



State Senator Daniel Squadron
25th Senate District
December 2010

Cradle to Career: A social services agenda for a new New York

New York State's fiscal crisis is taking a toll on all New Yorkers, but especially the low-income citizens and those who are considered hardest to employ. Given our limited resources, it is critical to support proven, cost-effective programs that will nurture children, help them transition from school to college, onto adulthood, and help them find successful careers.

With a total investment of \$76 million, the Cradle to Career initiative outlined below has the potential to do just that. With this amount, we can:

- Double the number of families who participate in home visiting, a proven program that helps new mothers and young families succeed from before birth through early childhood;
- Make School of One, a cutting-edge and extraordinarily effective rethinking of primary education, available on a state-wide basis;
- Create a seamless community college support program ; and
- Continue successful wage subsidy and job training programs

I. From the Cradle: A Comprehensive Home Visiting Program

It is well established that children who live in abuse and neglect free environments have much better chances of succeeding in school and in life.¹ As Marian Wright Edelman has said, "it must be an urgent priority to strengthen the web of child and family supports to keep children safe, prevent problems before they occur, resolve problems that do happen before they become crises, and prevent the recurrence of maltreatment."²

One way to ensure that children are raised in safe, nurturing, and loving families is with home visiting programs – such as Healthy Families and the Nurse Family Partnership – that provide coaching and parenting skills to mothers considered high-risk. These programs have been proven to reduce cases of child neglect and abuse, as

¹ See "Home Visitation for Families with Young Children." Congressional Research Service, October 23, 2009; "A Comprehensive Crime-Fighting Strategy for New York." Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 2009; "HFNY Demonstrates Enduring Effects on Parenting and Child Well-Being in the First Seven Years of Life." Healthy Families, New York; "Realizing the Promise of Home Visitation: Addressing Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment." Avon Foundation for Women, 2010.

² Marian Wright Edelman, "Home Visiting Programs: Urgently Needed Help for Young Children and Families," *Huffington Post*, available at: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/marian-wright-edelman/home-visiting-programs-ur_b_585189.html (accessed on 12/15/10).



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well as costs associated with foster care placements, unintended pregnancies, hospitalizations and emergency room visits, and other costly interventions.³ On average, home visiting programs return \$2.24 for each dollar invested.⁴

At the urging of the State Senate, New York's 2010-2011 budget maintained the State's previous investment in home visiting programs, which was necessary to meet federal maintenance of effort requirements and ensure State eligibility for federal dollars. In fiscal year 2010-2011, Healthy Families received \$23,900,000 and Nurse Family Partnership received \$2,000,000. This enables approximately 4,000 of the New York's "at-risk" mothers to participate in home visiting programs. Still, fewer than 10% of eligible families who wish to participate in home visiting programs are able to do so.

Greater investment in home visiting will guarantee cost savings for the State in the long run. An additional investment of approximately \$100 million per year would be enough to make home visiting programs universal for all eligible mothers in New York State. In the short-term, if the State doubles last year's investment in the next fiscal year, at a cost of \$26 million, these successful programs could reach a much greater number of New York's families.

The federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 that became law in March 2010 allocated \$1.5 billion for state-level home visiting programs over the next five years. New York State will potentially be eligible for as much as \$150 million of that amount, assuming it complies with federal maintenance of effort requirements.

II. K-8: School of One⁵

New York spends more per student than any other state, yet the state ranks 40th in its high school graduation rate.⁶ In 2008, 74% of all freshmen enrolled in associate degree programs at the City University of New York who graduated from New York City public high schools needed to take remedial classes.⁷ In 2008, only 19.2% of New York City public high school graduates met the City University of New York's content area recommendation of having received four years of math instruction. We must take bold action to improve our public schools.

A promising program developed at the New York City Department of Education has the potential to revolutionize teaching and learning. In 2009, the Department piloted

³ "Universal Prenatal/Postpartum Care and Home Visitation: The Plan for an Ideal System in New York State." Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, October 2007. p. 2.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 3.

⁵ See "The Littlest Schoolhouse." By Ta-Nehisi Coates. Atlantic, July/August 2010.

⁶ "The New NY Agenda: A Plan for Action." Andrew Cuomo 2010, 10 Troubling New York Facts.

⁷ See "Increasing College Access for New York City Youth." United Neighborhood Houses, 2010; "Are New York City's Public Schools Preparing Students for Success in College?" John Garvey, 2009.



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a technology-based method of instruction—called “School of One”— that has been called “the single most important experiment conducted in education so far.”⁸

In the School of One model, which is currently focused on math instruction, teachers receive computer-generated lesson plans for each student. Each student follows his or her own instruction plan at the student’s own pace. At the end of the day, the software is designed to review the student’s progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and design a lesson plan for the following day accordingly.

Three New York City public schools have School of One pilot programs, and initial assessments are extremely positive. According to a city Department of Education evaluation, participating students “showed gains that, when annualized, would be equal to one half to two-thirds of an additional year of gain in relation to their predicted academic trajectory without School of One.”⁹ Teachers¹⁰ and students¹¹ have also provided positive anecdotal feedback about the program.

