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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Jasmine Gripper. I am the executive director for the Alliance for Quality Education. It is without saying the challenges both students and school districts have faced in beginning another year amidst a pandemic. We commend the work that has been done in the face of these challenges.

However, the concern is that though districts posted and shared their plans in compliance with the state law, these plans were often vague and lacked meaningful details on district spending and programming. Without details and specifics it is difficult for parents and advocates to hold districts accountable.

Research and evidence, combined with parent and community input, are necessary to inform the actions of school district leaders — primarily regarding their planning and implementation of the federal and state funds that are available to them during COVID recovery and reopening.

In my testimony, I will discuss what we have found in school district plans and juxtapose it with the Alliance for Quality Education’s survey findings.

The importance of community engagement is well established in educational research. Yet, often there isn’t a systematic and meaningful effort to engage with communities. Without the engagement of families and communities, schools miss the opportunity to have parents as partners to amplify success for students. Successful engagement leads to higher outcomes for students, fewer behavioral issues, and most importantly, to the establishment of a trust based relationship between the school and the family.

Due to the lack of trust between families and districts some parents are still hesitant about sending children back to school while we are still dealing with the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Delta variant we urge districts to offer a remote option, so students and educators can attend class in a capacity that allows for everyone to stay safe.

AQE worked to inform communities of the new federal and state aid coming to districts by hosting information sessions for AQE parent leaders around the state. Parents were eager to

learn about the new aid coming to their communities and the potential uses of these new resources. Communities were ready to provide input in district plans to adequately address the needs and demands of Black, Latinx and low income families, educators, and students in each community. Some districts welcomed parent input, like Buffalo. Others kept parents out of the process, like Utica.

The Alliance for Quality Education and Public Policy and Education Fund launched a survey with the intent of getting feedback and input from Black and Latinx families, students and educators primarily in New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Kingston, Utica, Albany. We collected 1,046 surveys in English and Spanish. Of the 1,046 survey responses, 80 percent (836) were from parents, 10 percent (100) from educators, 5 percent (56) from students and 5 percent (54) by people who identified as “other.”

The survey asked respondents to select their top 5 priorities on how money should be spent from the following list of allowable uses of the new federal funding. Parents, students, and educators around the state overwhelmingly agreed that support staff & mental health, smaller class sizes, technology, infrastructure and summer programs and accelerated learning.

Overwhelmingly, respondents identified hiring more staff to provide mental health support to students and teachers and smaller class sizes as the two most important areas to invest funding. COVID-19 illustrated, and continues to do so, how important mental health is for all people and in particular for the communities that were hit hardest by the pandemic.

It is unsurprising that the survey respondents identified mental health support as one of the most important priorities for using the ARP funding. Many schools and districts did not have nurses, social workers or psychologists before the pandemic, and these disparities were exasperated once the pandemic hit.

Parents, students, and educators identified smaller class sizes as their second most important area to invest. Small class sizes have benefits for learning that are indisputable and often commonsensical. When class size is reduced, students receive more individualized attention and interact more with the teacher, teachers have more flexibility to use different instructional approaches, and students are less distracting to each other than a large group of children. These are just some of the benefits that come with smaller class sizes.

Respondents identified technology to also be a priority area for investing. After the state shutdown of schools on March 16th, 2020, school districts that had devices for students were able to shift seamlessly to remote/virtual learning. Those who did not had to use paper packages, phones or relied on devices available in the home. As of February 2021, 8 percent (204,628) of students statewide were without access to a dedicated device to do their school work and 7 percent (159,251) without sufficient internet access. Almost a year after the pandemic hit New York, not having access to technology that is necessary to access one's

education seems to be a violation of the constitutionally granted right to “a sound basic education.”

Parents and educators are concerned about the loss of instructional time, academic rigor, and educational support. While some students have kept pace, many more have fallen behind in their academic subjects. There must be a plan in fact that is not remediation, but instead accelerated learning that helps students overcome the barriers of learning.

The rest of parents, students, and educators' topline priorities can be found in Alliance for Quality Education's report titled [We Demand: How New York's Communities Want To Use New Federal Aid to Public Schools](#).

