

**TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2017-2018 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 youth success for New York families and students. We are grateful that Governor Cuomo has proposed the \$35 million Empire State After-School Program in this year's Executive budget, and we support the continued investments in struggling schools through the \$150 million in Community Schools Aid included in the Executive Budget. However, these funding opportunities should be available to all students and schools that want them, and the funding provided is still short of meeting the need.

The 2014 *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.<sup>1</sup> The need for afterschool programs in New York far outweighs the availability. For every student enrolled in an afterschool program in our state, two more students who would participate simply lack access. In rural areas, this number increases to three children in need of a program for every one child enrolled.

Empire State After-School Program

While the demand for afterschool and expanded learning programs remains high, we are pleased to see a clear recognition of the need to increase investments in these programs, and we request that the legislature **support the \$35 million proposal for the Empire State After-School Program in the Executive Budget, which will expand afterschool programs to serve an additional 22,000 students in the 16 Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI) cities.**

To ensure this new program is fully supported by the field, we have two recommendations. The first is to provide the flexibility to school districts and community partners to utilize this funding to provide summer programming to students in their communities in addition to afterschool programming. Summer learning programs are a vital tool in addressing summer learning loss among students and can be a crucial resource to schools and communities that currently lack access to quality summer learning opportunities.<sup>2</sup> Similar funding, including 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers and Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention, allows the flexibility to offer afterschool and summer programs.

The second is to ensure the Empire State After-School Program is sustained and expanded to additional New York State communities in the future. Positive youth outcomes require consistent, long-term participation; therefore, this program must be continued past the pilot year. These programs are an

<sup>1</sup> Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2014, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.

<sup>2</sup> Building Educated Leaders for Life (BELL), Summer Impact Report, 2014; [http://issuu.com/experiencebell/docs/bell\\_summer\\_impact\\_report\\_2014/1?e=4625325/9785981](http://issuu.com/experiencebell/docs/bell_summer_impact_report_2014/1?e=4625325/9785981)

important part of a comprehensive set of services to address the needs of high-poverty communities, and expanding the Empire State After-School Program beyond the 16 ESPRI cities in the coming years would serve more students with vital expanded learning opportunities that can help working families, support academic and social and emotional development, and provide a safe place for students during the peak hours of juvenile crime.

### Potential Impact

If implemented, the Empire State After-School Program will provide a number of positive benefits to students that will support their success. 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.<sup>3</sup> Regular attendance at a high-quality afterschool program over several years can close the achievement gap in math for low-income students.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> Program participation also increases engagement in school-day learning, resulting in higher attendance rates, a decrease in behavioral issues, and an increased motivation to learn.<sup>6</sup>

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 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.

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

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<sup>3</sup> New York State Network for Youth Success, *Top 10 Reasons You Should Support Expanded Learning Opportunities*, <http://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/top-10-reasons-draft-5.6.16.pdf> (2014).

<sup>4</sup> Deborah Lowe Vandell, *The Achievement Gap is Real*, <http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/The%20Achievement%20Gap%20is%20Real.pdf> (2013).

<sup>5</sup> 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).

<sup>6</sup> A Compendium of Expanded Learning. Afterschool Programs that Follow Evidence-Based Practices to Promote Social and Emotional Development are Effective. [http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg\\_Final.pdf](http://www.expandinglearning.org/docs/Durlak&Weissberg_Final.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> 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).

<sup>8</sup> ExpandedED Schools, *The 6,000-Hour Learning Gap*, <http://expandedschools.org/policy-documents/6000-hour-learning-gap#sthash.DhamOIOW.dpbs> (2013).

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 that incorporates afterschool or expanded learning time.

### Community Schools

We are pleased to see the Executive Budget maintains \$100 million in Community Schools Aid included in last year's budget and provides an additional \$50 million to expand funding this year. We ask the State to **maintain \$255 million in existing community school funding and add \$50 million in Community Schools Aid to adequately fund and sustain community schools statewide**. These new funds will allow school districts to develop quality community schools, to strengthen and enhance their work, and to sustain successful community schools. The community schools strategy has been shown to be effective for increasing student achievement in New York.<sup>9</sup>

We also ask for the State to **reserve 5%, up to \$5 million, of new community school funding to provide technical assistance and capacity building support for community schools**. Based on the successful efforts of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers Technical Assistance Resource Centers, these authorized services would be contracted out to community providers for targeted coaching and training for school-based teams to identify school needs and develop the strategies for organizing school and community resources around student success. Providing principals, superintendents, and district administrators with vital technical assistance and capacity building support will help ensure schools and school districts are successful in their community school efforts.

