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**ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR NEW YORK'S SCHOOLS:**

**COMMUNITIES SPEAK OUT ON WHAT STUDENTS  
REALLY NEED TO SUCCEED**

**June 2003**

**NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON COSTING OUT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An extensive public-engagement process, undertaken by the New York State Council for Costing Out in Spring 2003, gathered input from local communities for the New York Adequacy Study, an independent costing-out study seeking to determine objectively the level of funding needed by each district in New York State to provide an adequate educational opportunity to all students. In 13 forums around the state and a culminating statewide meeting in Albany, a broad cross section of community members discussed how to define an adequate educational opportunity and what specific programs and services are necessary in order to prepare all New York State students to meet the Regents Learning Standards and the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The findings from this public engagement process—the first in the country to consider in detail the funding implications of the new federal law—are as follows:

- Under current state and federal education requirements, an adequate educational opportunity should be defined as a *full* opportunity for *all* students to meet Regents Learning Standards.
- At the present time, students not meeting standards or at risk of not meeting standards are not receiving all of the academic intervention services to which they are entitled by law; similarly special education students are not being supplied with the necessary supplementary aids and services to which they are entitled to succeed in inclusion settings.
- An educational program that ensures all students a full opportunity to meet Regents Learning Standards and all applicable federal requirements must provide qualified teachers, adequate school facilities, and sufficient and up-to-date materials and equipment. In addition, in order to provide all students a full

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opportunity to meet state and federal requirements the following programs and practices *must* be provided by all school districts:

- Access to early childhood education, including, but not limited to, Head Start, full-day pre-kindergarten, and full-day kindergarten, for all young children.
- Intensive early-intervention literacy programs to ensure that all students are reading and writing by the third grade.
- Sufficient and appropriate Academic Intervention Services (AIS), including after-school and summer school programs, for all students at each grade level who qualify for them.
- Small class sizes for all students, especially those not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards.
- Sufficient and appropriate pupil personnel services to ensure that all middle and high school students have adequate access to counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.
- Access to high-quality, ongoing, collaborative, professional development for all teachers and administrators that is school based and relevant to students' instructional needs.
- Sufficient programs and personnel to foster quality parent involvement both in school and at home.
- Sufficient supplementary aids and services to permit special education students to succeed in inclusion settings, and training in special education for general education teachers.

The public engagement forums also resulted in detailed findings about the specific needs of students of various types of districts in New York State: rural, suburban, urban, and New York City.

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## INTRODUCTION

The New York State Council on Costing Out (CCO) formed early in 2003 to inaugurate a yearlong, cutting-edge costing-out study that will determine the actual amount of funding needed in each school district to provide an adequate educational opportunity to all students throughout New York State. *Costing Out: A New York Adequacy Study* is being led by an independent panel of national experts who have successfully undertaken large-scale costing-out studies in Wyoming, Maryland, Illinois, and a number of other states. This study seeks to determine objectively the level of funding each district needs for its operations by first utilizing professional judgment panels to identify the specific resources and conditions necessary for students to meet the Regents Learning Standards and then systematically calculating the amounts needed to fund each of those prerequisites.<sup>4</sup> The study's findings will be presented to the governor and the state legislature early in 2004.

An important part of the costing-out process involves gathering input from local communities around the state. This public engagement component of the study creates a means for capturing important local knowledge and expertise about New York's diverse schools as well as a forum for openly exploring underlying policy issues. This spring, the CCO brought together hundreds of citizens from dozens of communities around New York to address two questions fundamental to the study:

- What constitutes an adequate educational opportunity?
- What do public schools in New York need in order to ensure all their students the opportunity for an adequate education?

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<sup>4</sup> Though the adequacy of facilities can have a significant impact on schools' ability to provide all students with a reasonable opportunity to meet Regents Learning Standards, facilities costs are not within the scope of the present study. They may be handled in a future study.

Their answers are instructive and, at the same time, disturbing. On the first question, participants wrestled with the educational uncertainties, contradictions, and politics entailed in defining educational adequacy in the context of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Regents Learning Standards. They recognized that the federal law and the new state standards, if taken seriously, require a paradigm shift in the way school administrators and policymakers think and act on budget issues. For the first time, the federal law and state policy both say that the educational needs of *all* children—and especially those who historically have failed or have been “at risk” of failing—*must* be met successfully. This has enormous monetary implications. School people must approach budget making by asking themselves what types of programs they need to meet these much higher expectations and what these programs will actually cost.

Looking at the second issue from that perspective, participants agreed on many of the programs and practices required to ensure that high-needs as well as average-needs students have the opportunity to meet Regents Learning Standards and actually achieve proficiency in these standards. While educators generally believe that these programs are important, in the context of Regents Learning Standards and NCLB, public engagement participants determined that it is *essential* that schools be able to ensure that all students, especially those not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards, be provided with, at the least, early childhood programs; intensive early-intervention literacy programs; academic intervention services, including after-school, summer-school, and other programs that provide more time on task; small classes; pupil personnel services, including guidance and social and psychological support; relevant, ongoing professional development for teachers and administrators; intensive parent involvement programs; and special education supplementary aids and services and teacher training.

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In addition, the participants detailed specific needs of children of each region in New York State, whether rural, suburban, urban, or New York City. Participants indicated that, in many communities around the state, schools are not able to meet the education requirements of their students, particularly the most needy and most vulnerable children. In these communities, in spite of state and federal legal mandates, many students go without the programs and services they need and, as a result, never receive a full opportunity to meet the Regents Learning Standards and the requirements of the NCLB. In fact taken as a whole, the input gathered from public engagement shines a strong light down into the deep gulf between the rhetoric of “all children can learn” and the reality of what it takes to ensure all children a full opportunity to learn.

The findings and recommendations in this report represent a synthesis of the input gathered in the forums, “Adequate Funding for New York’s Schools: A Community Conversation on What Students Really Need to Succeed” that ran from mid-March to early May 2003. The report includes additional ideas and feedback received from representatives from each of the forums and CCO members at the culminating meeting in Albany on May 16, 2003.

