

May 2003

# Education

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From the NYS Assembly • Sheldon Silver, Speaker  
Steve Sanders, Chair, Education Committee

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## *Legislature makes the right choice —*

### **Budget accord restores \$1.1 billion for education**

The Assembly and Senate have joined together to pass a state budget that provides New York schools with \$1.1 billion more than the governor's budget cut. The Legislature's budget plan makes the right choices for children and taxpayers across the state by helping schools avoid cutting essential educational programs, laying off teachers and increasing local property taxes.

Left unchallenged, the governor's proposed \$1.4 billion cut to education – the largest in New York's history – would strike a serious blow to New York's elementary and secondary schools. In addition to eliminating early childhood education programs, the governor cut funding that establishes afterschool programs, improves the use of technology in the classroom and ensures proper maintenance of school buildings.

### **Assembly rejects Pataki's 20% property tax hike**

This year's state budget deficit forced a lot of tough decisions – but instead of leading our state forward through this crisis, the governor chose to simply walk away from negotiations with the Legislature.

## **What the experts are saying...**

"Both houses of the state Legislature have taken a very positive step."

- Alan B. Lubin,  
*Executive Vice  
President, New York  
State United Teachers*

"... Senator Bruno and Assembly Speaker Silver restored the majority of the governor's school aid cuts, clearly recognizing that maintaining vital school programs and staving off radical property tax increases were New Yorkers' highest priorities this year."

- Regina Eaton, the  
*Executive Director of  
the Alliance for  
Quality Education*

"The Legislature heard the voice of tens of thousands of parents, children and education supporters that the cuts in educational programs throughout the state could not stand. ... The Legislature clearly understood that the governor's school aid cuts would kill many more jobs than a small income tax increase. It's simple

The Legislature's budget rejects the governor's attempt to force property taxpayers to foot even more of the bill for a quality education. The governor's budget would have increased regressive property taxes an average of 20 percent for working families and seniors on fixed incomes – those who can least afford more taxes. And the budget rejects the governor's plan to freeze basic STAR property tax savings.

Our state cannot afford any more of the governor's wrong choices and we cannot wait for him to decide to lead. Because the governor walked away from budget negotiations, the state Assembly and Senate came together in a nonpartisan spirit to reach a reasonable solution – and to lessen the damage of the governor's wrong choices.

Without a sound investment in our children and their education, New York would face crumbling school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, and fewer opportunities to excel.

### **Saving early education programs**

While the governor wanted to abandon New York's commitment to our youngest students, the Legislature's budget makes real investments in pre-K, full-day kindergarten and smaller classes. The Assembly has always championed the merits of early education and the unique advantage it gives our youngest students.

Research has shown time and again that smaller class sizes and pre-kindergarten benefit children through increased achievement, lower dropout rates, and less disruptive behavior. Early education investments also save money in the long run by reducing the need for costly special education placements and helping prevent students from repeating grades.

If the governor had his way, approximately 240,000 students who benefit from individualized attention would be lost inside larger class-sizes and 60,000 children would be forced out of pre-K.

To protect these valuable programs, the Legislature's budget fully funds early education and protects pre-K from elimination by the governor. At a time when our schools need more support than ever, the Assembly remains committed to ensuring every student has access to a quality education taught in a top-notch school.

### **Legislature's budget protects students and taxpayers**

economics: large education spending cuts would drive New York's economy into a deeper recession."

*- Karen Scharff,  
Executive Director of  
Citizen Action of New  
York and a co-chair of  
the Alliance for  
Quality Education*

"This is a huge move in the right direction. The other wonderful thing about this is it puts back pre-K and class-size reduction."

*- Utica School  
Superintendent Daniel  
Lowengard*

"It simply is not realistic to conclude that school districts can absorb those and other increases, plus an average 10 percent loss of state aid under the governor's proposal, without either raising property taxes or cutting back on the quality of education our children receive."

*- Matthew Crosson,  
President of the Long  
Island Association*

This budget continues the Assembly's strong tradition of standing by our schools. Since the governor took office in 1995, the Assembly successfully fought for an additional \$2.8 billion that the governor tried to cut from education.

The governor's assault on our schools is – and always has been – the wrong choice. The Assembly urges the governor to make the right choice and sign our budget into law.

**For a complete listing of the school aid runs, [click here](#).**

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