



ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK

City Education Budget Priorities for FY 2024

Cutting funding for programs and services that support students and school communities should be completely off the table at a time when New York City is receiving an increase in education funding from New York State and continues to have unspent federal COVID-19 relief.

Yet the Executive Budget would cut hundreds of millions of dollars from the New York City Public Schools budget—including funding for several key initiatives that were launched with city funding that will expire in June.

Instead of cutting funding, the City should be investing to address unmet needs; for example, to ensure preschoolers with disabilities receive their mandated services, help more schools support newcomer immigrant youth, provide prompt transportation to students in the foster system, and expand restorative practices to keep students in the classroom.

The City should:

1. **Extend and baseline key programs funded with city funding scheduled to expire in June 2023:**
 - A. Mental Health Continuum (\$5M)
 - B. Multi-faceted immigrant family communication and outreach (\$4M)
 - C. Early childhood education and care for children who are undocumented (Promise NYC) (\$10M in FY 23 for 6 months; \$20M needed in FY 24 to maintain current capacity)
2. **Make additional investments to build upon progress being made and take advantage of opportunity for change:**
 - A. Bolster English Language Learner transfer school programs (\$3M)
 - B. Expand schoolwide restorative justice practices to 500 high schools (\$85M)
 - C. Guarantee bus service for students in foster care (\$5M)
 - D. Provide preschoolers with disabilities with evaluations and mandated services (\$50M)
3. **Plan now to sustain long-term education initiatives funded with federal COVID-19 relief funding that expires in the fall of 2024.**

Extend and baseline key programs funded with city funding scheduled to expire in June 2023.

We are deeply concerned that the Mayor's Executive Budget does not extend funding for a number of programs that provide critical support to students and families. The City launched these initiatives with city funding that will expire in June, unless extended in the FY 24 budget.

A. Mental Health Continuum · \$5M (DOE: \$787K, H+H: \$3.74M, DOHMH: \$472K)

This innovative model, recently highlighted in the [Mayor's Mental Health Plan](#), is the first-ever cross-agency partnership (DOE, H+H, DOHMH) to help students with significant mental health needs access expedited mental healthcare in person and via video. It supports students at 50 high-needs schools through school partnerships with H+H mental health clinics, dedicated staff to provide students with timely access to mental health services, NYC Well hotline to advise school staff with mental health inquiries, Children's Mobile Crisis Teams to respond to students in crisis, school-based mental health managers, Collaborative Problem Solving training to build school staff capacity to better address student behavioral and mental health needs, and culturally-responsive family engagement. At a time when we have a youth mental health crisis, this model is urgently needed.

B. Multi-faceted immigrant family communication and outreach · \$4M

This initiative strengthens the DOE's communication with immigrant families, many of whom would otherwise be left without important information, by using local ethnic media to share school-related updates, sending paper notices to families' homes, reaching families via phone calls and text messages, and collaborating with immigrant-facing community-based organizations to create and launch information campaigns. Given that more than 329,000 public school students do not have a parent who speaks English fluently and more than 61,000 children of Limited English Proficient parents live in households without broadband internet access, it is critical for this initiative to continue, especially given the recent increase in the number of newly arrived immigrant families in New York City.

C. Early childhood education and care for children who are undocumented (Promise NYC) · \$10M in FY 23; \$20M requested in FY 24

No child should be turned away from an early childhood education program due to their immigration status. The City should continue to be a leader in providing early learning opportunities to children, including those who are undocumented, by extending ACS funding for [Promise NYC](#). In FY 23, the City allocated \$10M for the program, which launched in January. To continue serving the same number of children, the City would need \$20M for the full year in FY 24.

Make additional investments to build upon progress being made and take advantage of opportunity for change.

A. Bolster English Language Learner (ELL) transfer school programs · \$3M

ELLs who arrive in the U.S. as teenagers have some of the greatest needs of any student population. In addition to having to learn a new language and meet graduation requirements before they turn 21, many of these students also have gaps in their education and require specialized academic support to access the curriculum; are juggling jobs and family obligations in addition to their schoolwork; and have complex social-emotional needs in part due to traumatic migration experiences.

The DOE's "ELL transfer schools" provide a supportive learning environment for older immigrant students, but there are only five such schools, four of which are located in Manhattan. The City has an additional 40 transfer schools serving over-age and under-credited youth, but these schools do not focus on the needs of ELLs. This year, the DOE launched new programs aimed at serving ELLs at six existing non-ELL transfer schools in Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens. However, these programs did not receive sufficient resources to provide the intensive support that recently arrived immigrant students typically need.

The City should invest and baseline \$3 million to add comprehensive services at the six new ELL Transfer School Programs in Queens, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. This funding would provide bilingual social workers, robust training for school-based staff, and community-based wrap-around supports, bringing these new programs in line with best practices for newcomers ages 16-21 and enabling them to serve more students at a time when the need is greater than ever.