But due to the vagueness of the plans released by districts, parents and advocates still have many unanswered questions in respect to the implementation of both ARP funds and Foundation Aid. Plans did not include a clear timeframe for when new programming would be rolled out. Plans did not indicate the number or percentage of students that would receive an added benefit of proposed programs. Most alarmingly, districts did not indicate how they would measure success. We want to see a growth in opportunities for students, but we cannot assume this is happening. We have to require districts to track and measure their progress. District plans need regular evaluation periods in order to ensure that money is not being wasted and our most vulnerable students are being prioritized. Many districts lacked initiatives focused on vulnerable students. We know students who are English language learners and students with disabilities struggled during the last year of remote learning. These populations of students need to be prioritized as districts allocate these new resources.

Let us be clear: Equity and racial justice must be central to these efforts to help ensure that schools do not return to the old systems that did not work for so many of our children.

There can be no one size fits all approach to building back better, but student needs must be at the forefront and in ways that build on the assets they and their communities bring.

In regards to Foundation Aid, we are grateful and eager for this increased funding. The commitment to fully fund the Foundation Aid formula allows districts to develop long term plans without fear of a fiscal cliff when ARP funding is no longer available.

We urge the NYS senate to mandate districts comply with the Contract for Excellence as the state increases Foundation Aid funding to schools. We urge the NYS senate to require quarterly reporting from districts that includes academic and social indicators of progress. We the NYS senate to continue to help parents and advocates hold districts accountable by having hearings like this in your local community.

COLN · PARK · SCHOOL

WE DEMAND

HOW NEW YORK'S COMMUNITIES
WANT TO USE NEW FEDERAL AID
TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS



PUBLIC POLICY AND
EDUCATION FUND OF NEW YORK

AaQeE
Alliance for Quality Education

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The Alliance for Quality Education is a coalition mobilizing communities across the state to keep New York true to its promise of ensuring a high-quality public school education to all students regardless of zip code. Combining its legislative and policy expertise with grassroots organizing, AQE advances proven-to-work strategies that lead to student success and echoes a powerful public demand for a high-quality public school education for all of New York's students.

The Public Policy Education Fund was founded in 1986 to address critical social, economic, racial and environmental issues facing low and moderate income New York State residents. Our areas of work have included health care, education, after-school programs, voter participation, economic development and consumer issues. PPEF uses many tools in its work, including grassroots organizing, research and policy development, public education on a wide range of policy issues, and community outreach.

WE DEMAND

HOW NEW YORK'S COMMUNITIES WANT TO USE NEW FEDERAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

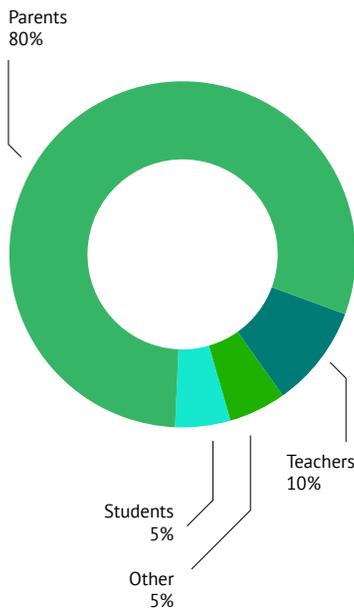
INTRODUCTION

Families, students and research agree: New York's schools should invest new federal education funding in strategies that work.

New York State received a total of \$12 billion in federal funding through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), to spend over the next three years. The ARPA funding requires school districts to go through a public engagement process to show how stakeholders, including families, educators and students want the funding to be spent. This engagement process is happening within the next few weeks as districts are required to have a plan posted on their websites by July 1st, 2021.

The importance of community engagement is well established in educational research. Yet, often there isn't a systematic and meaningful effort to engage with communities.¹ Without the engagement of families and communities, schools miss the opportunity to have partners that facilitate and amplify success for students. Successful engagement leads to higher outcomes for students, fewer behavioral issues, and most importantly, to the establishment of a trust based relationship between the school and the family.

