



FY 2023-24 Budget Priorities

Kids can't learn or focus on school when life outside of school isn't meeting their needs. Students have faced many challenges in the last two years, including adapting to remote learning; navigating grief/loss of loved ones to the pandemic; and experiencing disruption of services that they need to thrive academically, socially, and psychologically. The impact of COVID on the mental health of young people is well-documented¹ and profound, leading the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and the Children's Hospital Association to declare this mental health decline as a national emergency.² Students, families, and communities need more wraparound resources, and dedicated investment in community schools would enable the provision of these crucial services. Through a whole-child approach, community schools help improve conditions for student learning, at home and at school. We can expect better student attendance, greater family engagement, greater student engagement, better physical and mental health, and improved community safety when the community schools strategy is implemented.

Learn more about
the impact of
community schools.



SCAN ME

Prioritizing investments in community schools statewide would enable more New York communities to coordinate the assets of their schools, families, and community partners for students' immediate and long-term success. The NYS Community Schools Network urges New York to uplift this proven strategy in the following ways:

Invest an additional \$1 million in community schools technical assistance centers. An increased investment totaling \$2.2 million would help expand and strengthen the capacity of CSTACs in New York. Currently, the three CSTACs are stretched thin to provide support to a wide geographic range. The additional funds would:

- Increase the staff capacity of each existing CSTAC to provide technical assistance to existing community schools across the state.
- Strengthen support for new partners, including Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), looking to establish community schools.
- Add at least one new CSTACs to increase capacity to cover statewide and also provide specialized support, including to rural school districts.
- Coordinate an annual statewide convening to share best practices and engage community schools and education leaders.
- Increase capacity of CSTACs to engage in virtual and hybrid visits across the state.

¹ Christine Vestal. (November 8, 2021). COVID Harmed Kids' Mental Health—And Schools Are Feeling It. <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/11/08/covid-harmed-kids-mental-health-and-schools-are-feeling-it>

² American Academy of Pediatrics. (2021). AAP-AACAP-CHA Declaration of a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health. <https://www.aap.org/en/advocacy/child-and-adolescent-healthy-mental-development/aap-aacap-cha-declaration-of-a-national-emergency-in-child-and-adolescent-mental-health/>

Dedicate \$100 million to expand community schools statewide. Community schools work.³

Dedicated funding for community schools would allow school districts, BOCES, and community partners to target and maximize resources toward specific activities and interventions that align with community schools' principles. An established community schools fund would support school districts that do not have a Community Schools Set-Aside as part of their school aid, and/or those that need further support utilizing the community schools strategy. These funds would:

- help prioritize the hiring of a Community Schools coordinator/director, whose leadership and coordination role is central to the community schools strategy.
- increase the capacity of school districts to integrate comprehensive programs, structures, and systems that help equitably meet the holistic needs of students.

A potential distribution model that adopts similar principles to the Universal Prekindergarten grant would allow districts to accept or decline funding available to them based on their interest in implementing the strategy. This would allow the State to maximize funds while providing equitable resources for school districts to leverage the community schools strategy effectively.

Maintain the current Community Schools Set-Aside of \$250 million to ensure sustainability for current community schools. The Community Schools Set-Aside, as well as the maintenance of the \$100,000 funding minimum for school districts, provides ongoing support for many community schools in New York. These community schools address the critical needs of students and their families, building on their robust relationships with community partners, university partners (as relevant), and awareness of specific school, district, community, and regional needs. The set-aside funds provide the sustainability needed for continuous improvement and adoption of the strategy.

Community schools also effectively leverage multiple funding streams at the school site to efficiently meet school community needs. These programs are not only a part of the scaffolding of community schools, but they are critical for ensuring an equitable recovery for young people and families across the state. We support the following priorities:

Afterschool, Summer, and Expanded Learning Programs: Restore \$5M cut to the Advantage After School Program. Invest \$219M in a new Afterschool Learning and Enrichment Program (ALEP) initiative to consolidate and increase the per student rate of the Empire State and Advantage afterschool programs to \$4,300. Dedicate \$500,000 to the NYS Network for Youth Success to provide technical assistance and quality supports for afterschool programs statewide. Increase professional development support and coordination of afterschool programs.

Early Childhood Education: We support the requests of the Empire State Campaign for Child Care for the governor and legislature to transform child care. Continue the momentum in full day pre-K by investing \$250 million.

School-Based Health (SBH): Permanently carve-out SBHCs from Medicaid Managed Care and increase funding for school-based health centers by \$6 million.

Mental Health: Maintain the \$250,000 allocated to mental health grants to support community schools in New York.

³ Research and evaluation show that community schools are a smart investment in the coordination of resources at both the school and system levels, which translates to a return on investment (ROI) of over \$7 for every \$1 invested in a coordinator's salary. In NYC, UFT's United Community Schools data showed that a \$100,000 investment to hire a community school director can bring in more than \$600,000 in services and grants to the school community. The Rome Connected Community Schools program reported an even higher ROI upward of \$20 for every \$1 invested in community school initiatives. See data using the QR code above.