

17 July 2024

The Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government

411 State Street
Albany, New York 12203

Dear Rockefeller Institute,

We are writing in our capacity as members of the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), also known as the Board of Education of the City School District of the City of New York, the voting body responsible for overseeing the nation's largest school district. It is one of our unifying tenets that we are committed to representing the diversity of voice and opinion within New York City Public School (NYCPS) communities and promoting equity in education. As such we represent an ever-broadening constituency from teachers and principals to parent leaders and local communities, and ultimately the heart of public education—the students.

Above all, it remains imperative that the students of NYCPS receive the State funding they deserve for the programmatic supports which allow them to not only thrive but achieve the extraordinary potential that exists in them all. Therefore, we write in representation and solidarity with Community Education Councils (CECs), Borough Presidents, the Office of the Mayor of New York City, and the NYCPS Chancellor, David C. Banks, to share our analysis of the potential revisions to New York State's funding formula.

Foundation Aid supports \$9.9 billion of NYCPS' budget this year and even seemingly miniscule changes to this funding stream can have a reverberating impact on the vital services NYCPS provides students on daily basis. Members of this body have been critical voices in the advocacy of this funding and are proud to see it come to fruition, as last year the state fully funded Foundation Aid. However, the financial modeling this aid is derived from is founded upon outdated data and signifies an insufficient understanding of the individualized needs of contemporary NYC school communities.

Since the formula's advent in the 2000s, the shape of modern education—particularly that in NYCPS—has undergone a dramatic evolution. In the classroom there have been massive expansions with the construction of 3-K and Pre-K programs to meet the needs of families; increased services for students with disabilities, seen through an expansion of Autism programs and the formation of the Boldly Reimagining Multilingualism Advisory Council; the spearheading of NYC Reads and NYC Solves which help arm students with the rigorous and relevant academic skills following graduation; and the vital integration of civic awareness through the innovative work of Civics for All into district curriculum (and their amazing Comics Group which recently become one of the largest distributors of comic books in the world). Even beyond the confines of a four-walled classroom NYCPS is consistently seeking ways of increasing services that meet the needs of the community through free, full-day summer programming; requirements to comply with the new class size law; and free meals for students during summer months.

The City has taken on a growing share of the non-federal costs of funding NYCPS. In our current Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, the City will now be responsible for financially supporting 57% of our public schools, while the State maintains only 37%; 7% less than in 2002 and a funding difference of over \$8 billion. This disparity is unacceptable—the State must continue to pay their fair share of the costs of our schools.

Given this disparity, we support the five recommendations made by Chancellor Banks to update the foundation aid formula to best support our most vulnerable populations. The recommendations include:

1. Overall, the successful school district model at the basis of the formula should be updated to reflect the costs of educating students in 2024. Additionally, the definition of a “successful school” has evolved over the past two decades.
2. A modification to the Foundation Aid formula to provide support for Students in Temporary Housing and Students in Foster Care, which do not currently get a separate “weight” under the formula.
3. Reviewing and expanding aid for special education and MLLs, a growing service area for NYC and many other districts. The existing Foundation Aid formula provides aid at the same rate for every student with disabilities, regardless of need.
4. Review the Regional Cost Index metrics, which have been fixed since 2006, even as costs of living downstate have risen substantially.
5. Finally, the State should designate dollars specifically to support the new class size law. NYCPS estimates hiring up to 10-12,000 new teachers will be necessary in order to comply with the law.

If we can discuss this topic further or provide additional testimony, please don’t hesitate to reach out via email at panel@schools.nyc.gov or attend a monthly meeting of the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP). We greatly appreciate your time and consideration on this important matter which ultimately advances the experiences and services provided to each and every student of New York City Public Schools.

Sincerely

Hon. Gregory Faulkner

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