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## DEFINING ADEQUACY

Costing-out studies aim to calculate the cost for districts of attaining a certain level of student achievement. Previous studies have assessed the cost of student achievement levels ranging from 70-85% of students meeting proficiency standards. Most of these studies were conducted before the advent of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The new federal law, with its requirement that *all* children meet state standards by 2014, presents critical questions for costing out. What does it mean to say that all schools must get all students to meet standards? How do schools accomplish this formidable task, and what are the funding requirements for achieving such an unprecedented level of success?

The politicians who enacted the NCLB have not seriously grappled with these questions, and concerned educators have just begun to wrestle with their implications. Because the core question of what a 100% success rate means is critical to a costing-out study, we asked the participants in our public engagement process to face this difficult issue directly. The problem of how to define adequacy in the context of NCLB was explored in general terms at the regional forums. At the May 16 statewide convening, this core question was the subject of an explicit and extensive deliberative discussion.

Specifically, participants at the May 16 statewide conference were asked to consider the NCLB requirement that *all* students meet the state standards by 2014, the pre-NCLB goal that the New York Board of Regents had set for all New York schools of bringing 90% of students up to standards in ten years by 2010, and the 70-85% success rates that were considered realistic achievement goals in prior (pre-NCLB) costing-out studies. Then, in moderated, small-group discussion sessions and a final plenary session, they were asked what figure the New York costing-out study should adopt.



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As the discussion proceeded, it quickly became clear that the distinction between providing all students the *opportunity* to achieve the Regents' standards and all children *actually attaining success* in meeting the standards was critical. Nearly all participants questioned whether the NCLB goal of having all students actually attain success in meeting Regents Learning Standards by 2014, and every year thereafter, was achievable. They pointed out that this level of success was unprecedented for the vast majority of schools and that the needs and costs of actually bringing all students, and, especially, the last 10% of students, to standards were unknown.

The majority of participants nevertheless voiced the opinion that, if possible, the 100% attainment figure should be costed out. They said that, whether or not this goal could actually be met, full attainment was the currently the law, the framework within which schools were judged, and, therefore, the reality with which schools and the state must contend.

A significant number of participants disagreed. They thought that the Regents goal of 90% achievement in ten years, though ambitious, was a more realistic and more useful figure. Some of them suggested using this figure for adequacy and possibly also using the Regents' timeframe with a reassessment, in 2010, of what would be required to bring the final 10% to standards over the remaining four years of the NCLB time limit. It was agreed that if 90% were to be used, it should refer to 90% of the students in each school and to each of the NCLB subgroups of students. No one suggested using a figure lower than 90%.

Although there was disagreement among public engagement participants about the feasibility and desirability of costing out a 100% attainment standard, there was virtual consensus that 100% of students must be given a full opportunity to meet standards. Upon reflection, we concluded that this consensus on pursuing a 100% opportunity goal obviated any need to delve further, for purposes of the present New

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York Adequacy Study, into the difficult issue of whether and how a 100% attainment standard can be costed out.

We do not actually know how many students would successfully meet the Regents Learning Standards in the NCLB timeframe, if all students were actually to be provided with a full opportunity to meet standards. Perhaps, over the long term, full opportunity would result in 100% success; perhaps it would only result in some lower attainment level. In either case, for purposes of the present costing-out study, which covers a 3-5 year period, the goal should be to provide full opportunity for all students, and whether that will ultimately result by 2014 in achieving an actual success rate of 90%, 100%, or some other figure makes no immediate practical difference.

Following this insight, the approach that the CCO recommends to the research team and the professional judgment panels is that, over the next 3-5 years, all students be provided with a *full opportunity* to meet Regents Learning Standards, consistent with the law. If such efforts are made over the next 3-5 years, we may then have sufficient data and experience to be able to reconsider the programmatic and fiscal issues raised by the 100% attainment criterion, and reassess whether continued invocation of that goal—or recommendations to substitute 90% or some other figure as a reasonable maximum attainment goal—should be considered.

For present purposes, the key point is that too many students are not receiving an adequate educational opportunity whether judged ultimately by a 100% or a 90% attainment standard and that schools do not presently have all the resources they need to provide all students, including those not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards, with the educational personnel, programs, practices, and services that they require for a full opportunity to meet standards.

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Professional judgment panels should be strongly encouraged to create educational programs over the next 3-5 years that include the necessary personnel, programs, and services to provide a *full opportunity* for students to meet standards. After providing all students a *full opportunity* according to the recommendations of this report for the specified period of time, progress throughout the state should be evaluated, and the funding needs reassessed. At that time, with the additional data and experience on the progress of students receiving all necessary services, the question can again be faced of whether and how to assess the costs of bringing all or the vast majority of students to standards.

Initial efforts should focus especially on early childhood and K-3 programs. If it is possible to reach the goal of 100% achievement by 2014, then the students currently in first grade will be the first class subject to the full compliance requirements. Failure to provide for full educational opportunities *now* to present first graders and their peers of preschool and kindergarten age, will make it exponentially more expensive to try to overcome learning deficits that these children may carry forward into later years. In short, the extent to which a 100% – or even a 90% – attainment goal is feasible can best be tested by attempting to promote 100% success for all children now entering the school system.

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## THE CONCRETE NEEDS OF NEW YORK'S DIVERSE DISTRICTS

What specific programs and services are necessary in order to provide a full opportunity for all New York State students to meet the Regents Learning Standards? To answer this question, we held 13 forums around the state to get input from all stakeholders in the school community. Public engagement forums took place in Greece/Rochester, Buffalo, Brooklyn, Lake Placid, Illicottville, Horseheads, Valhalla, Queens, Farmingdale, Cicero, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Albany. The sites were well distributed around the state and accessible to people from rural, suburban, small city, and large urban school districts. Over 400 parents, teachers, administrators, school board members, business people, and other community members attended. Many other individuals, and members of the CCO, mailed, emailed, or phoned in comments on drafts under discussion.