B. Expand schoolwide restorative justice practices to 500 high schools · \$85M

Over the past decade, the DOE has worked to reduce the use of punitive, exclusionary discipline practices like suspensions—which disproportionately harm students of color and students with disabilities and do not make schools safer—and instead adopt restorative approaches that address students' underlying needs, teach positive behaviors, and keep students in the classroom where they belong. However, most NYC schools still do not have the staff, training, and resources needed to implement restorative practices, and many instead resort to suspensions. During the 2021–22 school year, the DOE reported removing and suspending students 31,738 times from 1 to 180 days of school each time. Ample studies conclude that exclusionary discipline leads to an increased likelihood of future behavioral incidents, school dropout, and involvement in the juvenile legal system.

Restorative practices hold students accountable for their actions, help address the root causes of behavior, and build and heal relationships; their adoption is correlated with improved academic outcomes, school climate, and staff-student relationships.

The City must commit to supporting students by investing in the citywide expansion and implementation of school-wide restorative justice practices, which includes hiring a restorative justice coordinator for each school; training all staff and interested members of school communities; and providing young people with training and stipends to lead restorative practices. For FY 2024, the City should invest and baseline \$85 million to bring this model to 500 schools.

C. Guarantee busing for students in foster care · \$5M

When students are removed from their homes and families and placed into foster care, school is often the only source of stability in their lives. Federal and state law require school districts to provide transportation to students in foster care so they can stay in their original school, unless it is in their best interest to transfer to a new school. However, the DOE currently does not guarantee bus service or a comparable mode of door-to-door transportation to students in foster care. Even when students do receive busing, delays in routing can be hugely destabilizing to students who are already in crisis.

As a result, students who cannot travel on their own may be forced to transfer schools or even foster homes. Students in the foster system who transfer schools during the year are less likely to be proficient in reading and math than their peers in care who do not change schools.

The DOE has taken an important step by launching its first-ever team focused on students in foster care. Now, the DOE should ensure children can get to school without delay when they are placed in foster care or change foster care placements. The DOE already guarantees yellow bus service to the thousands of kindergarten through sixth grade students living in shelter. The City should invest and

baseline \$5 million to provide bus service—or alternative, comparable door-to-door transportation—to the relatively small number of students in foster care, so that no student in the foster system is forced to change schools due to lack of prompt, workable transportation.

D. Provide preschoolers with disabilities with evaluations and services · \$50M

During the 2021–22 school year, the most recent year for which data are publicly available, 37% of preschoolers with disabilities—more than 9,800 children—did not receive all their mandated services. These children finished the school year without receiving a single session of at least one of the special education services they had a legal right to receive, such as speech therapy or part-time special education teacher services. This year, we have heard from numerous families whose preschoolers are waiting for their services to begin—months into the school year—as well as families unable to get an appointment for a preschool evaluation. The City must address these legal violations and ensure young children with disabilities are not left waiting for the help they need. The City should invest and baseline funding to provide preschoolers with evaluations and mandated services by taking steps such as launching more DOE evaluation teams; hiring more DOE service providers and teachers; increasing payment rates to ensure children needing bilingual services and children in underserved communities receive their services; and allocating funding to DOE Pre-K Centers and schools with pre-K and 3-K programs so that young children receive their special education services where they go to preschool.

Plan now to sustain long-term education initiatives funded with federal COVID-19 relief funding that expires in the fall of 2024.

Over the last two years, the DOE received an unprecedented infusion of more than \$7 billion in federal stimulus funding, allowing the City to invest in a number of critical education priorities. While some of this funding has been used for short-term expenses directly stemming from the pandemic—such as costs associated with reopening school buildings and accounting for the impact of lost instructional time—the DOE is also using these stimulus dollars to address student needs that existed long before the pandemic, many of which have historically been underfunded.

Although the federal COVID-19 relief funds will run dry in October 2024, these ongoing needs will remain. Among other things, stimulus funding is currently being used to:

- Double 3-K enrollment and open new preschool special education classes to help address a longstanding shortage of legally mandated seats for preschoolers with disabilities;
- Increase the number of community schools and expand access to summer enrichment programming;
- Hire 500 new school social workers, expand restorative justice practices, and enable every school building to have a nurse;
- Bolster supports for students with dyslexia, students with intensive sensory needs, and students living in homeless shelters; and
- Open new bilingual programs for English Language Learners and improve access to translation and interpretation services for immigrant families.

It will take more than \$700 million per year to sustain these new and expanded education initiatives that are making a difference for some of New York City's most marginalized students. Elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels need to start planning right away to identify funding to avoid taking a massive step backwards and losing the progress the stimulus funding has enabled. More information about the programs at risk is available at https://www.advocatesforchildren.org/sustaining_progress_call_to_action.