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Focus on Education

From the NYS Assembly ■ Sheldon Silver, Speaker
Steven Sanders, Chair, Education Committee

For the 8th straight year, the Governor's budget slashes education

Local school officials warn of pending cuts in education programs, teacher layoffs and tax hikes

The Governor's 2002-03 state budget proposal gives New York schools \$1 billion less to educate our kids than under the law in effect just two short years ago.

The Governor has a long record of shortchanging our schools.

The Governor tries to take credit for an increase in school aid during his tenure. In reality, the state share of education funding in the Governor's latest budget proposal remains at approximately 40% — only a few tenths greater than when the Governor took office.

Meanwhile, local schools are under increased pressure to meet higher educational requirements, as well as cope with growing enrollment and fixed operational costs. Without adequate funding, schools don't have the resources needed to improve academic standards, reduce classroom overcrowding, and retain qualified teachers.

Every year, the Assembly must scramble to restore the Governor's education cuts.

Last year, the Assembly passed a budget resolution that contained a landmark 2-year plan to ensure schools have the resources they need and the ability to plan for the future. It increased state funding to our schools by \$3.4 billion over two years. But the Governor refused to negotiate with the Legislature.

The Governor's budget threatens higher educational standards.

The Governor's proposal provides no additional resources to help schools meet the demands of new academic standards.

For the second year in a row, the Governor's budget fails to invest in the Assembly's innovative and effective LADDER program, which has helped schools reduce class sizes, improve teacher training, establish universal pre-kindergarten, provide full-day kindergarten programs and modernize computer technology.

The Governor's budget also cuts:

- \$52.5 million for Teacher Support Aid;
- \$20 million for Teacher Centers; and

"The budget does not adequately assist districts in meeting the more than \$1 billion in new costs that maintaining just the current level of services would require."

■ **Timothy Kremer, NYS School Boards Association**

"Keeping overall school aid flat is, simply put, equivalent to a cut and is unacceptable...Without a sustained investment of state aid, many school districts will be placed in the untenable position of having to raise property taxes — and risk school budget defeats — or cut essential programs."

■ **Alan Lubin, NYS United Teachers**

"Our students can't reach for higher standards if the governor shockingly fails to address the needs of our schools."

■ **Gregory Nash, National Education Association of NY**

"You're going to see a lot of poor districts in May with some of the highest tax increases."

■ **Tom Rogers, NYS Council of School Superintendents**

"It's very devastating. We're talking about children's lives. Children in cities need more, and they're continually — continually — getting less."

■ **Marion Canedo, Buffalo School Superintendent**

"People are demanding higher standards from the schools and that's absolutely what they should be doing. However, that costs more money."

■ **Martin Handler, Sullivan County BOCES Superintendent**

- \$3 million for the Teacher Mentor program.

The Assembly Majority knows we can't afford to cheat our kids — and overburden taxpayers.

An investment in education today is an investment in our future.

By cutting funds for our schools' basic operating costs, the Governor's proposal only shifts the burden to local taxpayers.

It's simply unacceptable to ignore the challenges facing our schools and the burdens on taxpayers. We all must work together so that our children's education isn't compromised.

That's what the Assembly Majority has been fighting for all along, and that's what we'll continue fighting for this year.

For a complete listing of the Governor's proposed school aid cuts, click below.

[\(pdf version\)](#)

[\(html version\)](#)

"It's insulting and irrational."

■ **Ronald Ross, Mount Vernon Superintendent**

"We are appreciative of any help we can get, but the government is not providing the money to pay for the demands it puts on us. They want increased performance, but that's going to land on the backs of the taxpayers. This is not good."

■ **Bruce Watkins, Briarcliff Manor Assistant Superintendent**

"How will we cope with rising costs and salaries and benefits and at the same time deal with no rise in aid from the state?"

■ **Anthony Micha, Waverly School District Superintendent**

Additional information is available in the publication, *Statistical and Narrative Summary of the Executive Budget* ([the Yellow Book](#)).

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