**FIG. 1
RESPONDENTS**



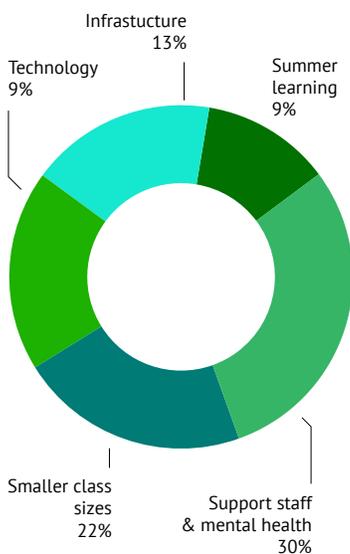
Even though the public engagement process is required, very often it does not include the voices of the most marginalized populations of our public school system. Black, Latinx, immigrant and low income families and students are not included when institutions seek public input.

The Alliance for Quality Education and Public Policy and Education Fund launched a survey with the intent of getting feedback and input from Black and Latinx families, students and educators primarily in New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Kingston, Utica, Albany. We collected 1,046 surveys in English and Spanish.

WHO RESPONDED

Of the 1,046 survey responses, 80 percent (836) were from parents, 10 percent (100) from educators, 5 percent (56) from students and 5 percent (54) by people who identified as “other.” The survey was distributed electronically through the AQE database, was posted on social media and was shared by parents to other parents in their networks.

**FIG. 2
TOP FIVE RESPONSES**



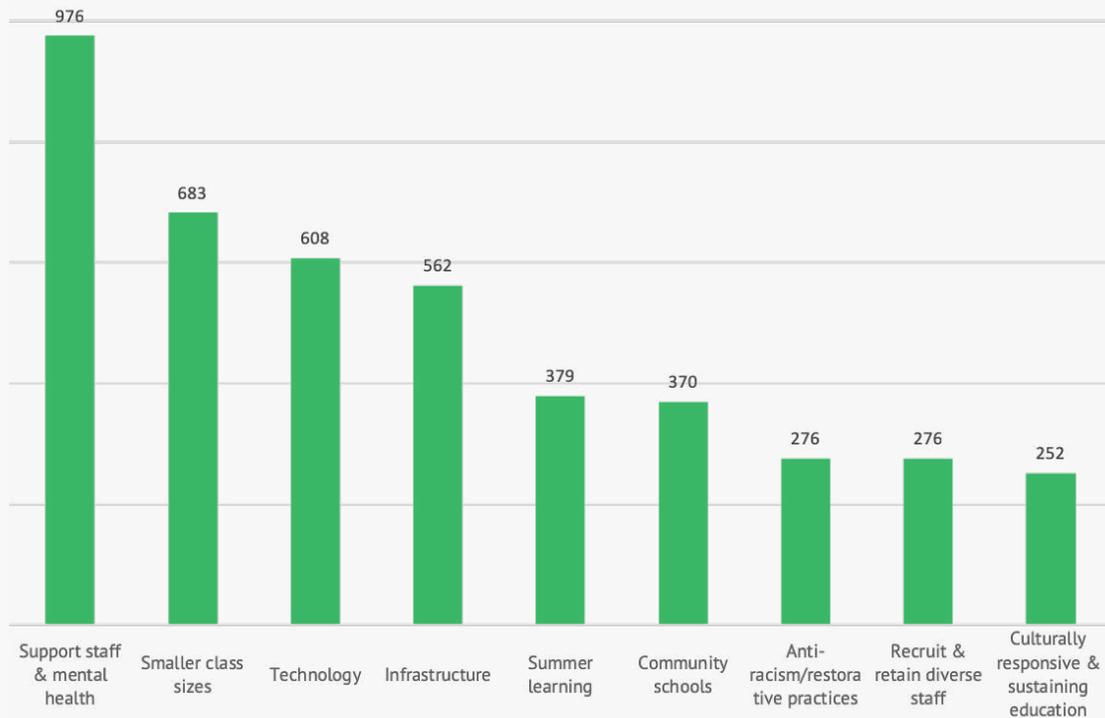
WHAT WE FOUND

1 | SUPPORT STAFF & MENTAL HEALTH

Overwhelmingly, respondents identified hiring more staff to provide mental health support to students and teachers and smaller class sizes as the most important areas to invest funding. COVID-19 illustrated, and continues to do so, how important mental health is for all people and in particular for the communities that were hit hardest by the pandemic. The same applies to small class size: it is important in terms of safety, but also in terms of learning.

