



The Education Trust–New York

Testimony to the Joint Legislative Public Hearing on the 2020-2021 Executive Budget Proposal: Elementary and Secondary Education

February 2020

Good afternoon, Chairperson Krueger, Chairperson Weinstein, Chairperson Mayer, Chairperson Benedetto, and honorable members of the Legislature. Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony as you review the 2020-2021 Executive Budget.

My name is Ian Rosenblum and I am proud to serve as the executive director of The Education Trust–New York. Ed Trust–NY is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity. Our mission is to attain educational justice through policy and advocacy that results in all students – and especially those who are low-income or students of color – achieving at high levels from early childhood through college completion and entry into the workforce. Our work is data-centered and student-focused, and we work in close partnership with civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations across the state.

We hear the term “equity” often these days, and I want to begin by making clear what we mean when we say we are an “educational equity” organization. For us, achieving educational equity means putting in place policies that address systemic barriers and opportunity gaps, resulting in all New York students receiving an excellent public education characterized by high expectations and strong support so that they are prepared to succeed in any path they choose for college, careers, and civic engagement.

Here are just a few of the data points from our work and that of the diverse coalitions in which we participate that guide our understanding of the urgency to improve educational equity in New York:

1. **Proficient and Passed Over:** Even when they scored proficient on the state math assessment in grade 7, students who are low-income and students of color were less likely than their non low-income and White peers to be enrolled in an advanced math class in grade 9. Enrollment in advanced math was 22% higher for students who are not low-income compared to students who are low-income who were also proficient, 16% higher for White students compared to their Black peers who were also proficient, and 20% higher for White students compared to their Latinx peers who were also proficient.¹
2. **Stolen Time:** New York’s education system imposes out-of-school suspensions on an average of at least one student every minute of every school day. There is a crisis in the use of suspensions and other exclusionary discipline measures, and it disproportionately impacts Black students. In 2017-18, schools suspended Black students at more than five times the rate of White students in New York City and more than four times the rate of White students outside of New York City.²
3. **Well-Prepared, Supported, and Diverse Teachers:** In the 2018-19 school year, 56% of students in New York State were American Indian, Asian, Black, Latinx, or Multiracial – compared to 18%

of teachers and 25% of school principals. Nearly 10% of Black and Latinx students are enrolled in schools with no same-race/ethnicity teachers. In addition, nearly 350,000 White students attend schools without a single teacher of color. The data reinforce what we've learned from dozens of conversations and focus groups with educators of color: Teachers of color face unique career challenges due to prejudice, resulting in disparities in recruitment, hiring, support, and retention.³

The 2020-2021 Executive Budget Proposal

The Executive and Legislature continue to make important strides in addressing educational equity issues through strategic investment and policy changes, and we are grateful for your ongoing leadership and commitment. Positive steps include sustained investment in expanded access to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses; action to enable more high school students to earn college credit for free or at a reduced cost – addressing a real impediment so first-generation college hopefuls can benefit from Dual Enrollment classes; and a requirement that the New York State Education Department undertake a recently completed report on ways to improve educator diversity, among many other measures.

We would like to highlight three issues addressed in the 2020-2021 Executive Budget:

- **Early College High Schools:** In 2019, the State of the State agenda included the commitment that every student will be able to earn college credit and/or complete a work-based learning experience by the time the Class of 2025 graduates from high school. While additional steps are necessary to meet that commitment – as described below – it is good news that the Executive Budget includes an additional \$6 million to create at least 10 new Early College High School programs. The Syracuse Comprehensive Education and Workforce Training Center partnership with the Syracuse City School District and SUNY Empire State College is also an innovative and positive proposal.
- **Early Childhood Investment:** We are pleased that the Executive Budget proposes a \$15 million increase to expand half- and full-day pre-kindergarten for more than 2,000 3- and 4-year-olds in high-need school districts. In addition, we strongly support the Executive's proposal to expand the Empire State Child Tax Credit to families with children ages 0-3 with income under \$50,000 as an important initial step to increase financial security for families with young children. Although it is not the subject of today's hearing, there are three additional critical early childhood investments missing from the Executive Budget that we hope you will consider:
 - 1) Creation of a Workforce Retention and Child Care Provider Stability Fund to provide immediate relief to family and center child care providers in order to prevent closures and ensure stability for parents;
 - 2) Additional state funding dedicated to limiting subsidy co-pays and expanding subsidy eligibility levels – recognizing that an overwhelmingly majority of New York voters (85%) support investing more public funds to expand access to quality, affordable child care for families with young children;⁴ and

3) Investing more in QUALITYstarsNY – the state’s quality rating and improvement system – to support quality and transparency and enable parents to know the quality rating for their child’s program or a program they’re considering. A \$14 million investment would enable QUALITYstarsNY to reach an additional 10% of the state’s child care providers.

- **School Funding Transparency:** Schools that serve students with greater needs require significantly greater resources than other schools. There are three parts to this puzzle: whether a school district’s overall level of funding from state and local sources is adequate to provide a quality education; whether the school district is directing the most resources to the schools with the greatest needs; and whether schools are spending resources effectively. All three parts are necessary to understand whether our school funding system is equitable. In addition, what happens once resources get to a school district has historically received the least transparency and attention. The Executive Budget’s continued focus on this issue can help improve educational equity within that broader context.

