



The New York State Budget: The Wins and What We're Watching

At the end of March the New York State Assembly finalized the 2018-19 annual budget. The \$168.3 billion state budget covers spending in a variety of areas including health, education and aid to localities.

So how does this year's state budget affect kids across the state? After tireless advocacy on the part of a number of organizations, there are some clear wins for kids, families and communities. Healthi Kids explores the state's investments in this fiscal year that support kids' physical, social-emotional and cognitive development. We also break down some areas that we'll continue to watch over the coming year.

Investments to improve the nutrition environment:

- **Greater access to school breakfast:** Starting next school year, high-need school districts, where at least 70 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, will be required to provide breakfast after the school day has begun. The budget provides funding to support breakfast after the bell (e.g., breakfast in the classroom, food kiosks and healthy vending machines) including \$5 million to support reimbursement for schools that increase their participation rates. In the Rochester City School District, 16,203 students eat school meals every dayⁱ and the Department of Nutrition and Food Services continues to increase participation in the breakfast program to ensure every child in the district has a healthy start to the school day.
- **The creation of a statewide policy to ban lunch shaming:** In the 2018 – 19 school year, children who do not have money for a school meal cannot be singled out or provided an alternative meal. A law adopted within the statewide budget this year requires all students to receive the same meal regardless of income. While students in the Rochester City School District are all community eligible, meaning that any student in the district is able to receive free meals at schools, this policy ensures students in other district across the state cannot be denied food if they cannot pay.
- **Incentives to support local produce in school meals:** Schools that purchase at least 30 percent of their ingredients from New York farms will be eligible for a \$0.25 per meal incentive. [This incentive is four times higher than the amount currently provided per meal](#) from the state and a huge win for students as state reimbursement for school meals has remained static for the last 40 years.ⁱⁱ
- **Additional funding for Farm to School:** The 2018-19 budget also doubles state funding for Farm to School grants to \$1.5 million making it easier for local school districts to receive technical assistance, equipment and support for implementing Farm to School strategies.

Investments in kids programming:

- **Out-of-school time programs receive a boost:** The budget secures additional funding for out-of-school time programming in both the *Advantage After School* and *Empire State After-School* programs. Advantage After School receives \$22.3 million in funding, restoring the funding to levels not seen since the 2016-17 budget.ⁱⁱⁱ The Empire State After-School program receives a \$10 million increase in funding. Last year, the Rochester City School District was awarded \$7.1 million over the next five years to support these after school programs locally.
- **Administrative changes to program funding:** Funding out-of-school time providers becomes easier, as the budget also includes a change that allows nonprofits to apply for funding through the Empire State After-School program. Moving forward, both community-based organizations and school districts will be eligible to apply for this program, which will remove administrative barriers for providers and will help to ensure kids have access to quality programs in the next school year.

Investments in education:

- **School aid:** Schools across the state receive a boost in this year's budget with school aid increasing by 3.6% (or \$914 million), to a total of \$26.7 billion. In 2016 – 2017, the Rochester City School District received \$472.9 million in aid.^{iv} The school aid payments are used to fund numerous programs and services throughout the school district such as expanding children's education and learning opportunities, providing transportation, increasing access to technology and computers, the urban-suburban program, and for programs that support special education.^v
- **Community schools:** Community school aid increases by \$50 million to a total of \$200 million. The budget also increases the minimum community schools funding amount from \$10,000 to \$75,000 to ensure all community schools can fund a wide range of activities (e.g., hiring a community school coordinator, offering summer learning activities and/or providing health services to families). Locally, the Rochester City School District has nine community schools and in the 2016-2017 school year received \$7 million from the state to support the expansion of this model.^{vi}
- **School mental health training center:** \$1 million was added to establish a new center that will assist local school districts to develop and implement mental health curriculum in schools across the state. This follows last year's changes in the law that require mental health education be provided to kids as part of their school curriculum.
- **School health services:** \$8.3 million in funding will go towards school-based health centers. This restores \$4 million in funding to the clinics that were cut in last year's budget. School-based health centers improve access to primary care, behavioral health care, and preventative care services for children and youth by providing services at school.^{vii} There are currently 255 school based health centers throughout New York State that provide services to 186,566 children.^{viii}
- **Improving School climate:** \$2 million is provided for the Supportive Schools Grant Program that helps districts improve school climate, safety and implement the NYS Dignity for All Students Act. The act requires school districts to modify their Codes of Conduct to include prohibitions on harassment, bullying and discrimination; to provide training and education to students and school employees; and to designate Dignity Act Coordinators at the district level to facilitate implementation.^{ix}