Mental health supports are hugely important for all communities and particularly for communities of color, which were more at risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19.²

FIG. 3
SURVEY RESPONSES



The Center for American Progress notes, “Amid concentrated job losses and financial insecurity, disproportionate rates of contracting and becoming seriously ill from COVID-19, and nationwide protests in response to centuries of racial injustice and anti-Black racism, the past few months have **exacerbated** the already disparate mental health needs of many Black, Indigenous, and non-Black people of color (BIPOC). In particular, BIPOC students are experiencing all of these traumas on top of the isolation of social distancing and remote learning.”³

It is unsurprising that the survey respondents identified mental health support as one of the most important priorities for using the ARP funding. Many schools and districts did not have nurses, social workers or psychologists before the pandemic. New York State's 2020 budget short-changed schools resulting in layoffs of staff that were essential in providing academic and emotional support to students. The new funding allows schools to correct this issue by hiring the support staff necessary to provide this crucial support to students, families and educators.

**FIG. 4
SURVEY OPTIONS**

The survey asked respondents to select their top 5 priorities on how money should be spent from the following list of allowable uses of the new federal funding:

Expanding the school day/school year

Mental health supports for students and teachers

Summer learning activities or accelerated learning (summer school, camp)

Reduce class sizes

Provide students with up to date technology (laptops, high speed internet)

Anti-racism and anti-bias training for educators and school leaders

Hire more support staff, including social workers, psychologists, paraprofessionals, teaching assistants, nurses, etc. to address student and faculty trauma

Recruit and retain diverse, racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse staff

Implement culturally responsive and sustaining educational (CRSE) programs to ensure that students and educators feel welcomed and supported

Restorative practices training for all school staff

Allow multi-age grouping of students to ensure that learning is happening at a developmentally appropriate level

Community schools with health clinics, food pantries and any other service the community needs

Invest in infrastructure (food court-style cafeterias, playgrounds, outdoor classrooms)

2 | SMALLER CLASS SIZES

While it is unclear how long schools will have the social distancing requirements, small class sizes have benefits for learning that are indisputable and often commonsensical.⁴

When class size is reduced:

- Students receive more individualized attention and interact more with the teacher.
- Teachers have more flexibility to use different instructional approaches.
- Students are less distracting to each other than a large group of children.
- Teachers have more time to teach and better classroom management.
- Students are more likely to participate in class and become more involved.
- Teachers have more time to cover additional material and use more supplementary texts and enrichment activities.⁵

3 | TECHNOLOGY

After the state shutdown of schools on March 16th, 2020, school districts that had devices for students were able to shift seamlessly to remote/virtual learning. Those who did not had to use paper packages, phones or relied on devices available in the home. As of February 2021, 8 percent (204,628) of students statewide were without access to a dedicated device to do their school work and 7 percent (159,251) without sufficient internet access. Almost a year after the pandemic hit New York, not having access to technology that is necessary to access one's education seems to be a violation of the constitutionally granted right to "a sound basic education."

4 | INFRASTRUCTURE

Respondents to the survey also identified the need for investment in infrastructure that would allow students to have access to food that is appealing and nutritious, as well as culturally appropriate; access to playgrounds; and facilities that allow for outdoor classrooms. The pandemic shed light

on the fact that there are many outdoor spaces that are not utilized by schools, thereby missing the opportunity to engage more students in person and provide a safe environment for students and teachers to return to in person learning and teaching. In the most recent school tour AQE did with Senator Jackson, we found that many schools that serve BIPOC students do not have access to outdoor spaces at all. We also found that basement rooms were often used as “spillover locations” because the school building was so overcrowded.⁶

Most recently, a news story from Rochester, New York showed that students were being offered school lunches that were moldy and stale.⁷ Survey respondents noted that there was need for “food court” type cafeterias that would offer a plurality of options.

