

March is Advocacy Month!



Your voice is crucial



What is Advocacy?

- **Speaking up** on behalf of yourself or others
- The act of **mobilizing individuals**



What Does an Advocate Look Like?

- There are many levels: novice to expert
- Who is the most effective advocate?
You as Parents are Advocates !
- Parents are advocates when they:
 - Attend a PTA meeting
 - Serve on a PTA or district advisory committee
 - Attend a parent-teacher conference
 - Attend a school board meeting
 - Disseminate information to their community about proposed budget cuts or school board candidates*



What is **at stake right now** under the Governor's proposed budget?

1. **Education Funding** - Individual school districts are facing a reduction of state aid averaging 5% under the Governor's proposed budget.

2. **Further Drain on already compromised traditional public school programs because of the Governor's proposal to double the number of Charter Schools.**

The Governor proposes lifting the current cap on the number of charter schools in New York without changes that would hold charter schools to the same principles of equity, educational and fiscal accountability, and local control required of all other public schools. The implementation of New York's Charter School Act has led to unintended consequences in certain areas of the state including Albany and Schenectady where the communities are suffering serious financial drain on traditional public school programs and there is no local recourse.



You can do a lot for all our children in a few short minutes...

- Sign a letter or postcard addressed to Assemblyman Reilly and Senator McDonald
- Call key elected representatives on March 17 and raise one point listed on the “Talking Points” prepared by the State Advocacy Team
- Ask your friends to do the same...

Our voices are crucial. If elected representatives don't hear them, the message of silence is that we all accept the damage the proposed budget will do to our schools and communities.



BUDGET LETTER

Date:

The Honorable _____

Address _____

Dear

On behalf of more than 340,000 New York State PTA members, I am writing to express concern about the potential impact of the 2010-11 Executive Budget on our education system. The proposed budget reflects a 2% reduction of all school spending statewide. Individual school districts would see a reduction of state aid averaging 5%. Universal Prekindergarten aids would be frozen for two years and full phase-in of the foundation formula would be extended to 2016-17. Under this plan, our schools will fall further and further behind.

Although the proposal would impose a greater percentage cut in state aid to high wealth/low need districts, the loss of actual dollars would still likely be greatest in low wealth/high need districts that are more dependent on state aid and serve our most vulnerable populations. Moreover, proposed reductions are too great to be absorbed in a single year without causing long term damage to educational program and staffing.

The Executive Budget saves an estimated \$13 million by modifying Early Intervention programs by requiring evidence based criteria to determine service eligibility, permitting paraprofessionals to provide certain services and increasing reimbursement from commercial insurers. More importantly, it introduces a sliding scale based on income that would, for the first time, charge parents between \$42 and \$540 for each child enrolled in the program

We acknowledge that you are approaching the 2010-11 budget year faced with unprecedented and continuing economic challenges. Recognizing this dire situation, school districts have demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and efforts to reduce spending, and are willing to continue to work with the state on this path.

But deep reductions to our education system cannot be sustained. New York State's economic future depends on protecting the investment the state has made in providing the learning opportunities that today's youth will need to succeed in tomorrow's world. Each child passes through the education process once. Where academic opportunity is diminished or denied, the impact will be felt forever.

Sincerely,

CHARTER SCHOOLS LETTER

Date:
The Honorable
Address _____

Dear

Fair funding of public education is a priority of the New York State PTA. Our current position, established in 2001, seeks to address the negative financial impact of charter schools on traditional public schools. The Charter School Act provides for per pupil funds to be drawn from school district operating expenses; requires that textbooks, transportation, computer software, library materials and health and welfare services be provided; and, in the event of contingency budgets, the requirement to finance a charter school may result in having to eliminate or cut programs in traditional public schools of a district. Districts take an additional financial hit when students who signed to attend charter schools change their minds and return to the district, or if a charter school closes mid-year. NYS PTA supports legislation to change the method of funding New York's charter schools in order to eliminate the potential for an adverse effect upon traditional public schools and the communities they are intended to benefit.

While the Governor proposed increasing the cap on charter schools in order to make New York competitive for Race to the Top funding, the potential impact on local schools is devastating. If the cap on charter schools must be raised, funding to offset the financial impact on regular public schools must be provided.

NYS PTA acknowledges charter schools as an avenue to school reform and supports actions that rationally invest in innovation and experimentation. It is the hope of the NYS PTA that the allocation of new resources will be invested wisely in initiatives that produce measurable and sustainable gains for all students. To ensure the promise of modeling innovative public education, charter schools must be open to all students, adhere to state and federal laws governing public schools, include meaningful parent involvement, be accountable to local school boards, and be funded in a way that does not undermine the opportunity to provide students in traditional public schools with excellence in education and quality of life.