The U.S. Department of Education has singled out School of One by awarding it a 2010 Investing in Innovation grant; the program was the fifth highest-ranking application out of 1,700 submitted.

New York should seize the opportunity to become a true leader in education reform. With a one-time allocation of \$10 million in the SFY 2011-2012 budget, the School of One model could be expanded so that any school or district in the state could choose to opt into the program with software and training.

III. High School and College: College Access and Community College Student Support Program

As the Community Service Society and the Center for an Urban Future recently concluded, there is a “skills deficit” in New York, with an increasing number of jobs requiring technical training many New Yorkers do not have.¹² The same report indicates that earning power continues to be directly linked to educational attainment,

⁸ Quote from Arthur Levine, President, Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and President Emeritus, Teachers College at Columbia University.

⁹ “*School of One 2010, Results from Afterschool and In School Program.*” NYC Department of Education, Research and Policy Support Group, September 2010.

¹⁰ *Id.*, p. 29-30: Quotes from School of One Afterschool pilot teachers: “The level of dedication was excellent;” “Students had less time to get bored;” “Providing students with a different schedule daily, and allowing them to work with different teachers and peers helped keep students engaged.”

¹¹ *Id.*, p. 37-38. Quotes from School of One students: “I was able to learn more math that I never learned before. I enjoy the learning environment and understand what is being taught;” “My favorite about school of one is that we learn in a small group;” “I like that when you don’t understand a lesson you can try again.”

¹² See “*Closing the Skills Gap.*” Center for an Urban Future and Community Service Society, January 2010.



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with the number of jobs that require post-secondary education increasing.¹³ There are approximately 200,000 “disconnected” (neither working nor in school) youths in New York State, and community college graduation rates are alarmingly low; this problem has the potential to become a crisis.¹⁴

New York needs to better train its citizens for “mission critical fields like physical therapy, social work, speech pathology, education, engineering, medicine, information technology, and public health.”¹⁵ In line with Governor-elect Cuomo’s New York Works concept, New York needs to train a labor force that will be qualified to succeed in a 21st Century economy.

Governor-elect Cuomo’s proposal to create scholarship programs and give higher education institutions incentives to invest in science and technology research¹⁶ is a positive step. We should complement these proposals by increasing college access and community college support services, which are proven to work but need to be expanded to have a real impact. College access services -- provided by public high schools and community-based organizations – generally receive high marks for quality, but do not reach the full population of students in need. And there is simply no reliable network of support to help community college students navigate coursework and selection, financial aid, internships, and career development.

A \$10 million investment in a College Access and Community College Student Support Program in next year’s budget would provide school districts, community organizations and higher education institutions with the tools to better support and transition students from high school to college by (1) training college counsellors to ensure students receive more support and information about their post-secondary school options, (2) providing resources to assist high school students with standardized tests, the college application and financial aid process, (3) providing critical tuition assistance, and (4) developing strategies and programs to ensure that students’ succeed and stay in college.

As the Community Service Society/Center for an Urban Future report states, “ultimately, the goal of policy makers and stakeholders should be to create a seamless pipeline of broadly educated, highly trained lifetime learners who reach maturity with the widest possible range of options before them.”¹⁷

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 6-7.

¹⁵ “*The New NY Agenda: A Plan for Action.*” Andrew Cuomo 2010, p. 81.

¹⁶ “*The New NY Agenda: A Plan for Action.*” Andrew Cuomo 2010, p. 81 and 118-9.

¹⁷ *Closing the Skills Gap.*” Center for an Urban Future and Community Service Society, January 2010, p. 31.



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IV. A Successful Career: Job Creation through Wage Subsidy and Job Training

Both the “skills deficit” and the economic downturn have contributed to an environment in which many New Yorkers, especially those who are “hardest to employ,” have nearly no prospects for long-term employment.

Fortunately, jobs programs targeted at the neediest New Yorkers got a boost by the federal government, which in 2009 created funding for job training and wage subsidy programs. In Fiscal Year 2009-2010, New York State used \$36 million in Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) Contingency Emergency Funds for subsidized job programs: Green Jobs received \$4 million; Health Care Jobs received \$4 million; Transitional Jobs received \$20 million; and the Wage Subsidy program received \$8 million.

All of these programs employ a subsidized wage model, pairing workers with private-sector employers, non-profit organizations, or government jobs. By helping lower-income and hard to employ workers get their foot in the door and obtain on-the-job training, the programs have proven highly successful at helping individuals advance towards full-time, permanent employment.¹⁸ As of August 2010, the programs, which are overseen in New York by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, have created at least 4,860 jobs state-wide. Thanks to an extension of the deadline to spend federal stimulus dollars, the programs may continue operating through this fiscal year.

But unless the State continues to invest in these programs, they will end when the federal dollars run out. A \$30 million state investment, and greater attention to integrating these programs with other job creation and training initiatives, will allow even greater numbers of motivated New Yorkers to move into permanent employment.

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¹⁸ *Id.* at p. 38.