



**2020-2021 TESTIMONY TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE PUBLIC HEARING ON
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

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Our thanks to Senator Krueger, Assemblymember Weinstein, Senator Mayer, and Assemblymember Benedetto, and to the other members of the Finance, Ways and Means, and Education Committees for the opportunity to present testimony to you today.

All of New York's students should be provided equitable access to a well-rounded education. A well-rounded education includes supports that ensure students come to the classroom and are ready to learn, such as afterschool and summer programs, health and mental health services, and family engagement opportunities.

Every child deserves to live a happy and healthy life. Unfortunately, we know in historically marginalized and under-resourced communities across the state, our children do not have access to the health services they need. Approximately 4 million children live in New York State, and nearly 750,000 of them are poor.¹ We know that children living in poverty experience a variety of barriers to healthy growth and development. One of the best and most effective ways to keep kids healthy is by making high-quality physical, mental, vision, and dental health care as accessible as possible. For many communities, schools are uniquely positioned to integrate health care services as they are a hub for the community where children learn, feel safe, and spend most of their time. Furthermore, nationally in two parent households, 63 percent have both parents working.² Opportunities for safe, engaging, and enriching programs after the end of the traditional school day and throughout the year are a critical support for youth, families, and communities.

The integration of comprehensive health services and expanded learning opportunities can be maximized through community schools. A community school is a strategy to create the conditions for learning, growth, and success. By developing and integrating partnerships in a school, the academic, social-emotional, and health needs of children and families can be addressed. Key to the success of community schools is having a lead partner who coordinates the services at the school level and also has a full-time presence in the school. Community schools are smart investments: for every one dollar invested in a coordinator, the school receives more than \$7 back in value.³ With the right resources in place, community schools increase access to health and mental health care, a critical core element of the work. School-based health centers ensure that kids miss as little class time as possible.

Additionally, community schools provide expanded learning opportunities through afterschool and summer programs and parent/family engagement support. These services reduce the burden on

¹ Children's Defense Fund. "Child Poverty in America 2018." <https://www.childrensdefense.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Child-Poverty-in-America-2018-State-Factsheet.pdf> (accessed November 27, 2019).
² United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Employment Characteristics of Families Survey." <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/famee.nr0.htm> (accessed November 27, 2019).
³ Apex, ABC Community School Partnership. "Return on Investment of a Community School Coordinator: A Case Study." http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/ROI_Coordinator.pdf (accessed February 6, 2020).

Technical Assistance Centers

The New York State 2017-18 Enacted Budget allocated funds to support three regional technical assistance centers (TAC) to support its investment in community schools funding to districts. The responsibilities of these TACs include statewide dissemination of information on effective and promising practices in the establishment and ongoing management of Community School strategies through professional development and technical assistance activities. The following are a sampling of impact highlights since the TACs have been in operation.

- Three school districts have hired Community School Coordinators after receiving a technical assistance visit from the Eastern Regional TAC.
- The Central/Western Regional TAC worked with representatives from the NYS Office of Mental Health and the NYS Department of Criminal Justice Services to develop a collaborative approach to mental health and regional youth justice initiatives as a way to build regional community school capacity.
- The NYC Regional TAC provided intense support to new Attendance Improvement and Dropout Intervention (AIDP) schools brought under the community schools umbrella with a specific focus on improving attendance and reducing chronic absenteeism.
- The Central/Western Regional TAC worked to connect regional constituents with peers facing similar challenges in communities of practice, i.e. meetings of large urban districts, rural districts, and BOCES to discuss strategies for capacity-building within their own unique communities.
- The Eastern Regional TAC helped rural school districts connect with community partners of which they were previously unaware.
- All three TACs assisted districts in developing partnerships to support school-based health centers and/or school-based mental health clinics.

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 \$250 million in existing community school funding, support the additional \$50 million in Community Schools Aid, and add an additional \$100 million in a new Community Schools Categorical Aid to adequately fund and sustain community schools statewide.**
- **Increase the \$1.2 million investment in Community Schools Technical Assistance Centers (TACs) by \$650,000 for a total of \$1.85 million.**

Additional Recommendations

The NYS Community Schools Network also supports critical funding for the programs and services that community schools effectively leverage and coordinate in order to ensure that students and their families are supported and engaged. In collaboration with the New York State Network for Youth Success, Winning Beginning New York, and the New York School-Based Health Alliance, we support the following budget requests:

- **Afterschool Uplifts New York. To increase and protect investment in afterschool programs, the state must invest \$38 million in the Advantage After School Program, which will restore funding to the FY19-20 level of \$33 million, and increase overall funding to accommodate a per pupil increase of \$2,320. Invest an additional \$25.2 million in the Empire State After-School Program to increase per student-rate from \$1,600 to \$2,320. Also, maintain the \$10**

million increase for Empire State After-School Program, and amend language to stipulate an increase of the per student rate from \$1,600 to \$2,320 to account for the minimum wage increase.

- **Early Childhood Education. Invest at least \$150 million to ensure children across the state have access to quality full-day pre-k programs. This investment will enhance quality and eliminate barriers to expansion in districts ready with a plan to prioritize and meet the needs of at-risk children in their communities.**
- **School-Based Health (SBH). Maintain \$17.1 million in FY20 funding levels, and add an additional \$5 million to restore non-Medicaid State grant funds to the sponsors whose grant funds were disproportionately reduced in 2017 due to a 20% cut in the State Budget and a new NYS Department of Health methodology, which resulted in 25 - 70% reductions in total SBHCs funds.**

The New York State Community Schools Network advocates to develop, promote, and sustain community schools in collaboration with government, local school districts, and community partners. Through a diverse coalition of community-based agencies, parents, teachers, and statewide advocates, we champion effective community school policies so that children and families can thrive.

Comprehensive health and mental health services and access to expanded learning opportunities are critical to the education and wellbeing of our children in New York State. We are committed to ensuring our children, families, and communities have the resources and opportunity to live happy, healthy, and full lives.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important topic. Please feel free to contact Alli Lidie, Associate Executive Director at the New York State Network for Youth Success, at Alli@NetworkForYouthSuccess.org with any questions regarding this testimony.

