

**Joint Legislative Hearing of the
Assembly Ways and Means Committee
&
Senate Finance Committee
On
Executive Budget Proposals for Education
SFY 2013-2014
January 29, 2013**

The logo for the New York State Federation of School Administrators (NYSFSA) features the acronym "NYSFSA" in a blue, serif font. A golden-yellow arc curves over the letters "Y" and "S".

NYSFSA

**New York State Federation
of School Administrators**

**Crystal Boling-Barton, President
Buffalo Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**

**Steve Murphy, Vice President
Yonkers Council of School Supervisors and Administrators**

**Ernest A. Logan, Treasurer/Secretary
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**Peter McNally, Executive Director
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Good Morning, Assemblymember Farrell, Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblymember Nolan and Senator Flanagan. My name is Peter McNally, and I am Executive Director of New York State Federation of School Administrators (NYSFSA), representing 14, 000 active and retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and other school supervisors from Buffalo, Yonkers and New York City. With me today are the Presidents of the local unions of principals and assistant principals in Buffalo, Yonkers and New York City. We want to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Governor's proposed education budget for State Fiscal Year 2012-2013.

NYSFSA is pleased to see that the Governor's budget increases education spending by 4.4% and includes targeted funding to help high need districts such as Buffalo and Yonkers. NYSFSA believes that the new grant programs included in the budget (Early College High School Programs, Community Schools, Full Day Pre-K, Extended Learning Times) will begin to better position New York to eliminate achievement gaps as well as increase college and career readiness. It is our hope that funding for these initiatives might expand in future years, so that they are available statewide without a bidding process.

While we are supportive of many pieces in the Governor's budget, NYSFSA is concerned to see that the Executive Budget does not contain funding for School Leader professional development and supports as was recommended by the Governor's "New New York Education Reform Commission."

SCHOOL LEADER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The 2013-2014 Executive Budget contains a number of proposals aimed at improving and enhancing teacher performance, including a new program for rewarding higher performing teachers. Just as at is for teachers, development and support for School Leaders is essential to New York's implementation of reform measures, such as Common Core.

School leaders remain at the forefront of efforts to raise education standards and expectations for students, even while school budgets remain flat or actually decrease. Trying to balance meeting the actual needs of students while working with shrinking budgets, places tremendous pressure on school leaders, and hinders their ability to serve adequately in their role as the instructional leader of a school building.

Indeed, the role of instructional leader has become more crucial, as the focus in New York and across the country has turned toward improving student achievement and fostering college and career readiness. And we often hear of administrators who are pulled away from their instructional duties to attend to tasks that were previously performed by employees who were let go due to budget constraints.

In order to ensure that school leaders successfully manage and meet ongoing challenges, as well as truly succeed in their role as instructional leaders, New York State must provide our Principals and Assistant Principals with access to ongoing professional development. Now more than ever, as we move forward with implementation of the new teacher and Principal evaluation system and Common Core State Standards, there is an urgent need for strong, inspired, and dynamic leadership in our schools. The research-based literature related to effective schools and student achievement has long acknowledged the critical role of Principals in providing school leadership that shapes a highly complex human organization into a cohesive and collaborative community of learners. New York State should provide funding in the State budget for the following:

1) Ongoing professional development opportunities for Principals, Assistant Principals and other Education Administrators, tailored to address current and emerging education trends.

As part of the Education Commission's recommendation number 5 regarding educator preparation, they call for the need for *"ongoing training and tools for teachers and Principals so that they can continuously grow."* While some districts have been more aggressive in providing workshops and information regarding Common Core and Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR), we know that others have had very little training regarding these measures. Both APPR and Common Core are major reforms that require in-depth understanding and working knowledge obtained from workshops and other training opportunities. In order to prepare School Leaders for the implementation of upcoming reforms, we must provide them with access to on-going training opportunities to fine tune the skills needed to meet the challenges ahead.

2) Mentoring for first- and second-year Assistant Principals and Principals.

The Governor's Education Reform Commission has also recommended elevating standards for new School Leaders. While it is important to raise the entry bar for School Leaders, it is even more important to provide them with supports and services once they enter the field. Transitioning into a School Leader role is a challenge, and one that is easier and more capably overcome if supported by a mentor who can provide much needed guidance and insight.

3) Creation of Leadership Centers in Buffalo and Yonkers.

Creation of Leadership Centers in Buffalo and Yonkers, similar to New York City CSA's highly successful *Educational Leadership Centers*, strategically located so that Principals, Assistant Principals and other Education Administrators across the state are afforded easy access to resource materials, experts and networking opportunities with other educators in the area. Such centers will afford School Leaders an opportunity to hone their skills as well as learn from colleagues.

In this testimony, we call your attention to and ask your help in meeting an important need for ongoing professional development opportunities and supports for School Leaders throughout the state – support they will need if New York is to successfully implement upcoming reforms. NYSFSA is always honored to come before you and we are again grateful for the opportunity to present this testimony on behalf of our members – who work everyday in some of the State's neediest schools.

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Good Morning, Assemblyman Farrell, Senator DeFrancisco, Assemblywoman Nolan and Senator Flanagan. My name is Ernest Logan and I am President of the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA). CSA is the labor union representing 6,100 in-service and 9,000 retired Principals, Assistant Principals, Education Administrators and Supervisors working in New York City public schools as well as nine charter schools. CSA is also the collective bargaining unit for 357 Directors and Assistant Directors who work in city-subsidized Day Care Centers. I want to thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the Governor's proposed education budget for State Fiscal Year 2013-2014.