- **Supporting family engagement and equity in schools:** The budget allocates \$18.8 million to support My Brother's Keeper programs located in New York State. The national program provides grant funding to implement programs to help young boys and men of color succeed. Currently there are 21 communities across the state that participate in the program including Rochester and Buffalo.^x In December 2016, the Rochester City School District was awarded \$1.3 million in grants through this program to support family engagement and cradle-to-career college strategies.^{xi}

Investment in communities:

- **Libraries receive money for capital improvements:** The budget increases aid to public libraries by \$1 million (to a total of \$96.6 million this year). This funding also includes \$35 million for public library construction grants, increasing funding for that grant by \$10 million from last fiscal year. This funding will help support projects that will increase access to local libraries (e.g. encourage additional use), improve building space (e.g. installing solar panels), expanding building space (e.g. purchasing vacant land), and support safety related improvements (e.g. improving walkways). In 2016-17, funding secured from this program allowed for renovations to the auditorium at Rundell Library.^{xii}
- **Additional funding for Parks:** The state legislature reached an agreement to protect outdoor recreation and park space. The budget provides \$400 million for an Environmental Protection Fund to help maintain our state parks; and also allocates \$500,000 for the Parks and Trail Partnership Program to support local friends groups as they work to enhance public access and recreational opportunities.
- **Connecting communities to parks** – The budget includes several initiatives to enhance public access to parks, including \$500,000 for the Parks and Trail Partnership program that will support friends and foundation groups as they work to connect residents with recreational opportunities in communities across the state. This is great news for communities as access to high quality parks improves physical and mental health outcomes, fosters economic development, and builds vibrant neighborhoods.^{xiii}
- **Connecting kids with parks** – The budget provides \$1 million for the Connect Kids to Parks program that reimburses transportation costs for school kids visiting state parks and historical sites for educational opportunities. This is great news for kids, as studies demonstrate connecting children with parks supports their overall physical, social-emotional and cognitive development.^{xiv}
- **Multiyear commitment to revitalize state parks** – The budget includes \$90 million for capital improvement projects that will enhance infrastructure at parks across the state. This funding can be used for health and safety repairs, rehabilitating restrooms, repairing bridges, roads and polls and promoting tourism.

Investments in kids' behavioral health

- **Expanding access to children's behavioral health services:** The legislature included in this year's budget \$15 million to expand children's behavioral health services and ignored a proposal by the Governor to delay the transition to managed models of care. The funding will allow the Office of Mental Health and Hygiene to continue to streamline services and offer training and grants to

support the integration of children’s behavioral health services with primary care.^{xv} These dollars will also allow the state to continue to find ways to integrate health and behavioral health services and transition from a fee-for-service system that reimburses based on services provided, to a managed care environment that focuses on reimbursement based on improved outcomes. This is great news for kids as the transition to managed care can improve quality and coordination of care for families, encourage preventative health services^{xvi}, and decrease emergency department visits.^{xvii}

- **Establishes Kids and Recovering Mothers program** – The budget allocates funding for the Department of Health and Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services to establish a program that will give providers, hospitals and midwifery birth centers guidance, education and assistance when providing care to expectant mothers with substance abuse disorders.

Investments in early-childhood well-being:

- **Ensuring kids have a healthy start:** Last year, the New York State Department of Health announced a new focus for Medicaid redesign that will focus exclusively on children’s first three years of life.^{xviii} The First 1000 days initiative will work with health, education and other systems that interface with kids to improve health and learning outcomes. The First 1000 Days committee currently has proposed 10 ways to help integrate early systems for kids including the expansion of home visitation, braided funding for early childhood mental health consultations, and a pilot for peer family navigators. This year’s budget provides \$1.45 million towards the initiative and is a positive first step to ensuring every child receives a healthy start.
- **Ensuring kids have nutritious food in child care settings:** This year’s budget continues grant funding for nonprofit organizations to increase participation in the Adult and Child Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP provides reimbursement for meals and snacks in out-of-school time programs, homeless shelters, and child and adult day care settings.^{xix} Last year CACFP served over 11.2 million meals a month to 370,000 children and adults each day.^{xx}
- **Investment in Pre-K programs:** This year’s budget expands early childhood education opportunities for over 3,000 kids across the state. The budget provides \$15 million to expand half day or full day Pre-K programming.
- **Investments in child care:** The legislature restored \$7 million in child care subsidies that were cut in last year’s budget. Child care subsidies provide support to families to help pay for some or all of the cost of child care.^{xxi} Anticipating new funding to come from the Child Care Development Block Grant, the state has shared they will make an additional \$10 million dollars available to expand the program.

