



TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2016-2017 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Our thanks to Senator Young, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator Marcellino, and Assemblymember Nolan, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, and Education Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you today regarding the Executive Budget Proposal.

All of New York's students deserve the chance to reach their full potential. Afterschool, summer, community schools, extended learning time programs, and other expanded learning opportunities play a crucial role in supporting success for many New York families and students. We are grateful that the state has recognized the importance of these opportunities for struggling schools through the receivership model that encourages conversion to the community schools strategy included in last year's budget, and through the \$100 million in community schools aid provided in the Executive Budget; however these opportunities should be available to all students and schools that want them, and the funding provided is far short of meeting the need. Moreover, it is crucial that the state not only equate this strategy as simply a model for school turnaround. Many schools of all types benefit from the community schools strategy and from afterschool and summer programs.

In order to promote the success of schools across the state, the Legislature must consider funding for multiple components that may be utilized in a community school, as determined by the school's needs assessment. Just as community schools draw on many strengths of the community across multiple sectors to meet needs, the funding required for success spans many budget areas. Today we will focus on two crucial components affected by the budget on Elementary and Secondary Education – afterschool and summer programs and funding for the conversion to community schools. These topics are interrelated. Nationally, ninety percent of community schools incorporate afterschool programs or expanded learning time,¹ a percentage which is likely higher in New York State.

To build an innovation-focused economy, ensure our children are graduating high school ready for college and career, and keep them on track for healthy adult lives, New York needs to increase investment in high-quality afterschool and summer learning experiences. These programs help all of our students, no matter where they live, engage in hands-on learning, avoid risky behaviors and involvement with the juvenile justice system, and stay on track to develop into active citizens, and effective employees and entrepreneurs. They can be crucial for working families, who need to know that their children are safe between the end of the school day and the end of the work day. These programs may stand alone, or they may be integrated into a community schools strategy which incorporates afterschool or expanded learning time.

¹ Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership, Inc., (2013). The Growing Convergence of Community Schools and Expanded Learning Opportunities. Retrieved from http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/ELORreport_TheGrowingConvergenceofCommunitySchoolsandExpandedLearningOpportunities.pdf

While we are grateful the Executive Budget maintains funding for Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention, we are very disappointed that there was **no proposal for additional statewide afterschool or summer programs**. Furthermore, while the budget includes \$100 million for the state's persistently struggling, struggling, and high needs schools to convert to a community schools strategy, there is no additional funding for these schools to leverage to add the integrated programs and services that they identify as necessary to meet the needs of their students and families. We are deeply concerned that schools attempting to add in needed afterschool and summer programs will further stretch these already overextended funding streams.

We are pleased that the state recognizes the value of the community schools and expanded learning time strategies for struggling schools, however these strategies and resources are needed by students and families in many schools – not just those deemed as struggling. Prioritizing struggling schools for afterschool funding without adding additional funding would close strong, long-standing programs in other communities, putting those schools and students at-risk of falling behind without the additional resources the afterschool program had been providing. Afterschool, summer, expanded learning, and community schools strategies should be fully supported so the students and schools receive the support they need long before they begin to fail.

To that end, we are also very concerned that the Executive Budget **provides no new funding to continue the Community Schools Grant Initiative**. The first round of grants for this funding stream ends this year, leaving 30 grantees without funding to sustain the community schools they have worked to develop over the last three years. These schools have structures and programs in place that students and families have come to rely on, and that support teachers by ensuring students come to class ready to learn. If these programs are allowed to close without the opportunity to seek another round of funding, the loss will impact the teachers, students, families, and communities. The Legislature should not allow for this loss, and it is urgent that the funding be restored in this year's budget to allow for continuity.

We hope that the Legislature will **provide at least \$15 million this year to continue the Community Schools Grant Initiative, and will support increased funding for afterschool and summer programs, including the addition of \$49.9 million for the Advantage After School funding stream in the Human Services budget**.

Need

The state currently has fewer high-quality afterschool and summer programs than are needed, depriving over a million students of support for their intellectual, social, and emotional development and their families of safe, affordable places for their children to continue learning until the work day ends. During the summer months, 500,000 New York children are still in need of access to high-quality summer programs. The lack of funding for afterschool and summer programs puts an additional burden on schools to meet students' needs without additional learning time or community support.

The *America After 3 PM* survey of parents and guardians found that an estimated 1.1 million New York students would attend an afterschool program if one were available.² This is the same number as when the *America After 3 PM* survey was conducted in 2009.³ In 2009, New York was ranked third in the nation on a combined score for afterschool availability and quality. In 2014, New York did not even make the Top 10. Funding for afterschool remains 35% below pre-recession levels and substantially below the need.

² Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2014, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.

³ Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2009, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/AA3PM-2009.cfm>

Even without considering increased demand by the state's struggling schools converting to the community schools strategy, the demand for funding for afterschool and summer programs is high. A review of recent grant competitions reveals that New York currently has the capacity to run additional programs utilizing at least \$170 million in additional funds. In 2012, OCFS conducted a grant competition for Advantage After School. An additional \$48 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. In 2013, NYSED conducted a grant competition for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program (federal funding administered by NYSED) to fund afterschool programs. An additional \$122 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. Significant additional funding is needed to meet current and future demand and capacity for high-quality programs.

Likewise, the demand for funding to support implementation of the community schools strategy is also high. Applications for the 2013 round of the Community Schools Grant Initiative totaled 172 schools for 30 available grants. The funding provided for the 2014 round allowed for a total of 62 of the schools to be served, reaching approximately 48,000 students in New York State. With funding for the first round of grantees coming to an end this year and the second round ending next year, these schools and students will be left without the support they need to sustain the community schools strategy. The demand is clear, yet the Executive Budget does not include funds to continue this program. While a small number of current grantees may benefit from the \$100 million provided for persistently struggling, struggling, and high need schools, the community schools strategy benefits all schools and should continue to be available to schools outside of those designations.

Community Partners

Community partners are an essential element of successful community schools and expanded learning programs. Families, non-profit organizations, cultural institutions, and the rest of the community are crucial partners to schools in helping every youth reach their full potential. Community partners can connect these supports with youth and with the school. Community organizations are able to bring essential resources and expertise to schools, resources that could take the form of long-standing family relationships, teaching artists, culturally-competent educators, health and social services connections, or many other kinds of expertise as needed by a particular school or community. Likewise, schools bring valuable teaching and learning techniques that enhance the effectiveness and impact of supports provided by these partners.

Funding to support community schools, including community schools aid and the Community Schools Grant Initiative, should require the involvement of community partners. This requirement will keep schools from having to reinvent the wheel as they seek to implement the strategy. While community schools can be tremendous assets, they also can be complicated to put in place. Everything from regulatory compliance with governing agencies like the Department of Health or the Office of Children and Family Services that are mostly unfamiliar to your average principal, to the intricacies of scheduling thirty different activity options across a three-hour block of time will need to be carefully planned – and community organizations just down the street have already solved many of the challenges these schools will face.

Community partners also bring community relationships and knowledge that can help schools more successfully engage families, a factor widely acknowledged as key in long-term change for students and schools. A community-based organization can be perceived as less intimidating than a school, and thus may serve as a more accessible entry point for parents. Many community-based organizations are also deeply connected to providers of other social services, so that a strong community partner can bring elements of the referral and connections services provided by community schools.

Finally, the focus of most community-based out-of-school-time providers is on enrichment and overall youth development, not solely on academics. These programs foster the non- or extra-academic skills, from art-making to perseverance, that recent research has identified as equally as important to life outcomes as purely academic knowledge. These programs also provide opportunities for students to develop confidence in areas beyond the academic realm that translate into increased success in personal expectations and goal attainment.

Potential Impact

The community schools strategy has been shown to be effective for increasing student achievement in New York.⁴ Likewise, the body of research on high-quality afterschool and summer programs has grown substantially in the last few years, and shows clear evidence that high-quality programs have significant effects.⁵ Regular attendance at a high-quality afterschool program over several years can close the achievement gap in math for low-income students.⁶ High-quality summer programs can help students improve their math achievement by the equivalent of 17-21% of what they would normally learn in a year.⁷ Afterschool and summer programs support the development of critical thinking and social skills needed for long-term success in the workplace and in life. Afterschool programs typically include inquiry-based, applied learning that allows youth to take on worthwhile long-term goals and emphasizes collaboration, investigation, and problem-solving. Researchers have identified these types of activities as key for enabling youth to build the critical thinking and social skills that prepare them for success in college and career in the 21st century.⁸

As featured in both *The Economist*⁹ and *The Atlantic*¹⁰, researchers are also finding that the challenges of achieving the American Dream are partially due to the opportunity gap. ExpandedED Schools estimates that gap is 6,000 hours before children even leave elementary school.¹¹ Children from well-off families play sports, learn an instrument, travel to museums and colleges, explore hobbies, and volunteer. Through these types of experiences, children become more likely to be engaged in learning because they can connect it to a real world situation and an opportunity for their future. These experiences often make children from well-off families stronger candidates for colleges and employers—think of all the spaces on college applications for students to present themselves as having interests and experiences outside of school. All our children need such enrichment activities, and afterschool programs are an effective way to close the opportunity gap.

⁴ Coalition for Community Schools, (2009). Community Schools Research Brief 09. Retrieved from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

⁵ AfterSchool Works! NY: the New York State Afterschool Network, *Top 10 Reasons You Should Support Expanded Learning Opportunities*, <http://www.nysan.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/top-10-reasons.pdf> (2014).