The forums began with an opening plenary that introduced the costing-out study and the evening's tasks. Participants then took part in small-group discussions, aided by a trained moderator and a discussion guide. All groups considered the same set of questions that centered on two topics: (1) the specific challenges for local schools in meeting the federal requirement that all students meet Regents Learning Standards in 12 years and make adequate yearly progress toward that goal; and (2) the programs and practices that work for students not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards, including special education students and English language learners.

At each forum, participants were divided into the four groups that will be the focus of the differentiated professional judgment panels: rural suburban, Big Four/small city, and New York City. The cumulative findings by each regional group that emerged from the 13 community forums statewide are presented in the Regional Findings section of this report.

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On May 16, representatives from each of the 13 community meetings and the members of the CCO were invited to Albany for a statewide meeting. Over 50 people convened. They included representatives of major statewide organizations like New York State United Teachers, National Education Association of New York, New York State Council of School Superintendents, New York State School Boards Association, PENCIL, the Alliance for Quality Education, New York State Parent Teachers Association, and the Midstate School Finance Consortium, as well as parents, school board members, superintendents, teachers, and other participants from the regional forums. The morning session of the meeting consisted of small-group discussions and a plenary devoted to defining adequacy. The afternoon small-group and plenary discussions focused on reviewing the statewide and regional findings from the community meetings as summarized in a draft of the present report.

## STATEWIDE FINDINGS

Although particular needs and program recommendations differentiate the separate regions, there was strong consensus among the public engagement participants from around the state that if we take seriously the need to provide a full opportunity for *all* students to meet the Regents Learning Standards, certain critical programs and opportunities that now are provided to differing degrees to differing numbers of students in various parts of the state must promptly be fully provided to all students in all parts of the state.

All students must have access to certain fundamentals: qualified teachers; a safe school building with adequate facilities, and sufficient, up-to-date materials and equipment. In addition, public engagement participants agreed that the following programs and practices are necessary:

- *Early Childhood Programs.* Participants agreed nearly unanimously that early childhood education is essential. All students should be provided with programs that include, but are not limited to, Head Start, full-day pre-kindergarten, and full-day kindergarten. These programs currently are provided to many, but far from all, students in both school and community settings. Early childhood programs should include parent education components to ensure that parents have the opportunity to learn the skills they need to support their children’s education both at home and in school.
- *Intensive Early Literacy Instruction Programs.* Groups around the state strongly agreed that programs that provide students with individual or small-group literacy instruction by specially trained teachers or tutors are essential to ensure that all children are reading and writing by the third grade. Early grade literacy is an important foundation for meeting standards in later grades.
- *Academic Intervention Services, Including After-School, Summer School, and Other Programs to Provide Extra Time on Task.* Statewide, groups also clearly said that programs and practices designed to provide extra time on task for low-performing students—including after-school and summer-school programs—must be available to all students who need them, not just to those that districts can afford to support. There was a candid acknowledgement in nearly every community forum that many students are not getting access to all the academic intervention services to which they are entitled by law. School districts simply cannot afford to provide them at adequate levels. As a result, districts are often forced to choose which students to serve. Some districts provide a small amount of extra help to all needy students; others give services to those who need it most, while students who are not failing quite as badly receive nothing; still other districts provide services to students who are closest to passing statewide tests. The wide range of activities offered in after-school enrichment programs also increase attendance, improve attitudes toward

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school, foster parent involvement, and otherwise improve students' ability to succeed in school.

- *Small Classes.* Small class sizes are critical, especially for younger students and all students with special needs. Most groups recommended class sizes between 10 and 20 for the elementary grades, depending on the level of student need in the classroom. Middle-school grades should be between 20 and 25 students. And high school classes should have no more than 25 students and should be smaller if there are a number of high-needs students in the class.
- *Guidance and Social and Psychological Support.* There was widespread consensus that, for academic success, it is essential for students to have adequate access to pupil personnel services, including guidance counselors, social workers, and other sources of social and psychological support, particularly in middle and high school. Without the reliable support of these professionals, many students wrestle with serious problems that leave them unable to attend to their academic work.
- *Professional Development.* Assuming as a given that, consistent with New York State policy and NCLB requirements, only "highly qualified," state certified teachers will be entering the profession, participants strongly agreed on the need for extensive, ongoing professional development to ensure that teachers and administrators have a full understanding of the new standards—and of how to teach them to the diverse range of youngsters in the state—and especially those at risk of failure. All school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) are currently required to have a Professional Development Plan to provide all teachers substantial professional development activities aligned with learning standards and directly related to teacher capacities and student learning needs identified in school reports cards and other sources. Participants stressed that this training should go beyond the traditional workshop approach and should emphasize mentoring and

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collaborative peer interchanges, geared to each school's particular learning environment.

- *Parent Involvement Activities.* Participants also recommended that schools have the resources to make maximal efforts to involve all parents in their children's education. No one doubts the importance of parental support to a child's potential for learning or the difficulty of motivating and enabling parents who themselves have meager educational backgrounds or are limited in their own English language abilities to assume these responsibilities. But, if the schools do not reach out to these parents, they will not reach their children. Therefore, funding must be available for a range of parent outreach programs including school-based parent coordinators, parent literacy programs, staff training on how to engage parents (including Joyce Epstein's six standards), and attendance at sports, dance, and other extracurricular activities in which their children participate, as well as more effective school-home communication.
- *Special Education Support Services and Teacher Training.* The great majority of forum groups indicated that despite legal requirements, many special education students are not getting all the supports and services they need to succeed in inclusion setting, especially in urban and rural areas. In addition to teacher qualification and staffing issues, participants expressed great concern about the lack of training in special education for general education teachers and about the lack time for consultation between general education teachers and related service providers. Many classroom teachers, we learned, have not been informed about which of their students are receiving special education services, much less been given time to learn what those services are and discuss how they could be supported in the classroom.

