

STUDENTS' NEEDS MUST INFORM DECISIONS: EQUITY FOR YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS' SUCCESS POST-PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

**BUDGET TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE
JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL AND EDUCATION COMMITTEES**

PRESENTED VIRTUALLY ON JANUARY 26, 2022
DR. EDWIN M. QUEZADA, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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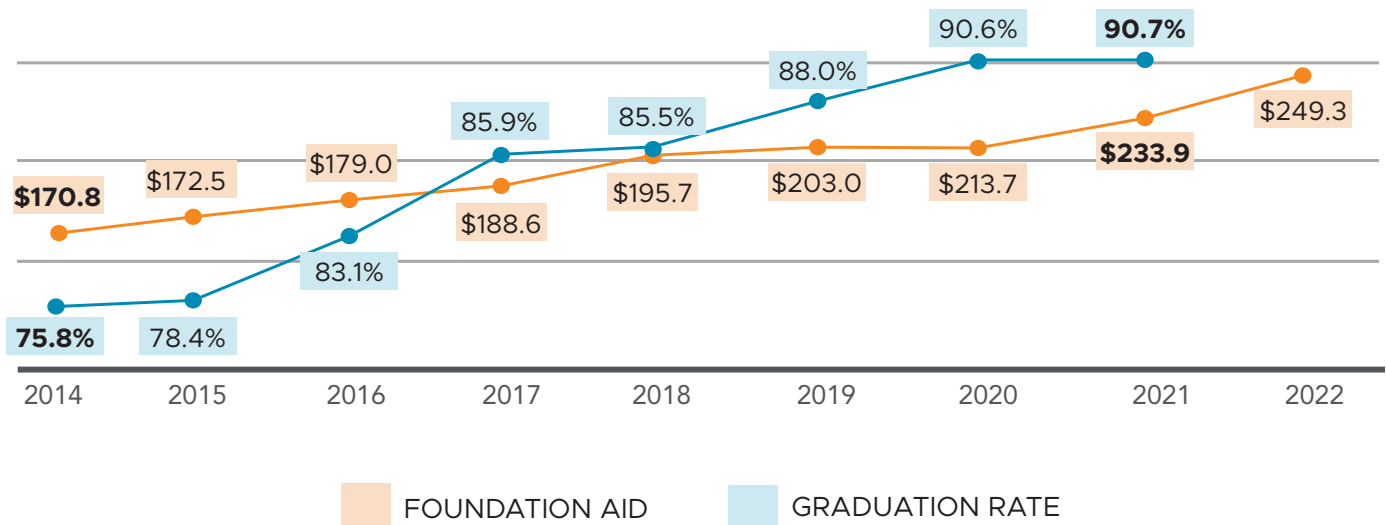
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS POST PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

Distinguished members of the Joint Legislative Fiscal and Education Committees, thank you for the opportunity to address you on behalf of the Yonkers City School District. I am Superintendent of Schools Dr. Edwin M. Quezada and I am overjoyed to see you safe and healthy during these challenging times of COVID-19.

This is the 8th time that I have come before you to advocate for Yonkers' remarkable students and their families. The substance of my messages has not changed over these years, Yonkers deserves equitable and sustainable solutions for students' success today and beyond, which needs the commitment and collaboration of State and local leaders who believe there are no excuses when it comes to elevating the learning and lived experiences of young people in urban communities.

Together, we forged a partnership that has made progress towards achieving equity and sustainable funding for Yonkers through Foundational Aid increases over 8 years.

I submit there is a correlation to our on time graduation during this period.



**Investment matters.
Consistency and leadership matter.**

The City of Yonkers and Yonkers Public Schools are steadfastly committed to sustaining our graduation rate as well as improving all educational outcomes for our students. We need your commitment to sustain and increase our appropriation moving forward.

YONKERS OFFERS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION SOLUTIONS FOR FY 2023 AND IN THE FUTURE.

We all recognize the Pandemic has had a devastating impact on the children of the City of Yonkers. Every thread of their social fabric has and will continue to be affected. Throughout Yonkers, there is an increase in poverty. More students are experiencing homelessness, food insecurity has risen, children are coping with significant health and mental health issues and we know there will be long-lasting effects from the social-emotional struggles caused by the Pandemic. The American Psychological Association (2020) reported that 51 percent of children between the ages of 13-17 said “*the pandemic makes planning for their future feel impossible.*” These struggles are real and merciless for students and families, and manifest in school with major attendance and behavior challenges.

These challenges facing our students can be overcome. **As leaders, we must say NO to a deficiency model, NO to remediation, and we must say NO to low expectations from our children, families and, more importantly, from our educators.**

Instead, we must assume a stance that our students are brilliant and ready to achieve, and we must increase expectations for all stakeholders as well as provide equity and opportunities to enrich and accelerate academic and social emotional learning.

CONSIDER THESE VIABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



CONSIDER ADOPTING STATEWIDE DEFINITIONS FOR EQUITY AND INCLUSION.

Rhodes Perry (he/him) is an award-winning social entrepreneur, best-selling author, and sought-after keynote speaker, who offers in his book, *Belonging at Work*, (2018). Portland, OR: RPC Academy Press, these definitions.

