

PROGRAMMATIC OVERVIEW

Education

"Investing in Educational Reform"

The Governor's first budget demonstrates a strong commitment to educational excellence by advancing a four year Educational Investment Plan. Echoing the Assembly's call of "Resources + Reform = Results", the Governor's plan addresses the court-ordered requirements of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit and provides for new resources statewide.

The Executive proposes to create a new foundation aid program which links school funding to the cost of a successful education. The Assembly has long advocated for a comprehensive statewide reform proposal through a foundation formula. Such reforms will make State funding for education more equitable, transparent and predictable. This year, the Executive has heeded the Assembly's call and proposed a stable formula which recognizes factors of student enrollment, student need, regional cost and district wealth. The Foundation funding would be phased in over four years, growing to a total of \$17.3 billion in 2010-11. This would represent an increase of \$4.8 billion over current funding levels. Overall, funding for education is slated to grow by \$7 billion, to a total of \$24.7 billion.

Together with increasing the resources available to schools, the Executive proposes various new accountability measures. Districts that receive significant increases in Foundation funding would be required to enter into a "Contract for Excellence." These contracts would

outline plans to spend new State funding on measures proven to improve student performance, such as the Assembly's proposal to reduce class size. Additional proposals would enhance performance targets and data collection, and assess the effectiveness of school leadership.

PreK: The First Steps Toward Excellence

The Executive also proposes expanding access to Universal Prekindergarten (UPK), increasing funding over four years by \$349 million for a total of \$645 million (Figure 3). The proposal would make the program fully universal by 2010-11. Quality early education is a proven strategy for closing the achievement gap and preparing children to succeed in school. Research has consistently proven that pre-kindergarten programs to have lasting benefits on student achievement, college attendance, and future earnings. The Assembly has historically fought to make UPK truly universal. This proposal is a step in the right direction, preparing all children to meet higher educational standards for competing in a global economy.

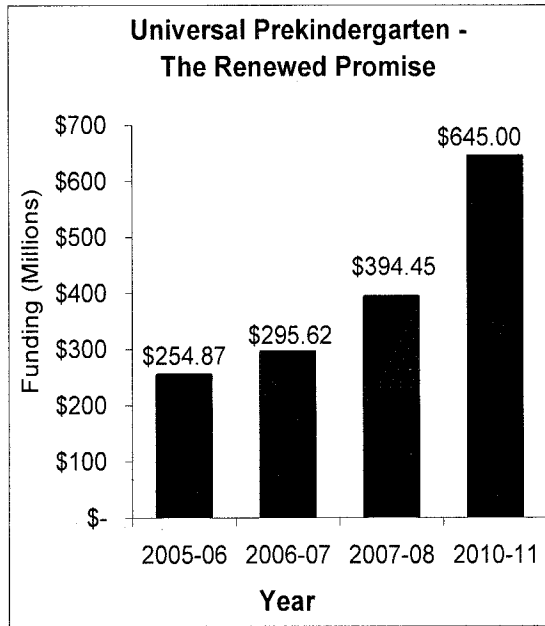


Figure 3

Under the leadership of the Regents, New York State has continued to work toward the goal of raising the performance of all children in grades K-12. Since 1999, student achievement and graduation rates have been climbing steadily as schools are focusing more of their resources on meeting the standards. However, there is still much work to be done.

The fact remains that resources are linked to success. Schools in high need areas have fewer computers per pupil, fewer library books and higher teacher turnover rates. The Assembly has consistently worked to increase the resources available to students in all districts across the State. The Governor's proposed increase in State aid, paired with last year's historic State investment in capital through the EXCEL program, would provide school districts with the resources necessary for success.

The Governor's budget also calls for the creation of 150 additional charter schools, along with \$15.2 million in Transition Aid to certain school districts that have been adversely affected by the establishment of charter schools.