### Expanded Learning Data System

Afterschool and expanded learning programs must also have access to the resources necessary to ensure quality programming that supports school-day learning. As afterschool funding expands, we request that the legislature **invest \$1.2 million in the acquisition of a data system for tracking participant outcomes from expanded learning opportunities (ELOs)**. This system would support afterschool, summer, expanded learning time, community schools, and other models that offer youth safety, learning, and enrichment beyond traditional school hours. The New York State Network for Youth Success estimates initial costs at approximately \$1.2 million and subsequent annual costs at approximately \$400,000. A data system would help support growth in program quality, simplify data collection and analysis for program providers, and inform New York State policymaking. This would be a relatively small investment to help ensure the success of the new Empire State After-School Program and to support the other, existing programs throughout the state.

### Need for Expanded Learning Opportunities

As previously outlined, 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.

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<sup>9</sup> Coalition for Community Schools, (2009). Community Schools Research Brief 09. Retrieved from <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf>

The 2014 *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.<sup>10</sup> This is the same number as when the *America After 3 PM* survey was conducted in 2009.<sup>11</sup> 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 Ten. Funding for afterschool remains 27% below pre-recession levels and substantially below the need.

Even while students and families suffer without access to programs, providers have the current capacity to increase the number of high-quality afterschool and summer programs dramatically, were the funding available. A review of recent grant competitions reveals that New York currently has the capacity to run additional programs utilizing at least \$170 million in added funds. In 2013, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) conducted a grant competition for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers program (federal funding administered by NYSED) to fund afterschool and summer programs. An additional \$122 million would be needed to fund all applications which met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program. In the 2012 competition for the Advantage After School program, set to expire this year without a new competition if funding is not restored, \$6.8 million was awarded to programs. The total funding requested by all applications that met the minimum criteria to run a safe, beneficial program was \$54.4 million, \$48 million of which went unfunded.

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 62 of the schools to be served, reaching approximately 48,000 students in New York State. With funding for the first round of grantees ending last year and the second round ending this 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 \$150 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, 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

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<sup>10</sup> Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2014, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>.

<sup>11</sup> Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 PM*, 2009, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/AA3PM-2009.cfm>

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 creativity to perseverance, that recent research has identified as equally as important to life outcomes as purely academic knowledge.<sup>12</sup> 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.

### *Innovative Practices in New York's 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 heroin and prescription drug addiction among youth, is working 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 Steuben County for at-risk youth that offers campers the opportunity to participate in art activities, learn to drum, and receive counseling, concluding with a glass blowing demonstration linked 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, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classrooms for the entire school

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<sup>12</sup> 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).

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 expanded learning programs. The New York State Network for Youth Success recommends that the Legislature **maintain Governor Cuomo's proposed \$35 million for the Empire State After-School Program, providing 22,000 more students across the state with access to afterschool programs. We also ask the legislature to maintain \$255 million in existing community school funding and add \$50 million to adequately fund and sustain community schools statewide.** 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 the benefits of afterschool and summer programs can be made available to all of New York's youth who need them.

#### **Additional Recommendations**

*Maintain funding at \$24.3 million for the Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Program.* Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention programs provide critical before school, afterschool, and summer programming to students across the state, and the continuation of these grants is necessary to the success of the programs and students.

*Maintain \$20 million in funding to extend current Extended Learning Time grants.* The Extended Learning Time program began in School Year 2014-15 as an initiative of Governor Cuomo to lengthen to school day with supplemental programming and supports. Participating schools involve community partners to provide enrichment activities and additional learning time to students throughout the extended school day, supporting their academic and social and emotional development. Maintaining funding will allow current grantees to continue providing additional learning time to students.