

RELEASE

Alliance for Quality Education Report *No One Wins, When Our Children Lose* Shows that Executive Budget Proposal Inadequate for Quality Education Needs

Analysis Shows that Only 52% of Proposed \$805 Million in Additional School Aid is Directed to High Needs Schools

Data Set Shows how Each School District would Benefit if \$250 Million in Competitive Grants were used for Classroom Restorations and Pre-Kindergarten

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Alliance for Quality Education released a report today entitled "*No One Wins When Our Children Lose.*" The report, an analysis of the Executive Budget proposal, shows that out of the \$805 million in new school aid proposed only 52% will go to high need schools and 14% to average needs schools; 31% of the aid would go to competitive grants. A full data set shows how much each school district in the state would benefit if the competitive grants were instead budgeted for classroom restorations. The report details many of the classroom cuts that schools have instituted as a result of budget cuts and finds that in order to stop more cuts the \$250 million in competitive grants needs to be reallocated and that the Legislature will need to add more school aid in addition to the \$805 million. The report calls for redirecting \$53 million of the competitive grant funds to pre-kindergarten programs as recommended by the New York State Board of Regents. Quality pre-kindergarten improves success in grades K -12, raises graduation rates, increases students' income as adults and reduces incarceration rates.

The Executive Budget would only restore 1 in 5 dollars of cuts made to the classroom over the past two years, and even if the competitive grants funds were instead used to restore classroom cuts only 1 in 4 dollars of classroom cuts would be restored.

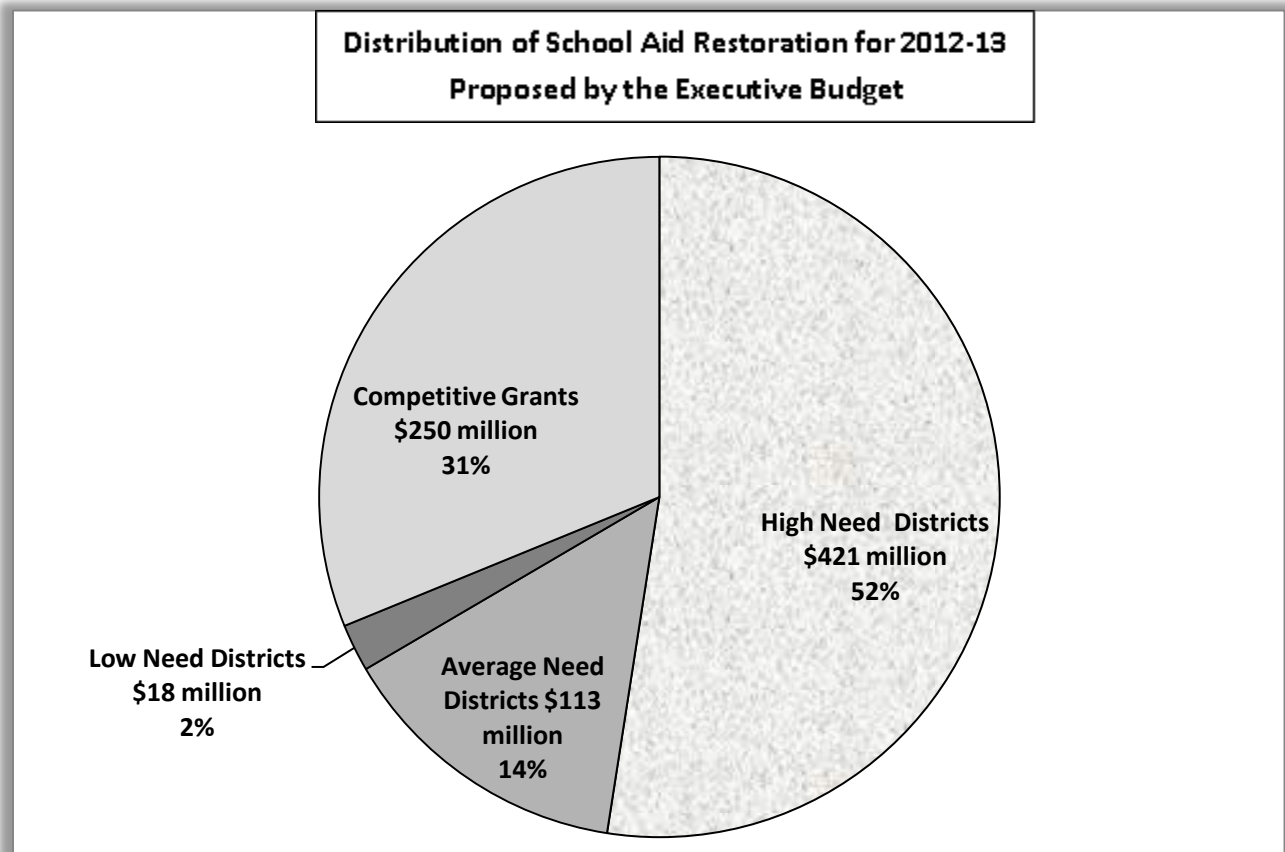
"After two years of devastating school cuts, an increase in school aid is a welcome change. But the \$805 million proposed is only one in four of the dollars that have been cut from the classrooms—it may not be enough to prevent more cuts. If students have to compete with each other for access to some of these funds, then the picture gets even worse. Make no mistake about it, the state budget cuts these past two years have jettisoned teachers, librarians and guidance counselors, arts, music and sports, college prep and career courses. Our students need the legislature to significantly increase the total education funding and put the competitive grants funding directly into the classrooms," **said Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education.**

