



TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2014-2015
EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON HUMAN SERVICES

Nora Niedzielski-Eichner
Executive Director
New York State Afterschool Network
neichner@nysan.org / 646-943-8671

Our thanks to Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator Felder, and Assemblymember Lupardo, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, and Children and Families Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you regarding the Executive Budget Proposal.

Afterschool, summer, extended learning time programs and other expanded learning opportunities play a crucial role for New York families and students. Afterschool programs make sure that children are safe until their parents are home from work, help to close the achievement gap for low-income students and support students in developing the social and emotional skills they need to be successful in college, career, and life.

Advantage After School and the Youth Development Program have been core parts of New York's support for afterschool and summer opportunities for youth, and it is crucial that these programs be fully maintained, requiring \$1.8 million in restorations. Child care subsidies can also play an important role in supporting afterschool programs, and it is crucial that all our low-income families have access to this important resource. NYSAN supports the Winning Beginning NY recommendation of \$182 million for child care.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's proposal to substantially increase the state's investment in afterschool programs over five years, beginning with \$160 million in the 2015-16 school year, would have a major impact on working families and their children across New York, and we ask for the Legislature's support for this major expansion of afterschool programs. We are also asking for a \$7 million investment in 2014-15 for the quality infrastructure needed to implement this proposal in the 2015-16 school year.

Need and Impact

The state currently has many fewer high-quality programs than are needed, forcing parents into difficult choices between safety and employment and depriving more than a million students of support for their intellectual, social, and emotional development. New York has some of the nation's best programs, but the current patchwork of funding sources and oversight creates inconsistencies in access for families and support for program quality.

The *America After 3 pm*¹ survey of parents and guardians found that an estimated 1.1 million New York students would attend afterschool programs if one were available. The New York

¹ Afterschool Alliance, *America After 3 pm*,
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM_2009/AA3_Factsheet_NY_2009.pdf (2009).



State Education Department (NYSED) reports that 1.4 million of New York’s public school students are economically disadvantaged, and afterschool programs have been found to be particularly beneficial for low-income students. All of New York’s more than 3 million children need a safe place to be when they are not in school. In 2012, New York had the highest average cost of child care for school age children in the nation—\$11,690 per child². High costs of child care are a significant burden on middle-class and low-income families, now exceeding rent and food costs for many families.

The research³ is clear that high-quality afterschool and summer programs not only keep children safe and parents working, but also help close the achievement gap for low-income students⁴ and 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 youth for success in college and career in the 21st century. Afterschool programs also typically offer physical activities and healthy living lessons that promote overall health and wellbeing. An investment in these programs would create long-term life benefits for the youth who would be able to attend and would support working parents who work hours past the end of the traditional school day.

Restore \$500,000 to Advantage After School

In 2012, OCFS conducted a grant competition for Advantage After School. They received 310 proposals for only \$7 million in available funding. This resulted in only 37 fully funded applications and eight partially funded applications. Given the level of need, it is important not to impose further cuts on this program—at \$17.7 million last year, Advantage was already funded at a level that is 35% lower than its peak in 2007-08.

Add \$1.3 million to the Youth Development Program

The Youth Development Program leverages the county youth bureaus and local expertise to support afterschool and summer programs across the state. As critical infrastructure for youth services, the Youth Development Program is crucial to maintain, and \$1.3 million should be added to restore the program to the \$15.4 million level of last year’s calendar year funding so that afterschool programs and services are not cut in calendar year 2014. NYSAN supports the recommendations of the Association of New York State Youth Bureaus.

Invest \$7 million in technical assistance and program oversight in 2014-15, so that all programs are high-quality programs.

- \$1.6 million for a data system to provide comprehensive information on programs.

² Child Care Aware, *Parents and the High Cost of Child Care 2013 Report*, usa.childcareaware.org/sites/default/files/Cost%20of%20Care%202013%20110613.pdf (2013).

³ New York State Afterschool Network, *Top 10 Reasons You Should Support Expanded Learning Opportunities*, http://nysan.org/files/3992_file_Top_10_Reasons.pdf (2014).