What we’re watching:

- **Early intervention programs:** Early intervention programs provide support services to children under the age of three who have disabilities or developmental delays. This year’s budget includes \$173.3 million for early intervention services (EI) but rejects the Governor’s proposal to reform any of these programs. The Governor for the last several years has put forward a recommendation to the legislature a proposal that would restructure EI programs. The proposal includes a restructuring of EI reimbursement, and supports programmatic changes to referral, screening and the evaluation processes. Healthi Kids will continue to monitor future proposals of EI reform.

- **Clarifying licensed activities for health professionals** – The legislature provided a clause in the budget that calls for the full implementation of social work and other licensed mental health provider licensing laws. The move will require New York State’s Department of Education to work alongside several state agencies to clarify activities that are within and outside the scope of practice for psychologists, social workers, and mental health practitioners and the activities that non-licensed staff can perform. The action will allow only licensed professionals to provide diagnosis and treatment. This clause ends a fourteen year licensure exemption that was included when the legislation was developed. The creation of these regulations has potential to affect services in high need and rural areas that rely on multidisciplinary teams and peer services to provide care and treatment. Healthi Kids will continue to monitor the progress of these regulations and share potential impact these decisions will have on kids across our region.
- **Public Health Programs:** The final budget restores funding for a number of public health programs that promote policy, systems, and environmental changes that support healthier kids. This includes programs that support healthier schools and communities by improving access to healthy foods and physical activity. The Governor proposed that these programs be consolidated and cut back. The legislature rejected the Governor’s proposal and saved cutbacks to these important programs that provide support to children and communities across the state. Healthi Kids will continue to monitor these programs to ensure they remain whole in future years.
- **Transportation:** This year’s budget provides significant investments for transit-oriented capital improvement projects, but there is no direct funding for complete streets initiatives. In 2016, the legislature allocated \$20 million for complete streets projects that helped communities across the state build their walking and cycling infrastructure. Healthi Kids will continue to monitor and advocate for complete streets principles in current and future capital improvement projects.

ⁱ Hunger Solutions New York (2018). School breakfast participation in New York State public schools during the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. Hunger Solutions New York. Retrieved online 4/20/2018: <https://hungersolutionsny.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/SB-Report-2018-School-District-Level-Data-16-17SY-FINAL-Shared.pdf>

ⁱⁱ New York School Nutrition Association (2013, October). Letter to Commissioner John B. King at the New York state department of education. New York School Nutrition association.

ⁱⁱⁱ New York State Network for Youth Success (2018). Budget analysis for FY 2018-19: Final Budget. New York State Network for Youth Success. Retrieved online 4/30/2018:

^{iv} New York State Department of Education (2017, July). 2016-2017 School Aid Payment Summer – Rochester City School District. New York State Department of Education, Office of Management Services State Aid Unit. Retrieved online 4/30/2018: <http://www.nysed.gov/STATEAID/DIST/PY0362016/A261600.HTML>

^v New York State Department of Education (2017). 2017-2018 State Aid Handbook: State formula aids and entitlements for schools in New York State as amended by chapters of the laws of 2017. New York State Department of Education: Office of State Aid. Retrieved online 4/30/2018: https://stateaid.nysed.gov/publications/handbooks/handbook_2017.pdf

^{vi} Rochester City School District (2017). 2017-18 Adopted Budget Summary. Rochester City School District. Retrieved online 4/20/18:

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^{vii} New York State Department of Health (2010). School-based health centers program description: New York State Department of Health school-based health centers). New York State Department of Health. Retrieved online 4/30/2018: https://www.health.ny.gov/facilities/school_based_health_centers/skprogram.htm

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