5 | SUMMER PROGRAMS & ACCELERATED LEARNING

Summer programs and accelerated learning is an area that experts have noted as important for all students, in particular those who have been remote so far. It is also an area that the ARPA funding requires a “set aside” by all local school districts and states. Survey respondents identified summer programs and accelerated learning as something that their children/students needed. In conversations with respondents, it was noted that summer programs must have a combination of both academic and enrichment opportunities.⁸

NEXT STEPS

Parents, students, and educators are in agreement with the research. School districts must meaningfully engage the public to go through the process of deciding where the funding should be invested. Meaningful engagement will only increase the likelihood of student success both in school and onwards.

Research and evidence, combined with parent and community input, are necessary to inform the actions of school district leaders — primarily regarding their planning and implementation of the federal funds that are available to them during COVID recovery and reopening. Equity and racial justice must be central to these efforts to help ensure that schools do not return to the old systems that did not work for so many of our children. With this in mind, education leaders must listen to their constituents. This will inform leaders’ future actions/initiatives as they will come to better understand their own contexts through community input.

There can be no one size fits all approach to building back better, but student needs must be at the forefront and in ways that build on the assets they and their communities bring.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To efficiently and effectively plan and implement school funding, there are processes that leaders can use to provide more mental health support, offer high quality summer learning programs, set up and maintain strong technology access for every student, invest in broader school infrastructure, and lower class size.

To begin, schools cannot do this work alone. To provide a more robust and sustainable effort towards the top five priorities of parents and attain educational equity and excellence for our most marginalized groups of students, the following approaches should be considered.

1. Know what works for every student in your district, what gaps exist, and where to prioritize efforts and funding. It is important to take on a few big initiatives that will yield major successful outcomes for more students for the long haul. Work with district and school level experts to take an inventory of successful practices and needs and crosswalk them with the priorities of the parents.
2. Build a community and cross sector approach to include families and students from the onset of planning and through the execution of plans and ensure ongoing communication. This means that there is broad stakeholder engagement and leadership for goal setting, activities, data collection and monitoring, aligned with reporting to the broader community. Each member of the community should be able to “see” their voices reflected in the work and should be kept informed through accessible communication channels.
3. Get to know the cultural assets and funds of knowledge of the community and elevate them in school, classroom, and community practice. By showing closer connection between the various cultures, languages, and norms of the broader community, every student is more likely to feel included and valued which can lead to greater academic outcomes for them.
4. Connect with other district leaders, national organizations, and experts to learn more about effective models that are used to provide more mental health services, offer enriching summer learning activities, improve technology and school infrastructure, and reduce class size.
5. Create partnerships, and invite experts and consultants to support planning and implementation and provide technical assistance in areas where the district will benefit from such efforts.
6. Work with cross-sector leaders and community partners to develop a plan to execute practices that bolster the five top priority areas that resulted from the survey of families from New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Kingston, Utica, Albany. Not only does this require attention to the details along with the big picture change that is needed, it also requires a level of innovative thinking - being able to think and do “outside the box” of traditional solutions in education.
7. Ensure ongoing multidirectional and multidisciplinary collaboration and communication that includes data sharing and agility to make changes in real time when implementation data suggests the need to do so.

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.waterford.org/education/how-parent-involvement-leads-to-student-success/>
<https://sites.ed.gov/progress/2015/06/effective-turnaround-initiatives-involve-parents-communities/>
<https://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/01/the-5-pillars-of-whole-school-transformation/>
- 2 <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/covid-19-mental-health-impact-on-people-of-color-and-minority-groups#People-of-color-at-high-risk-of-PTSD>
- 3 <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/news/2020/07/28/488044/mental-health-support-students-color-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- 4 <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/smaller-class-sizes-pros-and-cons>
- 5 <https://classsizematters.org/fact-sheets-on-the-benefits-of-class-size/>
- 6 http://www.aqeny.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/equityreport_FINAL_digital.pdf
- 7 <https://www.whec.com/coronavirus-schools/lunch-issues-at-rcsd-persist/6030709/>
- 8 <https://www.summerlearning.org/knowledge-center/2021-california-summer-learning-guide/>

ROCHESTER'S PLAN FOR HOW TO SPEND FEDERAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS OUT.

NOW WHAT?