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



- \$2.1 million for 14 additional state staff to ensure timely contracting, manage the data system, and promote quality.
- \$1.75 million for 5 technical assistance centers – Western Upstate, Eastern Upstate, Rural, and Long Island & Westchester at \$250,000 each and NYC at \$750,000.
- \$1.55 million for county youth bureaus, child care resource and referral agencies, and Cornell Cooperative Extension offices to provide targeted local technical assistance.

In order to implement a new afterschool funding stream, as well as support quality in programs funded through existing funding streams, investment is needed at the state level to ensure that contracts are issued in a timely fashion, organizations are supported in developing quality programs, and data is collected in a way that ensures sufficient oversight but also streamlines reporting and promotes quality improvement. NYSAN's proposal seeks to leverage the state's existing infrastructure as much as possible while filling in key gaps. Existing strengths, including programs funded through Advantage After School and the Youth Development Program, and program quality initiatives of county youth bureaus, local child care resource and referral agencies, and Cornell Cooperative Extension offices should be supported with new resources to ensure strong afterschool programs across the state.

The locally-focused and variable capacity of these existing partners will be enhanced by new technical assistance through regional centers, which are based on the model that has worked in California, the only state with a comparable investment in afterschool, and in New York City, where the Partnership for After School Education and The After-School Corporation (TASC) provide professional development and quality support to organizations across the city. A similar model is also built into the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. These centers allow the centralization and dissemination of resources such as curriculum, staff training, and research, which lowers administrative costs for programs and increases their quality. Similarly, a unified data system will ensure that no organization needs to make its own investment in costly technology, while providing reliable information about program strengths and needs to support future improvements in quality.

Invest \$182 million in child care subsidies in 2014-15.

Investing an additional \$182 million in child care subsidies in 2014-15 will allow more than 25,000 additional children to have a safe place to learn and play and support their parents as they try to rise out of poverty. New York's very high costs for school age child care mean that too many children are left home alone afterschool or in situations with inadequate supervision and educational opportunity. NYSAN joins the Winning Beginning NY coalition in calling for an increased and ongoing investment to support low-income children and families.

Adopt the Governor's proposal for five years of growing investments in high-quality afterschool programs, beginning with \$160 million in 2015-16.

The Governor's proposal would make afterschool programs available to approximately 100,000 students who currently lack access to opportunities to expand their learning in a safe, engaging environment. Importantly, NYSAN believes that there is existing capacity in the state to launch \$160 million in new programs in the 2015-16 school year if the initial investment of \$7 million in quality infrastructure and \$1.8million in maintaining current programs is made in 2014-15.



A review of two 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 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. There is sufficient strength within existing community organizations and sufficient commitment by school districts—every application had a school partner—to launch a program at the scale proposed by the Governor in 2015-16.

Plan for sustainable investment in high-quality school-community partnerships that grow toward universal access to afterschool programs that are enriching and engaging for students. Multiple studies have shown that the largest impacts of afterschool and expanded learning opportunities on students—for a range of outcomes and measures—come from regular, long-term participation in a high-quality program, and thus the state’s investment must be a long-term commitment to a program designed around components that are known to strengthen quality and increase outcomes for youth.

The Governor’s five year proposal lays the groundwork for reaching the 1.1 million students in need of afterschool programming, with an initial investment of \$160 million serving approximately 100,000 of those students. The state should beginning planning immediately for sustainable long-term funding of the afterschool and expanded learning system, building on that investment, so that over the next decade programs become available for all families and children who want to participate.

Built on a foundation of commitment to quality, including school-community partnerships and enrichment, and with quality infrastructure in place early enough to allow timely implementation, the Governor’s proposed afterschool program could be life-changing for 100,000 students and families beginning in 2015-16—and hopefully in the lives of hundreds of thousands more over the coming years.

Accept the Governor’s proposed increase of \$2.5 million for Summer Youth Employment, and increase by an additional \$7.5 million to maintain job levels.

Summer Youth Employment (SYEP) dollars are a double investment in youth by the state. Working as staff for summer programs for younger children is the most common work assignment for SYEP participants, so SYEP allows summer programs to serve more children while supporting older youths in their transition to the workforce. While we are fully supportive of the minimum wage increase, SYEP needs to be increased to support the increase in wages to \$8.00 an hour so that at least as many youth can participate as in the summer of 2013.