



Senate Standing Committee on Education White Public City School District Testimony

Good morning, Chairwoman Mayer, Chairman Liu and members of the Senate and the Assembly:

I am Joe Ricca, the proud superintendent of the White Plains City School District and I am joined by my colleague Dr. Ann Vaccaro-Teich, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Operations. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about the important and positive impact of the Foundation Aid increase and use of ARP funds for the White Plains City School District.

We remember it like yesterday - during the summer of 2020, the White Plains City School District developed a dynamic and comprehensive reopening plan to prepare for the full re-opening of the schools (full days for all children) in September of 2020, which was centered around addressing the necessary health and safety protocols required in order to provide a hybrid instructional model of in-person and remote instruction. As of April 2021, in compliance with changes in state statute, rules, regulations and guidance, the plan was updated to reflect the health and safety protocols necessary to return all students to in-person instruction as of that date.

The district's reopening plan is updated continually and posted on the district's website, along with the recordings from the district-wide reopening committee meetings, to ensure the community is constantly updated.

It is important to note, that prior to the SFY 2021-22 Budget, the Foundation Aid owed to the WPCSD was more than \$12.5 million. So, we really must thank you and your colleagues for your strong advocacy that led to the securing of full funding of Foundation Aid by 2023-24. This is a major victory after 20 years since the Court of Appeals' decision regarding the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and provides districts with the resources necessary to close the disparity between high and low need districts in order to fight off educational and fiscal insolvency.

Specifically related to foundation aid, the WPCSD will expand and enhance programs and opportunities to our students based on the district's long-range Strategic Plan.

Some programs that are being targeted include the following:



- Vocational hands-on programs: Kitchen and Culinary, Veterinary/ASPCA Program, Floriculture, TV/Production, Dance Studio, Life Skills Apartments, sensory room, Social and emotional supports and learning; and
- Programs to continue the district's work in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

On June 1, 2021, the district held a Stakeholder Committee meeting consisting of parents, teachers, staff, community members, students, Board of Education members, and administrators to discuss the use of the federal and state funds allocated to the district.

Through consensus and input from the Stakeholder Committee, the plans for the use of these funds were developed.

Funds that were made available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP), will be used to support learning loss, to support the academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs of all students who have experienced learning loss, particularly for students that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including our students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, children with disabilities, students experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, and migratory students.

7.2M LEARNING LOSS

These funds will be used to provide evidence-based interventions, which will include summer learning and enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, and extended school year programs.

The remaining net funds of \$7.8 million will be expended based on the consensus of the district's Stakeholder Committee. The plan will use these funds to continue to support the health and safety of students and staff impacted by COVID-19 by providing additional support of health aides grades K-6 and addressing improvements and renovations needed to the district's ventilation, air filtration, and air conditioning systems throughout its nine school buildings.

Additionally, the district will seek to provide premium pay to recognize the extraordinary effort by all staff to keep the district open throughout the pandemic.

Annually, the district sets and reviews progress on its Strategic Plan as well as its long-range plan. The district will assess the impact and benefit of these improvements and communicate the same to the community.