BUDGET ISSUES

CSA is pleased to see that the Governor's budget increases education spending by 4.4% and includes a 3% increase in School Aid funding in the State Fiscal Year 2013-2014. However, we are concerned to learn that the increase is once again linked to the full implementation of the teacher evaluation system by September 1, 2013.

APPR Negotiations

Before I proceed, I must address the recent events in New York City surrounding Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) negotiations. As always, CSA negotiated in good faith. We believed that after a year of negotiations and a very intensive final six-week phase, the CSA and the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) had arrived at an agreement that was all but signed. Then we saw it abruptly swept away at the zero-hour. I am saddened to say here today that the latest attempt to negotiate an APPR plan seems to have been far from the City's actual intent.

Late on the night of January 16th, CSA and the NYCDOE closed in on a one-year final agreement. We were pleased. Make no mistake: CSA members want and need a workable agreement. Our members are accustomed to meaningful accountability, had a strong evaluation system in place for more than a dozen years, and were ready to improve upon it. Only moments after the new agreement seemed to be reached, however, we were informed of a game-change: the one-year evaluation system that had been under discussion for weeks was suddenly unacceptable and an evaluation system that would endure in perpetuity was put forward by the City. We could find no reason for the City to pull this last minute switch. We believed, and they seemed to understand, that the responsible thing was to develop a system that would be reviewed at the end of a year so all of us could identify any mistakes that had been made in haste and revise them. That would include determining whether adequate professional development was allowing our Principals and Assistant Principals to do their jobs and assessing whether

the United Federation of Teacher's own evaluation system was creating an avalanche of paper work that could bury our members. I must point out that an overwhelming number of district APPR plans approved by the NYSED by the required deadline of January 17th, and pursuant to State law approved by the Legislature, call for a one year agreement. This was legislation that had been supported by New York City's mayor.

In spite of this stunning surprise, CSA continued to negotiate with NYCDOE for several hours on the next day, January 17th, in hopes of reaching a deal. We were also frustrated in that effort and, I feel compelled to remind you here today that this was not the first time we have been left wondering about the City's good faith in terms of APPR. We have been subjected to frequent canceled negotiation meetings, including one on December 30, 2011, that I had the opportunity to tell your committees about last year. Failure to resume those negotiations would put SIG money in jeopardy.

Indeed, the New York State Department of Education (NYSED) has already penalized New York City for failure to negotiate a teacher and Principal evaluation system. In 2011, New York City lost out on School Improvement Grant funds, due to the City's failure to negotiate an evaluation system with the unions. And now our schools have lost \$240 million in additional school aid because of the most recent failure. The situation could get much worse for our students: In a letter dated January 18, 2013 to NYCDOE, NYSED Commissioner John King detailed the potential loss of additional Race to The Top funding, for noncompliance, if New York City does not negotiate an APPR plan.

CSA agrees with the Governor that the new evaluation system must be implemented, but we continue to urge the Legislature to reject any proposal to link its implementation to a district's ability to receive additional school aid. For too long, our schools have struggled with reduced funding and have made significant cuts to valuable student programs and services in order to make our budgets balance. A 3% increase will help our schools maintain existing programs and, in some instances, resume programs previously eliminated. Creating yet another barrier to even this modest increase in School Aid punishes the innocent.

Pre-School Special Education

I would like to move on to budget specifics. The Executive Budget contains a proposal that would authorize New York City to select pre-school education providers and establish payment rates within certain parameters. As outlined, New York City would be allowed approximately six months to issue a

request for proposal, set rates and transition children to new providers, if needed. With such an aggressive timeframe, CSA has concerns about New York City's ability to actually assume this responsibility during the 2013-2014 school year. Please remember that through this program children receive much needed services to assist them with learning and/or disabilities. A critical connection, linking families and children with services and supports to help them learn is fostered through the preschool special education program. We caution the Legislature that any plan for transitioning approval and rate setting must include protections that allow the shift to be as seamless as possible – in order to ensure that children have continued access to providers with no delay in services.

Community School Grants

Over the years, many of you have heard me speak about the need to take a holistic approach to education; the need to bring services, such as health care to the school building, so that children have direct access rather than having their family seek out the service provider. We all know that a child's ability to come to school ready to learn is impacted by a number of forces, many of which occur outside of the school. Are they hungry, are they not feeling well, do they have a permanent home or are they moving from shelter to shelter? By making the connections with the school, social services, health care providers and others, we are empowering our educators and the system to address all of the needs of the child so that they are ready to learn when they come enter the classroom.

The Governor's Budget includes funding for community school grants, a much needed mechanism that will turn schools into community hubs with service delivery for academic, health, nutrition, counseling, legal and or other services that will lead to improved educational outcomes. CSA strongly supports this grant program and urges the Legislature to increase spending for it.

I would like to say a few final words about issues of importance to CSA, our members and the students in New York City right now - today. We must ensure that children receive access to high quality education and services to prepare them for the workplace and college and that they are not further penalized for the failures of some adults. Let's remember what Walt Disney once said, that "adults are only kids grown up." Disney meant that in a flattering way, but when we witness certain behaviors during negotiations, there is sometimes a level of immaturity that is hard to praise.

CSA is always honored to come before you and, on behalf of all our members, I thank you again for the honor.