In addition to this list of necessary practices and services, many participants discussed the cost-savings aspect of providing all students with the programs and



practices they need. They acknowledged that doing this right will be expensive—but they argued that it is perhaps not as expensive as it seems. Students currently require additional programs and services to compensate for previous and current deficiencies in their educational programs. If maximal efforts are made to deal with initial learning deficits early on, compensatory and academic intervention services will not be needed on such an intensive basis in the later years. Moreover, if students receive adequate services in general education, they will require fewer special education expenses. And if, throughout students' academic careers, time is allocated for coordinating the services they receive—for example, academic intervention services, guidance, and regular education—as well as for consultation between special education and general education teachers, students may have a significantly diminished need for additional services.

Professional judgment panels must take seriously the challenging task of creating an educational program that meets the needs of all students in the school, including fully meeting the educational needs of the students in each school most likely to fail. This program must therefore emphasize providing sufficient recommended programs, practices, and personnel to ensure all students, especially those not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards, a full opportunity to meet Regents Learning Standards.

In sum, the strong consensus of the statewide public engagement process is that an adequate program to meet NCLB and Regents requirements *must*, at the least, include:

- Access to early childhood education, including but not limited to Head Start, full-day pre-kindergarten, and full-day kindergarten, for all young children.
- Intensive early-intervention literacy programs to ensure that all students are reading and writing by the third grade.

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- Sufficient and appropriate Academic Intervention Services (AIS), including after-school and summer school programs, for all students at each grade level who qualify for them.
  - Small class sizes for all students, especially those not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards.
  - Sufficient and appropriate pupil personnel services to ensure that all middle and high school students have adequate access to counselors, social workers, and school psychologists.
  - Access to high-quality, ongoing, collaborative, professional development for all teachers and administrators that is school based and relevant to students' instructional needs.
  - Sufficient programs and personnel to foster quality parent involvement both in school and at home.
  - Sufficient supplementary aids and services to permit special education students to succeed in inclusion settings, and training in special education for general education teachers.

## REGIONAL FINDINGS

### 1. FINDINGS FROM RURAL DISTRICTS

#### Challenges

Participants from rural districts agreed on a number of specific challenges faced by their community schools. The main challenges include:

- Overcoming the effects on students of poverty
  - Lack of student support from sources outside of school
  - Low level of parental education and support for schooling
  - Low expectations of students from parents and teachers
  - Competing responsibilities for students and their families – work, babysitting
- Meeting needs of significant population of high needs students
  - Insufficient early intervention and early childhood education
  - Insufficient social services
  - Insufficient academic intervention services
  - Large numbers of special education students
  - Unmet student health needs
  - Large occurrence of transient students
- Lack of community support for education and education funding
- Overcoming “sparsity” issues
  - Challenge of meeting the needs of small numbers of diverse students with limited staff, facilities, etc.
    - Meeting needs of special education students is resource intensive
    - Insufficient funding to meet special education mandates and other students’ needs
    - Vast transportation challenges
      - Long travel times
      - Expensive
      - Necessary for all extended-day programming
    - Inability to meet needs of ELLs
      - Few ELL teachers and services available
      - Students must be bussed long distances
  - Inability to offer full range of courses
  - Inability to offer pre-kindergarten
  - Challenge of staffing to meet needs of all students
    - Hard to retain teachers because “no one wants to live in rural areas any more”
    - Lack of accessible masters’ programs

- Too expensive to hire the teachers qualified to meet specific needs of small numbers of student with special needs
  - Small pool of teacher candidates
- No economies of scale
- Challenges of geographically large districts
- Dependence on the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) for needed services
  - Inadequate sustained and stable funding for BOCES to provide them.

## **Programs and Practices that Work to Ensure that All Students Can Meet Standards**

### **Class Size**

Rural districts agreed that a reasonable class size was essential. Classes above 25 were unacceptable for any grade level. Groups called for smaller class sizes for early grades, certain subject areas, inclusion classes, and other classes with high-needs students.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

There was consensus among participants from rural districts that parental involvement is essential, as well as consensus as to the huge challenge in these districts of providing students and schools with the parent and community support necessary for success. To get that type of involvement, schools need resources and staffing for

- outreach to families including individualized attention and home visits,
- parent information and education designed for working parents
- social workers in sufficient numbers,
- relevant professional development for teachers and administrators
- teacher-parent communication time and tools.

In addition, active parents must be given meaningful decision-making roles. Finally, students who do not have family support must not be penalized but must get additional support from schools.

### **Early Childhood Education**

Participants from rural districts voiced extremely strong support for early childhood education, agreeing that it was essential to children's later success with standards. Groups agreed that all students needed access to full-day kindergarten and at least half-day pre-K, though many participants pointed out the need to solve the transportation and child-care difficulties raised by half-day pre-K. A number of participants recommended earlier intervention for high-needs children. Head Start programs were

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endorsed. Many participants also recommended a parent education component for early childhood programs.

### **Professional Development**

Participants in rural districts supported a number of different approaches to professional development. There was strong support for providing newer teachers with the opportunity to learn from more experienced teachers and administrators who were real instructional leaders. They also particularly supported professional development that was long term, focused specifically for the needs of the students in a particular school or classroom, and minimized the disruption to classroom learning. Resources required for effective professional development included the staffing and compensation for time for planning, implementation, collaboration, and follow up; funding for substitute teachers; BOCES expertise; and staff developers and master teachers.