Rochester schools are slated to receive an additional \$324.5 million in state and federal aid. All districts were required to publicly post their spending plans for this new funding on or before July 1.

With nearly 700 school districts in New York State, we need your help to determine whether YOUR district's plan adequately addresses the needs and demands of families, educators and students in your community.

HOW DOES ROCHESTER'S PLAN MEASURE UP?

You can review Rochester's spending plan on the district's website by [clicking here](#).

What's included, and what's missing

+ Support Staff and Mental Health

"Social Emotional Learning" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"

- Smaller Class Sizes

+ Technology

\$49M for "District-Wide Infrastructure Improvements" that included technology improvements to support students and families

+ Infrastructure

"High School Redesign" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"; \$49M for "District-Wide Infrastructure Improvements"

+ Summer Programs & Accelerated Learning

"Summer School and Expanded Learning" and "Academic Support & Enrichment" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"

- Community Schools

+ Anti-racism/restorative practices

"Restorative Practices" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"

+ Recruit & retain diverse staff

"Recruiting diverse staff" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"

+ Culturally responsive & sustaining education

"Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"

+ Broad & Continual Community Engagement

"Parent & Family Engagement" under \$69M for "High-Quality Teaching and Learning for All"; \$2.5M for "Participatory Budgeting" involving Parents/Students/Community Members



LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO ►

STEP 1 REVIEW THE PLAN WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



Meet with parents and community members to review and discuss your district's plan. Together, identify the top three initiatives that your district is investing in. You can list them below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STEP 2 TAKE ACTION

Share your community's feedback and concerns with your local school district's decision makers. Remember to report back on the meeting with district leaders to community members that are not able to attend.

For each of the programs you identified in Step 1, use the questions below as a guide for what to ask district leaders during the meeting.

- How many students will this program serve?
- When do you expect to roll out this program?
- How will you measure the effectiveness of this program?

In addition, consider the below questions to evaluate your district's plan:

- Are there any strategic investments missing from your district's plan? If yes, inform district leaders of what essential programs are missing.
- Do you want the district to reallocate resources from another program to support this initiative? If yes, please explain.



MEET WITH YOUR SUPERINTENDENT & CFO

Use this [sample letter](#) to request a meeting with your superintendent.



SPEAK UP AT A LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Check your local school district website to find the date of the next meeting.



ORGANIZE A PTA/PTO MEETING

Use these [step-by-step instructions](#) to organize a PTA or PTO meeting.

STEP 3 BUILD PUBLIC SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT

Organize an [education town hall](#) for your community to learn about the district's funding plan.

Write an [op-ed](#) in your local newspaper about how you and your community want this funding to be spent.

Organize a [press conference](#) to bring attention to the issues in your local community.

CONNECT WITH US

Statewide

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BUFFALO'S PLAN FOR HOW TO SPEND FEDERAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS OUT.

NOW WHAT?

Buffalo schools are slated to receive an additional \$333 million in state and federal aid. All districts were required to publicly post their spending plans for this new funding on or before July 1.

With nearly 700 school districts in New York State, we need your help to determine whether YOUR district's plan adequately addresses the needs and demands of families, educators and students in your community.

HOW DOES BUFFALO'S PLAN MEASURE UP?

You can review [Buffalo's spending plan](#) on the district's website by [clicking here](#).

What's included, and what's missing

+ Support Staff and Mental Health

~\$39M for "Student Support/Social Emotional" priority between 2021-2024 that includes additional funding for social emotional support staff

- Smaller Class Sizes

+ Technology

~\$38.1M for upgrades on "Information Technology" between 2021-2024 to establish "initiatives identified to support the needs of teachers and students"

+ Infrastructure

~\$38.9M for "Covid/Operations/Facility" improvements between 2021-2024 to reduce student and school-personnel risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental hazards

+ Summer Programs & Accelerated Learning

~\$173.4M for "Expanded EB [Education Bargain] Instructional Initiatives" between 2021-2024 that include summer 2021 learning programs across all grade levels

+ Community Schools

Existing community schools will be enhanced under the priority of family and community engagement

+ Anti-racism/restorative practices

The "entire ESSER funding ... will be aligned to the [Board's] equity goals" - including anti-racist focus in mental health supports and professional development, among many other initiatives

+ Recruit & retain diverse staff

Using Education Bargain funding, BPS commits to recruiting and retaining a diverse and effective body of school personnel

+ Culturally responsive & sustaining education

Using Education Bargain funding, BPS commits to ensure culturally and linguistically responsive resources and programming for students and staff

+ Broad & Continual Community Engagement

commits to engaging "students, teachers, families, school leaders, board members, parent leaders," etc. in the implementation of their plan



LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO ►

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- 2.
- 3.