"Making me compete with my friends in different schools for funding for our education isn't fair and it isn't right. How is my high needs school supposed to compete with the other districts with more money? The competitive grants will hurt my school and similar ones. The \$250 million could be better spent by supporting schools that need it. If my school needs new textbooks, computers and teachers, why should we have to prove that by competing?" **said Maya Williams a senior at Schenectady High School.**

"District 6 in northern Manhattan was one of the hardest hit districts in New York City-- we lost nearly \$14 million which in my school meant a loss of teachers and school aides. My son loves art but because of budget

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cuts he lost his art teacher which means that I now have to volunteer as an art teacher at the school,” said **Miriam Aristy-Farer, parent at PS 153 in Manhattan**, she added “I’m doing my part to make sure students have more opportunities but we need our legislators to do their part by demanding increased restorations so that our students can be college-ready.”



"Low-wealth rural schools have suffered enormous reductions in programs and staff in the past three years. They are now being asked by Governor Cuomo to compete amongst one another for aid in an unproven Dickensian competition just to provide the sound, basic education promised under the state constitution. This could quickly become a kind of cynical game that further punishes those who happen to be born in the wrong zip code. Our students need the Governor and the Legislature to lead in the effort to establish an equitable, sustainable and predictable state aid formula and not resort to gimmicks," said **Michael Glover, Ph. D. District Superintendent Genesee Valley Educational Partnership**.

Recommendations to Legislature

- Redirect the \$250 million from competitive grant programs to classroom restorations.
- \$53 million of the competitive grant funds should be redirected to expanding quality pre-kindergarten as recommended by the Board of Regents
- Add additional funds for classroom restorations.
- Institute cost savings initiatives that are recommended in the report.

A PDF of the full report as well as regional data sets can be found [HERE](#). Seven press conferences were held in across the state including in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Binghamton Albany, Mt. Vernon, and Wyandanch.

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Additional Quotes

"We are a high performing rural school district with about 850 students (K-12) and a graduate rate typically exceeding 90%. We have reduced our budget three years in a row and used an increasing portion of our fund balance to balance the budget. We have already had to cut back on the quality of education by eliminating our elementary school librarian, reduced or eliminated staff and eliminated our summer program. The task of developing a balanced budget that supports our education and is affordable to our taxpayers is becoming more difficult because our revenue sources are decreasing while our expenses continue to rise. At some point the math just doesn't work anymore", said **Cecilia Tkaczyk, President of the Duanesburg Central School Board of Education and mother of a 7th grader**. "The Duanesburg School District faces a \$1 million deficit in next year's budget. What are our choices? Raise taxes on the local homeowner 18%, or cut \$1 million out in expenses (eliminate Kindergarten, sports, clubs, music and art, AP courses), or wipe out our fund balance. None of these choices are acceptable. The proposed state budget is simply inadequate to provide the quality of education our children need to succeed."

"When we invest in learning for our youngest children, we're guaranteeing the best return on investment for our community," said **Ivette Alfonso, President of Citizen Action of New York**. "Study after study has shown that providing our children with quality Pre-K helps to ensure their future success, getting them ready for kindergarten, college, and careers. As the mother of a child who has attended Pre-K, I've seen firsthand the positive impact that these programs have. We call on our elected officials to expand funding for Pre-K, giving our kids the opportunity they need to become the future leaders of New York."