### **Programs and Practices That Work for Students Not Meeting Standards**

Participants from rural districts acknowledged that many of their schools were unable to provide sufficient services to ensure each student the opportunity to meet standards. Additional funding is needed for the following programs and practices that participants agreed were successful:

- Daily small-group academic intervention services
- Summer school, including early intervention (K-2) summer school programs
- Providing psychologists and guidance counselors, esp. for 7-12
- Reading Recovery, STAR, HOSTS (a community volunteer program) and other individual and small group literacy support
- Small alternative high schools, with good adult to child ratios
- Providing healthy food at reasonable intervals for students.
- Vocational programs and school to work programs
- BOCES
- More individual attention and tutoring during and after school.
- Well trained, experienced teachers
- Writing instruction and other exam preparation
- Literacy support – literacy volunteers, peer and family literacy programs.
- Parenting centers for pre-kindergarten

### **Programs and Practices That Work for Special Education Students**

Participants from rural districts report that special education is a huge challenge. State mandates often require disproportionate expenditures on special education that pose grave hardships for small, poor districts. Districts also incur significant expenses fighting special education lawsuits. Because of the small number of students in these

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districts, special needs students must often be bussed long distances to get the services they need. BOCES is indispensable in providing such services.

Groups from rural districts recommended the following programs and practices that work in special education:

- Careful, appropriate placement of students
- Collaborative team teaching
- Professional development in inclusion strategies for new and experienced general education teachers
- Coordination time for classroom teachers and related service providers or resource room teachers
- Providing OT, PT, speech therapists, counselors, social workers, aides
- Sensitivity training for general education students
- One-on-one mentoring with emotionally disturbed kids

### **Programs and Practices That Work for English Language Learners**

In rural districts, participants said, there are few ELLs, but there is no capacity at all to meet their needs, especially if children arrive in high school. One participant said that their ESL program consisted of "speaking loudly and slowly." ELL students are likely to be transient, part of a migrant farming community. In addition, finding qualified teachers is very difficult. When available, resources for ELL students come from the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES); for example, BOCES is able to provide some translation services.

## 2. FINDINGS FROM SUBURBAN DISTRICTS

### Challenges

Participants from suburban districts agreed on a number of specific challenges faced by their community schools. The main challenges include:

- Meeting the needs of dichotomous populations: “haves and have-nots” in the same school or classroom
  - (in some schools) To meet mandates, resources go to students not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards. With limited resources, resources are taken away from students who are meeting standards.
  - (in other schools) Because of the lack of clout of families of high needs students, “middle class students’ needs drive the school system” and students with special needs don’t get all the extra help they require
  - Unfed, ill-equipped children
  - Disaggregation reveals pockets of low achieving children
- Segregated communities
- Schools with disproportionate numbers of high-needs students
- Too many new teachers in some schools and some communities
- Insufficient resources in some schools and some communities to provide extra services to all students who need them
- Schools that are inadequately equipped; some lack computers, books, materials.
- Increasing student mobility
- Increasing number of special education students
- Inadequate funding for the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide needed services
- Strain of state mandates
  - Negative feelings about and consequences of testing requirements
  - Too much paperwork for state mandates
  - Unfunded mandates
- Demanding middle-class parents who want “the best” for their kids
- Increasing size of student population
- Lack of community commitment to fund extra services to ensure that all students meet standards
- Inadequate teacher and administrative expertise
  - Inadequate expertise with different learning styles and teaching strategies
  - Insufficient professional development for teachers and administrators.
- Insufficient numbers of social workers to meet student and family needs
- Difficulty meeting standards in middle schools
- Racism

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## **Programs and Practices that Work to Ensure that All Students Can Meet Standards**

### **Class Size**

There was agreement in suburban districts that small class sizes were essential for students at risk of or not meeting standards, as well as for lower grades, inclusion classes, and ELLs. Lower class sizes also help with teacher recruitment. But some participants felt that teacher quality was more important than class size. A range of numbers was recommended, but most participants agreed that K-6 classes should be under 20; and there should be no more than 25 in higher grades.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

There was significant agreement among suburban participants that real not just token parent involvement is essential to ensure that all students can meet standards. Groups stressed that parent involvement was critical in school and, even more importantly, at home. It was suggested that different models for ensuring parent involvement would work for different schools. However, groups felt that reaching parents early, in preschool or before, was key; they also felt strongly about insuring collaboration between the school, social workers, and other social services.

Real parent involvement, they stressed, requires resources for parent outreach and education. Some of the resources recommended included school-based parent coordinators and family resource centers, professional development for staff (particularly insuring administrative mastery of Joyce Epstein's six keys to parent involvement), and the availability of telephone lines in schools for efficient teacher-parent communication. Teacher load was also said to be a critical factor for parent involvement: if teachers have time to reach out, they can get parents involved in helping their children.

### **Early Childhood Education**

Participants in suburban districts also agreed that early childhood education was essential, and the more the better, especially for poorer children who would not otherwise come to school ready to learn. Nearly all groups recommended full-day pre-K and full-day kindergarten. Head Start programs were endorsed. A number of groups also suggested a parent component to early childhood education, teaching the skills parents need to support their children's education at school and at home.



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## **Professional Development**

Participants in suburban districts expressed the belief in continuous professional development for teachers and administrators that imparted the skills and strategies to deal successfully with the educational needs of the full range of students (including ELL, special ed., diverse populations, poverty, students at risk)—and the specific skills and strategies needed to work with the students in their own classrooms. They specifically endorsed mentoring and collaboration with colleagues, both intra- and inter-district, as essential to provide learning experiences that help teachers use their own data to improve instruction and meet the specific needs of students. Time and expertise are required to provide these professional development experiences, so schools need resources for the requisite staffing. As one participant said, professional development is the “most underfunded aspect of education.”

