



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

INVEST IN EDUCATION, NOT CRIMINALIZATION

Mayor de Blasio has proposed more than \$600 million in cuts to education for the coming year—cuts that are particularly painful at a time when our schools urgently need additional resources to address the challenges caused by the pandemic. While New York City faces a dire fiscal situation requiring difficult choices, *the Mayor's Executive Budget asks the NYPD to make cuts of just 0.31%, while simultaneously cutting funding that directly supports classroom instruction and student learning.* We are pleased that Mayor de Blasio and City Council Members have committed to shifting funding from the NYPD to youth and social services. As they negotiate a final budget, they must reject cuts to education and ensure schools have more resources, not less, when school buildings reopen.

FAIR STUDENT FUNDING

The Mayor has proposed a \$100 million cut to Fair Student Funding (FSF), the largest source of funding for City schools. FSF is the primary funding source for instruction, including for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs). The FSF formula has never been fully funded, meaning that the majority of schools *already* receive less than what the City itself says they need to support their students. While City Hall has yet to provide any information as to how the proposed FSF reduction would be implemented, *schools would face immediate budget gaps, and students and teachers would feel the pain of the resulting cuts.* For example, schools might:

- » **Increase class sizes**, making it that much harder for students who have fallen behind due to difficulties with remote learning to get caught up;
- » **Cut instructional supports and services, including those for students with disabilities and ELLs**, populations that have long trailed their peers academically and have been disproportionately affected by the challenges of learning online;
- » **Reduce the number of guidance counselors and social workers** at a time when many students have experienced significant trauma and need mental health support at school more than ever; or
- » **Eliminate art and music programs, elective STEM courses, or after-school enrichment opportunities** that boost student engagement and help young people prepare for college and careers.

OUR SCHOOLS CAN'T AFFORD MORE CUTS.

- » There are already more than 27,000 students in K-3 classrooms with 30+ children.
- » Last year, nearly 29,000 students with disabilities did not fully receive their mandated special education instruction, in some cases because schools said they did not have the resources to create new classes or hire additional special education teachers.
- » 218 schools lack a full-time guidance counselor and 631 schools do not have a full-time social worker.
- » On the 2019 school survey, more than 82,000 students in grades 6-12 said there was not one adult at their school who they could confide in.

SCHOOL ALLOCATION MEMORANDA

City Hall has proposed an additional \$40 million in cuts to initiatives funded through School Allocation Memoranda (SAMs), which pay for a variety of school supports. While the Administration has not specified which SAMs are on the chopping block, **critical school programs and services for some of the City's most marginalized student populations could be at risk.** For example, SAMs fund:

- » **Bridging the Gap school-based social workers**, who provide support to thousands of students living in homeless shelters, a population that may grow even larger as unemployment skyrockets;
- » **Popular specialized programs for students with disabilities**, including the ASD Nest and Horizon programs for children with autism;
- » **Bilingual special education classes**, of which there are already too few to meet the need, leaving English Language Learners with disabilities without the help they need;
- » **Translation and interpretation services**, which allow parents who are not proficient in English to participate in their children's education and are particularly critical when students are learning from home;
- » **Restorative justice programs**, which help create positive school climates and support students in building relationships, resolving conflicts, and managing their behavior; and
- » **Guidance counselors and social workers in high-need schools**, staff who are already in short supply and who will be essential in providing students with additional social-emotional support in the coming year.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS

The DOE is also proposing to cut 25 social worker positions that the City Council fought to add in last year's budget that have not yet been filled, including three Bridging the Gap social workers who are assigned to schools with high numbers of students living in shelters to focus on assisting these students. There continues to be a significant need for these social workers. For example, the three schools that would lose Bridging the Gap social workers enrolled a combined 515 students in temporary housing last year, a third of whom were living in shelter; one school had nearly 100 students in shelter.

...

The funding streams highlighted above do not have catchy titles and are not well known to the public but play a significant role in meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of NYC's students. They reflect only some of the education programs that currently on the chopping block. In total, the Administration has proposed cutting more than \$600 million from the education budget for the coming year.

The pandemic has already disrupted children's learning and social-emotional development in dramatic ways. As they work to negotiate a final budget, the Mayor and City Council must reject these severe cuts to school funding and instead invest in education, youth services, and social services, particularly in Black and Latinx communities, to help protect our students from further harm.