



TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON 2014-2015
EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL ON ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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Our thanks to Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator Flanagan, 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.

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 and help to close the achievement gap for low-income students. 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 \$9 million investment in 2014-15 for the quality infrastructure needed to implement this proposal in the 2015-16 school year and to maintain the existing programs that will serve as the backbone for an expansion of programming.

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 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.

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

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).



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.

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 an initial investment of \$9 million in quality infrastructure and 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.

In order to do so successfully, 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. NYSED currently has only two staff members who work full-time on afterschool issues, which is insufficient for the scale of current programs, much less for managing the proposed new investment.

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).



Invest \$9 million in 2014-15 - \$7 million in technical assistance and program oversight, so that all programs are high-quality programs and \$2 million to restore existing programs.

- \$1.6 million for a data system to provide comprehensive information on programs.
- \$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.
- Restore \$500,000 for Advantage After School and \$1.5 million for the Youth Development Program to maintain existing programs (OCFS).

Strengthening existing supports and providing new investments in state staff, a data system, and technical assistance, this 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, Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention, 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 can assist in preparing organizations statewide to launch and expand high-quality programs in 2015-16.

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.

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 begin 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.

The afterschool program that is developed based on the proposed new investment should be based on national best practices for quality programs, including an expectation that every program is a partnership between a community-based organization and a school (as is currently required for Advantage After School and 21st Century Community Learning Centers) and that every program offer substantial enrichment components, which may include arts, sports, hands-on science and technology, or community service.

Established community partners have a track record of success – they have run similar programs at very high levels of quality for years or even decades across New York State. They focus on enrichment and overall youth development as well as academics, and in doing so foster the social and emotional skills, from resilience to perseverance to communication skills, that recent research has identified as equally as important to life outcomes as purely academic knowledge⁵.

Enrichment activities have been shown to increase student engagement and motivation, meet the needs of diverse learning styles, including students with disabilities, and help students develop ambitions for their futures. Enrichment activities are often structured as hands-on and project-based learning opportunities, and offer opportunities to engage deeply with the critical thinking skills demanded by the Common Core.

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.

⁵ Lex Borghans, Angela Lee Duckworth, James J. Heckman, Bas ter Weel, "The Economics and Psychology of Personality Traits," Journal of Human Resources, Volume 43, Number 4, Fall 2008, pp. 972-1059.