STEP 2 TAKE ACTION

Share your community's feedback and concerns with your local school district's decision makers. Remember to report back on the meeting with district leaders to community members that are not able to attend.

For each of the programs you identified in Step 1, use the questions below as a guide for what to ask district leaders during the meeting.

- How many students will this program serve?
- When do you expect to roll out this program?
- How will you measure the effectiveness of this program?

In addition, consider the below questions to evaluate your district's plan:

- Are there any strategic investments missing from your district's plan? If yes, inform district leaders of what essential programs are missing.
- Do you want the district to reallocate resources from another program to support this initiative? If yes, please explain.



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UTICA'S PLAN FOR HOW TO SPEND FEDERAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS OUT.

NOW WHAT?

Utica schools are slated to receive an additional \$95.7 million in state and federal aid. All districts were required to publicly post their spending plans for this new funding on or before July 1.

With nearly 700 school districts in New York State, we need your help to determine whether YOUR district's plan adequately addresses the needs and demands of families, educators and students in your community.

HOW DOES UTICA'S PLAN MEASURE UP?

You can review [Utica's spending plan](#) on the district's website by [clicking here](#).

What's included, and what's missing

+ Support Staff and Mental Health

~\$6.5M for "meeting student social, emotional and mental health needs" - that includes ongoing school personnel training and PD in socioemotional and mental health competencies

- Smaller Class Sizes

+ Technology

~\$12M for "Addressing Achievement Gaps and Learning Loss" that includes upgrading instructional technology to improve specialized instruction delivery

+ Infrastructure

~\$20.4M for "Safely returning students to full-time in-person instruction" that includes upgrading HVAC systems and other safety improvements to buildings & additional instructional supply purchase under the ~\$12M for addressing learning loss

+ Summer Programs & Accelerated Learning

Expanded credit recovery and course offerings under addressing learning loss dollars & \$7M for "Raise the graduation rate" that includes increased internship programming for students

- Community Schools

+ Anti-racism/restorative practices

UCSD was not explicitly clear on this point, but they did commit to provide staff development on "differentiated instruction and inclusive practices" with the \$6.4M for "Providing resources and support for English Language Learners (ELLs), Students with Disabilities, and students experiencing homelessness"

- Recruit & retain diverse staff

+ Culturally responsive & sustaining education

UCSD did not explicitly use CRSE language, but they did commit to: provide specialized resources, programming and supports to address the needs ELL and bilingual students and families under the previously mentioned \$6.4M

- Broad & Continual Community Engagement



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For each of the programs you identified in Step 1, use the questions below as a guide for what to ask district leaders during the meeting.

- How many students will this program serve?
- When do you expect to roll out this program?
- How will you measure the effectiveness of this program?

In addition, consider the below questions to evaluate your district's plan:

- Are there any strategic investments missing from your district's plan? If yes, inform district leaders of what essential programs are missing.
- Do you want the district to reallocate resources from another program to support this initiative? If yes, please explain.



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KINGSTON'S PLAN FOR HOW TO SPEND FEDERAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS OUT.

NOW WHAT?

Kingston schools are slated to receive an additional \$25.8 million in state and federal aid. All districts were required to publicly post their spending plans for this new funding on or before July 1.

With nearly 700 school districts in New York State, we need your help to determine whether YOUR district's plan adequately addresses the needs and demands of families, educators and students in your community.

HOW DOES KINGSTON'S PLAN MEASURE UP?

You can review [Kingston's spending plan](#) on the district's website by [clicking here](#).