## **Programs and Practices That Work for Students Not Meeting Standards**

Participants from suburban districts acknowledged that their schools needed to provide more services to their students to ensure each student the opportunity to meet standards. Additional funding is needed for the following programs and practices deemed successful:

- Reading Recovery and other small-group early-grade literacy instruction
- Small-group, in-school “skills classes” for high school students
- Family literacy programs
- Summer programs
- Homework clubs
- Providing elementary and middle-school guidance counselors and social workers
- Computer literacy and access
- Multicultural education
- Continuing education and extended use of school buildings for community
- Push in and pull out services
- Stretch classes/block scheduling
- Speech teacher
- BOCES

## **Programs and Practices That Work for Special Education Students**

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Participants from suburban districts also expressed frustration that providing for the needs of special education students “ate up” the budget for regular education. In addition, school districts incur legal costs of special education lawsuits.

Successful special education programs and practices cited by participants included:

- Extra training for teachers for behavior management
- School health and nutrition
- Counseling for kids with no home support
- Collaborative team teaching
- Consistent support services for students
- Training and support for general education teachers
- OT, PT, speech services
- Smaller class sizes
- Art and music programs

### **Programs and Practices That Work for English Language Learners**

As participants indicated, ELL students present a challenge to suburban districts because they arrive at very different starting points, and, as a result, their needs vary widely. Students with little or no literacy in any language pose a special challenge.

### 3. FINDINGS FROM SMALL CITY AND OTHER URBAN DISTRICTS

#### Challenges

Participants from small city and other urban districts agreed on a number of specific challenges faced by their community schools. The main challenges include:

- Meeting the needs of large numbers of students with special needs
  - Meeting the needs of transient students
  - Meeting the needs of large numbers of ELL students
  - Meeting the needs of large numbers of students from poverty
  - Meeting the needs of large numbers of students not meeting or at risk of not meeting standards
  - Meeting the needs of large numbers of special education students
  - Lack of stable funding for programs to meet students' special needs
- Overcrowding
- Schools lacking adequate materials, equipment, science labs.
- Inadequate social and health services of students and the consequences of this
- Student conduct issues
  - Discipline problems
    - Inadequate teacher expertise for dealing with discipline issues.
  - Gangs and violence
  - Inadequate school security staff
- Student mobility
- Too little parent involvement
  - Low-level of parental education
  - Lack of parent support for students' education
  - Too little home-school communication
  - Parents intimidated by school system
  - Lack of parent awareness about early intervention services
- Insufficient push-in services – over-reliance on pull-out because it is cheaper
- Too few early intervention services
- Insufficient literacy support services, esp. for later grades
- Insufficient pre-K and Head Start
- Pre-K and Head Start teachers not sufficiently qualified
- Need for community education programs
- Need for community space and building formula that doesn't reimburse for it
- Lack of sufficiently qualified teachers
- Need for scheduling to allow staff learning time and collaborative planning
- Need for more opportunities for "more time on task"
  - Longer school days, longer school year, extra help
- Racial segregation, both inter and intra school.

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## **Programs and Practices that Work to Ensure that All Students Can Meet Standards**

### **Class Size**

Some groups said that small classes were essential; other groups expressed support for reasonable class sizes but stressed that appropriate class size depended on student need, subject area, and other services available. Many groups recommend 18 for K-2; 20-22 for later grades; and 25-30 for high school.

### **Parent and Community Involvement**

Groups from small city and other urban districts agreed that parent and community involvement are essential to ensure that all students get a shot at meeting standards. The support and enrichment that middle-class kids get makes all the difference. To provide this for all children takes resources. Groups focused on the need for

- staff in each school building devoted to advocating for parents and children, including linking families with social service resources
- parent training and education accessible to working parents, including providing language and literacy instruction and training in the skills parents need to help children at home (Head Start was held up as an example of a program that's successful in teaching parents skills needed for involvement in their children's education and doing it early in the child's academic career)
- professional development for administrators and teachers on how to engage parents, including Joyce Epstein's six standards.
- better tools for communication with parents, going beyond newsletters—using TV, telephones, email, or “buddy systems” for sharing information with diverse families, as well as having teachers and other school personnel go out into the community and into students' homes.
- extracurricular activities—sports, arts, music—that have been traditionally successful ways to involve parents

### **Early Childhood Education**

Participants from these districts concurred that early childhood education was essential—“priceless.” They endorsed Head Start, full-day pre-K and full-day kindergarten.

### **Professional Development**

Participants said that professional development should be long-term, ongoing and classroom based. It should include opportunities for collaboration with colleagues, mentoring from master teachers from within their own schools who serve as mentors

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full time, and training for dealing with diverse populations of students, including at-risk students, ELLs, and special education students. Schools need the resources to pay for the needed expertise as well as to pay for teachers' learning and collaboration time.

### **Programs and Practices That Work for Students Not Meeting Standards**

Participants from small city and other urban districts agreed that their schools were unable to provide sufficient services to ensure each student the opportunity to meet standards. Additional funding is needed for the following programs and practices that participants deemed successful:

- Extended day for academic intervention and after-school literacy programs
- Family literacy programs
- Meals
- Sports
- Multicultural education
- Continuing education and extended use of school buildings
- Push in and pull out services
- Writing instruction
- Stretch classes/block scheduling
- Speech teachers
- Intensive early instruction literacy program, like Reading Recovery
- Pre-kindergarten
- Mentor-oriented professional development
- Summer school programs
- Good ratio of guidance counselors to students, esp. high-risk students
- Alternative schools/programs with smaller classes, specialized teachers and specialized curricula

### **Programs and Practices That Work for Special Education Students**

Participants from small city and other urban districts strongly agreed that special education students were not being given the opportunity to meet standards. Schools are not able to provide the personnel or services that children need to succeed. School districts do not provide all of the services that special education kids need in inclusion programs because to provide them would be very expensive. The participants concurred that the following programs and practices were successful and should be available to ensure students the opportunity to meet standards.

- Early intervention and preventative services, e.g., early screening and intervention for language development
- Sufficient social workers and support services

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- Summer school
  - Attractive programs at separate location in the high school
  - Homework lab
  - Middle school literacy support programs
  - Team teaching
  - Qualified teachers
  - Push-in services in general education classroom
  - Professional development for general education teachers
  - Trained aides
  - In-district programs designed to minimize student travel

### **Programs and Practices That Work for English Language Learners**

Participants from small city and other urban school districts said that appropriate services depend on the needs of the particular students and their families. They stressed the need for flexibility to provide needed services for immigrant students and families.