"Mount Vernon City School District is a high poverty district that faces many challenges and has many educational needs. Many of our schools did not make adequate yearly progress and now we are a district in need of improvement. Our children have lost teachers in English, Math, Music, Art, and Media/Library. We don't have enough textbooks and resource materials for our children. The district does not have the funds to provide adequate Regent/RCT prep classes and Academic Intervention/Support Services to our children. The budget cuts have really hurt our children. Our children attending the Mount Vernon City School District are not the children of millionaires' or billionaires'; but they also deserve a quality education. There's no way our children can get a quality education without adding additional funding restorations to our school system," said **Brenda Crump, Mount Vernon, parent**.

"I am an assistant teacher at Shepherd's Gate which has a universal pre-k program in Brentwood. What I love about the program is that the children come in not able to read or write in English or in Spanish and leave the program not only reading and writing in both languages but also speaking in English and Spanish. My concern is that this program might not be available for children next year due to past cuts. I'm asking that the \$53 million dollars that the Board of Regents proposed for New York State gets approved so that the quality of education isn't lost in our early care programs," said **Margarita Romero, Brentwood Assistant Teacher**.

"Despite the many challenges we face in Albany, over the last four years our state aid has declined by \$11 million dollars, even as our enrollment has increased. We are already doing more with less. The Governor's budget proposal falls far short of meeting our students' needs. We are not asking for a handout - but we are asking for a fairer share of the resources we need to meet our students' needs," said **Dan Egan, Albany School Board President**.

"In the Syracuse City School district we have lost more than 700 teachers and support staff for our students which has caused class sizes to be increased, a loss or reduction of vital programs, including electives, sports, and music. These are the kinds of programs that our schools need to help students prepare for college and careers," said **Eliza Sampson, Syracuse City School parent**.

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“This has become a pattern, when things need to be cut the first to go is the necessities of the children’s education. Two of my children go to School 16 in Troy where we have a pool facility that can’t even be used due to budget cuts, why?” said **Emily Pena, Troy School 16 parent**.

"In the Southern Tier, in our schools we have seen significant reductions in teachers and teachers aides, after-school program cuts that provide vital services to our youth, especially those that are at-risk, to name a few. Our area is considered high needs and so it is important to our kid’s future that our state leaders provide fair funding to ensure that all of our students have an opportunity to learn,” said **Talia Moore, Binghamton parent advocate**.

“For students in high needs districts like Buffalo the state's promise to finally provide adequate funding to help every student receive a world class education has never been fulfilled. In Buffalo we need real investment in students who are getting suspended, dropping out and not graduating. We need educational resources like guidance counseling, support services, tutoring and a broad and demanding curriculum designed to keep these students in school and get them back on track to success. The state budget as currently proposed is not going to get the job done,” said **Jim Anderson, Buffalo Board Member, Citizen Action of New York**.

"Past years cuts have produced a culture of shock and survival, where true support for teaching, has taken a back seat to just avoid sinking and falling further behind. In the last 2 years, budget cuts have forced our school to cut aides in the dual-language program. To weaken such a valuable program hurts the future of all students, so we hope that New York State will begin to prioritize high needs school districts and provide our schools with the funding they need to offer a strong education for all,” said **Luis Torres, parent at School #12, Rochester**.

“The Hudson Valley has several districts facing educational insolvency. Many high needs districts are considering or have already closed elementary schools and more will be closed this coming year if we experience more cuts. Special education aides have been cut in Kingston and in Hyde Park special education students no longer benefit from self-contained classrooms in which they get undivided attention, but instead have joined general education classes which has nearly doubled class sizes to 30 students. State aid needs to be distributed in a way that supports our neediest schools and students rather than increasing their burden,” said **Odell Winfield, Co-Founder of Sadie Peterson Delaney African Roots Library, Poughkeepsie**.

"As a parent of school children here in Queens, I have seen instances where my special need child has to have classes in the hallway because they do not have sufficient space," said **Margarita Mendoza, a Queens parent and a member of Make the Road New York**. "We need to make sure that the state invests more in our children’s education and that our schools get the necessary resources to help all of our children succeed. It is time that the State Legislature do its part."

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