What’s Missing From the 2020-2021 Executive Budget Proposal

Returning to the three data points at the beginning of this testimony, there are a few issues that we hope the Legislature chooses to prioritize as the 2020-2021 budget process continues: improving equitable access to advanced courses, eliminating disparities in how schools suspend students, and increasing educator diversity.

Improving equitable access to advanced courses

New York’s education system is on average approximately twice as likely to enroll White and non low-income students than their Black and Latinx peers and their peers who are low-income in a diverse range of advanced classes in high school – including Physics, Calculus, AP and IB courses, Computer Science, advanced foreign languages, and music. This is both because students who are low-income and students of color are less likely to attend schools where these courses are offered and because even when they attend schools that have the classes, these student groups are less likely to be given access.

We and our partners in The New York Equity Coalition have proposed four policy solutions that we hope are enacted this year:

1. **Improve access to advanced courses.** The state should invest in more AP, IB, and Dual Enrollment courses in high-need school districts — including planning time for teachers and equity-driven course enrollment policies — and in expanding access to school counselors who are culturally responsive.
2. **Support parents and students.** The state should require school districts to provide every family with clear and concise information, in multiple languages, beginning in the late elementary grades about the courses their child can take in middle and high school to prepare for college, careers, and civic engagement – including the benefits of enrolling in advanced courses and the support available.

3. **Eliminate barriers to enrollment.** Our research reveals that many school districts put in place unnecessary and inequitable barriers to advanced courses that disproportionately impact historically under-served groups of students.⁵ The state should enable automatic enrollment in the next available advanced course for students who demonstrate readiness using one of multiple measures. Families would always have the right to decline this automatic enrollment. States like North Carolina, Washington, and Colorado have enacted their own automatic enrollment policies to improve equity in advanced course access. For example, in one school district in Washington that adopted automatic enrollment before their new state law went into effect, “the number of students enrolled in advanced courses has increased by 70 percent, and for the first time the district’s ethnic diversity is reflected within these classes.”⁶
4. **Eliminate enrollment disparities.** The state should ensure that any school or school district that has disparities in advanced course enrollment is implementing an action plan to improve equity with parent, educator, and student input.

A9697, sponsored by Majority Leader Peoples-Stokes, and S7600, sponsored by Senate New York City Education Committee Chairperson Liu, includes several of these key provisions and would be historic legislation for New York with a dramatic impact on improving educational equity.

Reducing the use of suspensions and eliminating disparities in how schools suspend students

Schools must take steps to support all students in the classroom, not push them out of it. New York’s education system imposes suspensions on Black students at unacceptable rates and far more than their White peers. We believe it is up to the state leaders to enact policies to stop these practices. We strongly support the Solutions Not Suspensions legislation sponsored by Senator Montgomery and Assemblymember Nolan, which would:

1. Encourage practices that promote and sustain a safe, inclusive, and respectful school environment;
2. Require school codes of conduct to include restorative approaches to discipline;
3. Limit the use of suspensions for students in K-3 to only the most serious behavior; and
4. Shorten the maximum length of suspension from 180 to 20 school days.

Improving educator diversity

A comprehensive educator diversity agenda should address educator preparation, recruitment, and in-service support.

We strongly support the Board of Regents’ 2020 Budget and Legislative Priorities request for an additional \$3 million to expand the Teacher Opportunity Corps II program to increase the number of certified educators of color and to enhance teacher diversity in New York State.

In addition, there are other fiscal and non-fiscal steps that the Legislature can take to address teacher and school leader diversity, including:

1. Establishing a state “Grow Your Own” initiative to partner high schools with local colleges and universities;
2. Establishing a statewide teacher preparation pipeline initiative, building on the important work focused on teacher aides and teacher assistants in Buffalo;

3. Requiring diversity data collection, use, and transparency for educator preparation programs;
4. Requiring educator preparation programs to prepare all teaching and administrator candidates to educate all groups of students; and
5. Requiring all school district personnel involved in recruitment and hiring to receive implicit bias training.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you and discuss strategies to improve educational equity. We are grateful for your leadership on these critical issues for New York’s students and our shared future.

¹ See www.EquityInEdNY.org/PassedOver for additional details.

² The New York Equity Coalition, “Stolen Time” (New York, NY: 2018). Available at: <https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/stolen-time>. 2017-18 data is from forthcoming analysis.

³ See www.SeeOurTruth.org for additional details. 2018-19 data is from forthcoming analysis.

⁴ Global Strategy Group online survey of 1,208 likely 2020 voters in New York State, conducted between July 8-14, 2019, in partnership with Raising New York. Available at: <https://raisingnewyork.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2019/08/Raising-NY-Poll-Memo.pdf>.

⁵ The New York Equity Coalition, “The Gatekeepers” (New York, NY: November 2019). Available at: <https://equityinedny.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2019/11/Gatekeepers.pdf>. Based on documents requested in Summer 2018.

⁶ The Huffington Post, “Advanced Students In Federal Way, Wash. Automatically Enrolled In AP, IB And Cambridge Programs” (June 2, 2011; updated December 6, 2017). Available at: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/advanced-students-federal-way_n_869487.