## 4. FINDINGS FROM NEW YORK CITY

### Challenges

Participants from New York City agreed on a number of specific challenges faced by their community schools. The main challenges include:

#### *Demographic Issues*

- Concentrated poverty
  - Schools overwhelmed by other social problems
- Racial dimension to schooling issues
- Difficulty meeting the needs of immigrant families
  - Language barriers – many languages spoken
  - Students entering later grades and high school without prior school experience
- Challenge of meeting the needs of homeless and other transient students
- Large numbers of students not meeting standards
- Students with behavioral problems that schools aren't equipped to address

#### *Staffing Issues*

- Huge teacher and principal turnover
  - Poor salaries and working conditions impair teacher hiring and retention
- Teachers not sufficiently qualified or committed to work with particular student population, conditions, and challenges
  - Teachers untrained in how best to address the needs of lower performing students
  - Too many new teachers, and insufficient “really” qualified teachers (that is, teachers who have the skills that the particular learning environment demands of them)
  - Insufficient teacher classroom management skills
  - Insufficient teacher buy-in to that purpose – their need to do what is needed to meet the needs of large numbers of students not meeting standards (students who are way behind).
- Not enough time or effort or talent available for or devoted to collaboration to coordinate teaching to maximize learning
  - Lack of support and professional development for new and experienced teachers and administrators
    - Teachers insufficiently trained to combine high quality, innovative teaching with preparing students for tests
  - Decision making does not adequately involve teachers, social workers, guidance counselors, parents (and special ed. decision making also doesn't adequately involve principals)
- Insufficient recognition and respect for teachers within schools

- Large number of teachers not teaching “in license”

#### *Parent and Community Involvement Issues*

- Insufficient parent and community involvement to meet huge need
  - to support students’ education
  - to promote school improvement and education reform
- Parent-district/school/teacher communication inadequate
  - Language barriers to home-school partnerships
    - Inadequate translation services available
  - Parent-teacher conferences allotted no more than ten minutes
- Families not prepared to meet students’ needs
- Challenge of working parents
- Challenges of intimidated parents
- “Unhealthy” communities
- Large class sizes hinder parent involvement

#### *Educational Program and Facilities Issues*

- Inadequate pre K to accommodate all children who need it
- Class sizes too large
- Not enough services for students not meeting standards, as a result those closest to meeting standards receive them because of pressure on schools to raise test scores
- High drop-out rates
- Large number of students inadequately prepared for high school
- Student distrust of schools
- Challenges of a nonacademic or anti-academic student culture
  - Manifestations: lack of discipline, lack of respect for others in school, low expectations for themselves, lack of interest in learning
- Inadequacy of school resources, school culture, and school staff to meet the needs of high number of students at risk of and not meeting standards
- Difficulty with the consequences of the use of test scores as main measure of school success: too much test prep; no time for spontaneous teaching; too much pressure
- Challenges posed by large number of ELLs, esp. in schools with large number of languages represented
- Overcrowding, e.g., library cannot be used by all as much as needed.
- Increased overcrowding as a result of NCLB transfers.
- Inadequate facilities,
  - not enough classroom space
  - not enough gym space
  - not enough playground space
- Challenges of too-large schools (less community) and too large classrooms (fewer writing assignments; less one-on-one attention)
- Too little time for faculty collaboration and coordination



- Students receive too many pull-out services that eat into class time
- Insufficient coordination between classroom teachers and special service providers
- Summer school availability not sufficient for all students who need it
- Not enough funding for Reading Recovery, an effective program, to provide it to all students who could benefit from it
- Lack of emphasis on conflict resolution, citizenship skills, etc., because standards don't cover them
- Not enough shop and other vocational training available
- Not enough art, music, drama, or athletics programs

### **Programs and Practices that Work to Ensure that All Students Can Meet Standards**

#### **Class Size**

In New York City, there was considerable consensus that when it comes to class size, the smaller the better. Small class sizes were considered essential, especially for the lower grades, special education, and schools in areas of concentrated poverty. Recommended numbers included 12-15 in lower grades, and for all classes with large numbers of high needs students; 17-20 for regular elementary classes; 21-25 for high school. Many groups acknowledged, however, that New York City does not have the facilities to accommodate class size reduction.

#### **Parent and Community Involvement**

New York City groups were unanimous in calling parent and community involvement absolutely essential to ensure the opportunity for success for all students. It is especially critical to provide this support for students and families who are immigrants, have a low level of parent education, or come from poverty. Groups acknowledged that this required considerable resources, including providing the following:

- Dedicated staff and space for parent outreach, information, and education, including a parent resource center and staff who can provide social service and other resources for families, a neutral space for meetings between parents and school staff, and translation services.
- Sufficient staff and extended hours to provide varied meeting times and places to accommodate working and/or intimidated parents, as well as child care.
- Professional development for administrators and teachers to assure
  - learning time structured to incorporate parents—e.g., Parents as Reading/Math Buddies
  - administrative tone supportive for parent involvement
  - parent/grandparent volunteering opportunities in schools
  - outreach to community-based organizations
  - teaching strategies that help parents become more involved at home

- Tools for better communication between school and families, e.g., cell phones for teachers so they are available to parents after school hours.
- Staffing and resources for activities to draw parents and community members into the life of the schools: student performances; sports/games, and for school personnel to out into the community—to church activities, Little League, etc.
- Mandatory parenting classes and parent participation suggested, as well as requirement for employers to provide paid time off to parents for school duties.

### **Early Childhood Education**

There was consensus from New York City groups that early childhood education provided an important training ground for parent involvement, and that ILead Start, full-day pre-K and full-day kindergarten were *essential*. Most groups cited the child-care difficulties associated with half-day early childhood programs and acknowledged the need to provide additional childcare in order to make such programs accessible.