- **EQUITY** is “fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while simultaneously striving to identify and eliminate structural barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.” (P. 132)
- **INCLUSION** is “cultivating an environment where any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.” (P. 133)



EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Increase UPK allocation from **\$13 million** to **\$20 million**
- Increase the number of 3-year-olds eligible for UPK from 136 to 225 students
- Appropriate funding for training for parents of birth-3 children



INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

- Increase the Textbook, Software, and Library materials allocation to **\$5 million**
- Guarantee that access to the internet is free for all students living below the poverty level



OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

- Identify a strategy to increase Yonkers' Building Aid Ratio from **73.5%** to **90%**
- Appropriate a **\$100 million** block grant to build two additional schools

CONSIDER THESE VIABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



HEALTH & SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- Fully fund Health Services for Yonkers Public and Non-Public Schools by increasing funding from **\$1.2 million to \$7.8 million.**
- Allocate targeted funding specifically to open additional health clinics in community schools to provide wraparound services
- Allocate funding to partner with providers to provide social emotional support



MULTI-LINGUAL LEARNERS & STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Increase funding for Multi-lingual Learners and SWD to support students and families academic and social-emotional needs
- Declare a state of crisis and increase funding to prepare teachers in these two areas
- Demand that the Federal Government fully funds IDEA for Yonkers



CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE)

- Appropriate funding for CTE to **include over 1,300 ninth grade students** in the funding calculation
- Appropriate funding to offer paid internships to students in Grade 12 who are graduating with a CTE endorsed diploma
- Appropriate funding to create pathways aligned with new employment needs.



RE-CURRENT REVENUE

- **Permanently** allocate the **\$12 million** in Bullet Aid
- Increase the Yonkers Video Terminal Allocation from **\$19.6 to \$25 million**
- Increase Yonkers Academic Enhancement Aid from **\$17 million to \$22 million**



The academic year 2022-2023 must be a year for **Restoration, Renewal and Hope**. For Yonkers to resolve its long-standing structural problems, the viable solutions offered in this document as my testimony must be accomplished. These solutions offer a dynamic educational corrective plan to robustly revitalize our public schools and thereby our community. These recommended solutions will continue to provide sustainable support post-pandemic and beyond.

Let me reiterate, as leaders we must say NO to a deficiency model, NO to remediation, and we must say NO to low expectations from our children, families and, more importantly, from our educators.

Please join Yonkers Public Schools' fight for the survival of our public education system.

Year after year, Yonkers teachers, administrators and staff rise to the challenge to accomplish remarkable academic success for all of our students to achieve their potential. We take pride in the community that we proudly serve.

Respectfully submitted.

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada
SUPERINTENDENT OF YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

YONKERS STUDENTS TODAY

29,912 Urban Students

25,192

Prekindergarten-Three to Grade Twelve Students

- Prekindergarten 3 & 4 - **1,487**
- Kindergarten to 12 - **23,165**
- Students with Disabilities in Out-of-District Schools - **540**

18,273 Economically Disadvantaged (75%)

4,315 Students with Disabilities (18%)

2,988 English Language Learners (12%)

15,463 Hispanic (61%)

4,084 African American/Black (16%)

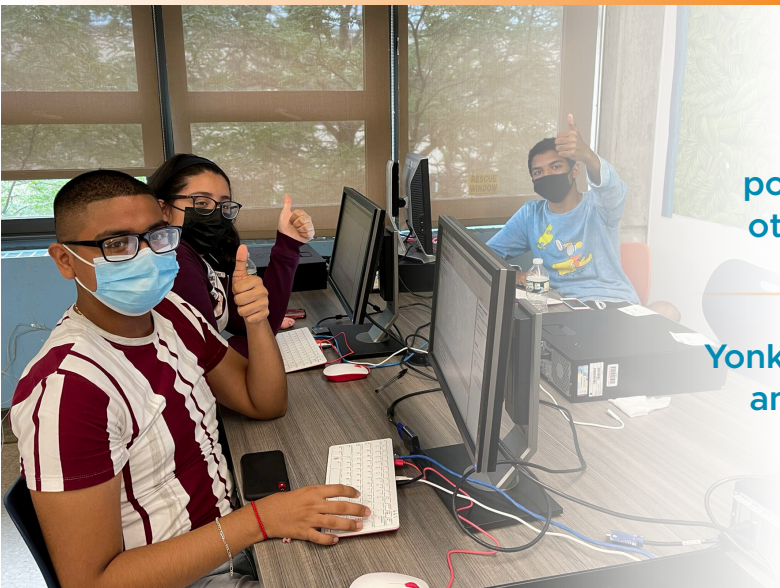
5,645 White, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, Multi-Racial (22%)

4,720

Yonkers Students attend:

- Charter Schools - **795 students**
- City of Yonkers Parochial/Private Schools - **3,925 students**

*These students receive **transportation, textbooks, library resources, nursing services, pupil support services, Title I, II and III funds and special education services.***



Recognize the difference in Yonkers' population and poverty levels compared to other Westchester County school districts.

Yonkers' students reside in Westchester County and deserve to have the same educational experiences and opportunities as their peers throughout the County.



YONKERS
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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