What's included, and what's missing

+ Support Staff and Mental Health

District-wide support staff and mental health approach, including on-site mental health clinics, social workers in each school, and "expanded trauma-informed training."

+ Smaller Class Sizes

Class size reduction among grades K-3, and to lowering class sizes below 20 students across elementary grades

+ Technology

Includes distributing more devices to students and increasing tech support for staff.

+ Infrastructure

Address all HVAC issues with incoming federal dollars

+ Summer Programs & Accelerated Learning

Addressing learning loss through summer programming for three years, in addition to extended credit recovery for secondary grades and after-school programming in all schools.

- Community Schools

+ Anti-racism/restorative practices

Will establish by June 2024 a Restorative Practices Program - K thru 12" per its "Social Emotional and Physical Well-Being" Commitment

+ Recruit & retain diverse staff

In the upcoming year, KCSD has committed to creating a plan for staffpersons to "proportionately reflect the diversity of our student body" by 2024, and to establish a DEI department

+ Culturally responsive & sustaining education

"Will conduct a thorough curriculum review and adopt culturally relevant curricula and provide teacher support in the implementation of this curricula" by June 2022

+ Broad & Continual Community Engagement

Creation of more "parent academies" for the unique needs of ELL-students, students with disabilities, and economically disadvantaged students.



LEARN WHAT YOU CAN DO ►

STEP 1 REVIEW THE PLAN WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



Meet with parents and community members to review and discuss your district's plan. Together, identify the top three initiatives that your district is investing in. You can list them below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

STEP 2 TAKE ACTION

Share your community's feedback and concerns with your local school district's decision makers. Remember to report back on the meeting with district leaders to community members that are not able to attend.

For each of the programs you identified in Step 1, use the questions below as a guide for what to ask district leaders during the meeting.

- How many students will this program serve?
- When do you expect to roll out this program?
- How will you measure the effectiveness of this program?

In addition, consider the below questions to evaluate your district's plan:

- Are there any strategic investments missing from your district's plan? If yes, inform district leaders of what essential programs are missing.
- Do you want the district to reallocate resources from another program to support this initiative? If yes, please explain.



MEET WITH YOUR SUPERINTENDENT & CFO

Use this [sample letter](#) to request a meeting with your superintendent.



SPEAK UP AT A LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

Check your local school district website to find the date of the next meeting.



ORGANIZE A PTA/PTO MEETING

Use these [step-by-step instructions](#) to organize a PTA or PTO meeting.

STEP 3 BUILD PUBLIC SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT

Organize an [education town hall](#) for your community to learn about the district's funding plan.

Write an [op-ed](#) in your local newspaper about how you and your community want this funding to be spent.

Organize a [press conference](#) to bring attention to the issues in your local community.

CONNECT WITH US

Statewide

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ALBANY'S PLAN FOR HOW TO SPEND FEDERAL AID TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IS OUT.

NOW WHAT?

Albany schools are slated to receive an additional \$55.9 million in state and federal aid. All districts were required to publicly post their spending plans for this new funding on or before July 1.

With nearly 700 school districts in New York State, we need your help to determine whether YOUR district's plan adequately addresses the needs and demands of families, educators and students in your community.

HOW DOES ALBANY'S PLAN MEASURE UP?

You can review [Albany's spending plan](#) on the district's website by [clicking here](#).

What's included, and what's missing

+ Support Staff and Mental Health

Committed to investment in a "social-emotional learning curriculum" and "staffing to support social-emotional learning."

- Smaller Class Sizes

+ Technology

Designated an entire priority, labeled "Educational technology," that includes "classroom upgrades," administrative support upgrades," and [tech]"infrastructure upgrades."

+ Infrastructure

Designated priority labeled "HVAC (ventilation/air filtration)"

+ Summer Programs & Accelerated Learning

Designated funding to before- and after-school tutoring/mentoring, Saturday enrichment programming, and to intramural and extracurricular activities under their "accelerated learning and academic support" priority.

- Community Schools

+ Anti-racism/restorative practices

Under their "social-emotional and mental health supports" priority, Albany leadership has included "Restorative practices" as a sub-priority.

- Recruit & retain diverse staff

- Culturally responsive & sustaining education

- Broad & Continual Community Engagement



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