### **Professional Development**

Participants in New York City argued that one-day one-shot workshops are not very effective, that it is better to have ongoing professional development that can be responsive to challenges teachers actually face: “Professional development needs to be tied to the issues of the schools and relevant to the job.” This includes ongoing opportunities for discussion of instructional best practices in content and classroom management with knowledgeable supervising teachers or administrators; ongoing professional development for new and experienced principals so they can be instructional leaders; and ongoing training and support for new and experienced teachers and administrators in teaching that meets the needs of the particular students in their building.

There was also consensus that it is particularly important that general education teachers get trained in special education practices. Mentoring was also considered an important tool, particularly well-designed mentor programs that featured master teachers with time dedicated to mentoring new teachers (rather than just adding this duty another teacher’s already too full schedule). Groups suggested that necessary resources included money for additional assistant principals, for master teachers, for more and ongoing training, and for staffing to free up teachers’ and principals’ time. A number of participants noted that a much greater percentage of a district’s budget could and should be spent on professional development.

### **Programs and Practices That Work for Students Not Meeting Standards**

Participants from New York City strongly confirmed that their schools were unable to provide sufficient services to ensure all students the opportunity to meet standards.

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Additional funding is needed for the following programs and practices that participants deemed successful:

- Providing sufficient guidance personnel and social workers.
- Increasing push in and pull out services
- Extended day programs: after school and Saturday instruction
- Leadership development and conflict resolution for students
- Relevant, ongoing training for teachers, including training in attitudes toward and expectations of students
- Art, music, drama, and athletics programs
- Discipline policies with real consequences
- Industrial arts classes and vocational training
- Intensive small group literacy and math instruction
- Good tasting, nutritious food for students
- Smaller instructional environments, both classes and schools
- Family literacy programs
- Summer programs with small classes
- School as community center with social services, health care and teachers available late into the evening

### **Programs and Practices That Work for Special Education Students**

In New York City, participants expressed profound dejection about special education in the city's schools. They said that students' needs in inclusion programs are not being met, and that programs and practices that work are few and far between. For example, inclusion classes of 30, with 7-8 special education students and one teacher, appeared to be the rule. There is virtually no training of general education teachers, and, often, general education teachers have not been told that many students in their classrooms have IEPs. The following is a list of the programs and practices that, according to the New York City groups, should be available to all special education students to ensure them the opportunity to meet Regents Learning Standards.

- Willing, qualified teachers and sufficient support for inclusion
- Ongoing professional development for special education teachers
- Professional development in special education for general education teachers
- Consultation time for general education teacher and related service providers
- Team teaching,
- Parent training in how to participate effectively in making IEP decisions
- Thorough assessment to prevent incorrect classification and follow up to ensure correct placement
- Skilled, school-based therapists

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- Multi-sensory reading instruction, such as Orton-Gillingham, for kids with language-based learning disabilities
  - Teacher expertise in students' special needs areas
  - Good information for parents
  - Early intervention
  - Good supervision and support for teachers

### **Programs and Practices That Work for English Language Learners**

Participants said the following programs and practices work in the education of English language learners:

- Pre-K
- Bilingual instruction
- Extended day – after school and Saturday instruction
- Small class size
- In-class libraries
- Technology
- Professional development for general education teachers in strategies for working with ELL students
- Dual language programs

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## CONCLUSION

New York State's goal of getting all students to meet Regents Learning Standards is no longer just a lofty ambition; under NCLB, it is the law. As a result, the entire education community must now take seriously the need to ensure that all students have a full opportunity to meet those standards. Schools must have what they need to provide the educational personnel, programs, and services required to meet the particular needs of all their students.

To prescribe what New York's public schools need to ensure all students a full opportunity to meet Regents Learning Standards requires good information on the range of challenges facing New York's diverse districts, as well as about what sorts of programs and practices can work there. The public engagement component of the New York adequacy study supplied this information.

Public engagement participants spoke with amazing consistency about the programs and practices *essential* for ensuring success for all students: early childhood education; intensive early literacy programs; academic intervention services, including after-school and summer school programs; small classes; guidance and social support; professional development; parent involvement; and supplementary aids and services to support special education inclusion. Participants also agreed that, in order to afford all students a full opportunity to meet standards, these essentials must be available to all students in accordance with their needs. These are the conditions under which "all children can learn."

## APPENDIX A. MEMBERS OF THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON COSTING OUT

The New York State Council on Costing Out (CCO) provides advice to the expert panel that will be determining the cost of providing a sound basic education to all students in New York. The CCO also organizes public engagement forums throughout the state to promote input from parents, teachers, business leaders, taxpayers and other citizens in the costing-out process. CCO members need not agree with the final report of the expert panel or with any positions that have been or will be taken by CFE or NYSSBA. The member organizations of the CCO are:

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.	New York State Council of School Superintendents
Alliance for Quality Education	
Americans for Democratic Action - NYC	New York State Parent Teacher Association
ASPIRA of New York, Inc.	New York State School Boards Association
Business Council of New York State	New York State United Teachers
Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc.	NYU Institute for Education & Social Policy
Citizen Action of New York	P.E.N.C.I.L.
Class Size Matters Campaign	R.E.F.L.T.
Coalition of Asian American Children & Families	Resources for Children with Special Needs, Inc.
Education Fund for Greater Buffalo	Rural Schools Program
Fiscal Policy Institute	Statewide Youth Advocates
Goddard Riverside Community Center	Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Healthy Schools Network	Teachers Network
Hispanic Federation of New York	United Parents Associations of New York
League of Women Voters of New York State	
Midstate School Finance Consortium,	
National Center for Schools and Communities	
National Education Association of New York	
New Visions for Public Schools	
New York Immigration Coalition	
New York State Association of School Business Officials	
New York State Association of Small City School Districts	