⁶ Deborah Lowe Vandell, *The Achievement Gap is Real*, <http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf> (2013).

⁷ Wallace Foundation, *Building Our Understanding of Summer Learning* <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/summer-and-extended-learning-time/extended-learning-time/Documents/Knowledge-in-Brief-Building-Our-Understanding-of-Summer-Learning.pdf> (2014).

⁸ Robert Halpern et al., *Realizing the Potential of Learning in Middle Adolescence*, <http://www.erikson.edu/wp-content/uploads/Realizing-the-Potential-of-Learning-in-Middle-Adolescence.pdf> (2013).

⁹ The Economist, *An Hereditary Meritocracy*, <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21640316-children-rich-and-powerful-are-increasingly-well-suited-earning-wealth-and-power?fsrc=scn/tw/te/pe/ed/anhereditarymeritocracy> (2015).

¹⁰ Alia Wong, *The Activity Gap*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/01/the-activity-gap/384961/> (2015).

¹¹ ExpandedED Schools, *The 6,000-Hour Learning Gap*, <http://expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.DhamOIOW.dpbs> (2013).

Just a few examples of the innovative opportunities provided by New York programs:

Afterschool and Summer Programs

- The Comet Design Co. in Carthage is an entrepreneurial program for high school students where participants write a business plan, utilize 3D printers and other high-tech devices to create real products, and then sell the products to support the afterschool program.
- Family Services Afterschool Programs in Poughkeepsie has partnered with the Animal Farm Foundation, providing students an opportunity to engage in a hands-on way with animals in need of care and to learn how to prevent animal cruelty.
- The Children's Aid Society in New York City has been providing youth from high-need neighborhoods the opportunity to intern in the offices of their elected officials, giving these youth the chance to gain valuable experience in a public service.
- The Boys and Girls Club of Massena, a community facing growing heroin and prescription drug addiction among youth, is working in concert with the local police department to provide a positive alternative for youth, through a program that provides a safe, educational place after school.
- Kieran's Kids, a youth mentoring and outreach program at Belmont Park in Nassau County, gives students a behind-the-scenes look into what takes place at a race track, including demonstrations in horse grooming, blacksmithing, and horse riding, while teaching them about the many different careers available in horse racing.
- Youth Philanthropy Council, a program provided by the Northern New York Community Foundation in four local high schools in the North Country, provides youth the opportunity to learn how the grant making process works and recommend grants to assist non-profits organizations in enhancing the quality of life in their community.
- The Garden of Fire is a summer program held in Steuban County for at-risk youth that offers camp goers the opportunity to participate in art activities, learn to drum, and receive counseling, concluding with a glass blowing demonstration connected to one of the region's major industries.

Community Schools Grant Initiatives Grantees

- PS 154 was able to expand its partnership with the YMCA of Greater New York to become a YSchool community school. As a direct result, PS 154 is able to reduce ratios by placing YSchool staff members in each Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade classrooms for the entire school day. In just one year, the percentage of Kindergarteners reading on or above grade level increased by 28%.
- The Raising Educational Achievement Coalition of Harlem (REACH) program sponsored by Teachers College at PS 36 partnered with Children's Health Fund to provide vision screenings to all students. Approximately 21% were found in need of follow-up care and were provided with additional examinations and two pairs of glasses as needed.
- Good Shepherd Services partners with Boys and Girls High School where the Direct Service Coordinator (DSC) improved the process for referring students and families to resources and services within the school and community. In one particular case, the DSC successfully assisted a student in foster care and unsure of his citizen status in locating his social security number and clarifying his status. The student was then able to apply for a job of interest.
- Wellsville Central School District and Auburn School District have both implemented mobile dental clinics that provide dental services to students and families.
- The New York City Community Learning Schools Initiative at PS 83 includes an afterschool program for English language learner (ELL) students and their families to give students and families the opportunity to learn English and American cultural traditions in a risk-free setting.
- The Horizons on the Hudson School partners with The Greater Hudson Valley Family Health Center to provide well-run health programs for the school's students and parents. Provided programs include health and dental screenings as well as nutrition and exercise workshops.

As New York seeks to ensure that all students graduate high school ready for college and career, it must invest in community schools and in afterschool and summer programs as partners to schools in achieving that goal. ASW:NYSAN recommends that the Legislature **provide at least \$15 million this year to continue the Community Schools Grant Initiative, and support increased funding for afterschool and summer programs, including the addition of \$49.9 million for the Advantage After School funding stream in the Human Services budget.** We hope that the Legislature and the Governor will take this opportunity to not just meet the immediate need, but to also **create a plan for future investments that will work towards serving the estimated 1.1 million children who need an afterschool program and do not have access** so that the benefits of afterschool and summer programs can be made available to all of the students and families across New York who need them.