uploads/file/2019-02-NYSCOSS-SURVEY-REPORT-FINAL.pdf>