Sincerely,

NYSPTA Talking Points: Charter Schools

- While a number of NYC charter schools have met the standard of improving achievement, many charter schools have failed miserably.
- Charter schools are financially devastating city school districts in Buffalo, Schenectady and Albany.
- The current process of establishing charter schools and the Governor's proposal to lift the cap, make no provisions for the long-held principle of local control. School district budgets are approved by community residents. Voters currently have no input into the establishment of charter schools that will be diverting funds already approved for traditional public schools. Applications or renewals of charters should be approved by the local school board before being received and acted on by any chartering entity.
- Charter schools drain students and finances from school districts.
- School districts need time to adjust and prepare for the opening of a charter school. A reasonable notice period should be required between the approval of a charter application and the opening of a charter school.
- Charter schools are financed by a formula based on a school district's prior year's annual operating expense (AOE). However, there are fixed costs that do not decrease when students attend charter schools, such as staffing, utilities, supplies and insurance. The formula should be revised to hold districts harmless for these fixed costs and reflect the difference between per pupil costs for K-8 (90%) and secondary (110%) students.
- School districts placed on a contingency budget may not increase their budget beyond the cap imposed by the state. However, districts must still pay the charter school at the prior year's AOE. This potentially forces the district to eliminate or reduce programs and services in traditional public schools. Contingency budget constraints should apply to funding that flows to charter schools, not only to funding that flows to traditional public Schools.
- Applying for Race to the Top federal grant monies without addressing the inherent inequities and funding problems within NYS's charter laws creates a situation of short-term benefit with the potential for long-term consequences.

NYSPTA Talking Points: Charter Schools (Cont)

Not all charter schools hold to the following NYS PTA beliefs that charter schools:

- be open to all students, including students with limited English proficiency, students with special needs, and students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds
- comply with federal and state laws governing public schools, including laws regarding teacher qualifications, testing standards, and fiscal accountability,
- adhere to federal, state, and local laws designed to ensure student health and safety,
- be accountable to local school boards in the districts where they are located,
- be funded in such a way as to preclude the charging of tuition or mandatory fees not charged by other public schools in the district,
- be independent of nonpublic, sectarian, religious, or home-based school affiliations, and include parents in meaningful decision-making roles.

NYSPTA Talking Points: State Aid and the Proposed Executive Budget

- We are very concerned that school districts would see a reduction of state aid averaging 5% under the Governor's proposed budget.
- The loss of funding will likely be greatest in low wealth/high need districts that are more dependent on state aid and serve our most vulnerable populations.
- Proposed reductions are too great to be absorbed in a single year without causing long term damage to educational program and staffing.
- We question the proposal to save \$13 million by modifying Early Intervention programs by requiring evidence based criteria to determine service eligibility, permitting paraprofessionals to provide certain services and increasing reimbursement from commercial insurers. Even more disconcerting is the introduction of a sliding scale based on income that would, for the first time, charge parents between \$42 and \$540 for each child enrolled in the program.
- We are very concerned about the delay in foundation aid and stretching its phase-in from the original four years to seven and now to a proposed ten years, as our schools fall further and further behind.
- Over the past several years, school districts, of all entities, have demonstrated remarkable ingenuity and efforts to reduce spending.
- We acknowledge that Governor Paterson and our state Legislators approach the 2010-11 budget year faced with unprecedented and continuing economic challenge.
- New York State's economic future depends on protecting the investment our state has made in providing the learning opportunities that today's youth will need to succeed in tomorrow's world.
- Education is an enterprise that can only flourish where each achievement builds on those that precede it and where continuity is the key to achievement of long term objectives.
- Each child passes through the education process once. Where opportunity is diminished or denied at any level, the impact will be felt forever.

**Virtual Lobby Day
is
March 17th**

Advocacy is a click away



March is PTA Advocacy month. It is a great time to advocate for our children and education because the NYS Budget is being deliberated. Our statewide March Advocacy campaign kicks off with a reaction paper to the governor's release of the proposed executive budget. Then on March 16, 2010 representatives of NYS PTA meet with Albany legislators on ***PTA Lobby Day***. On March 17, 2010, ***Virtual Lobby Day***, the message is carried to the finish line by **YOU**, the grassroots members with a statewide electronic advocacy campaign using the tools provided by NYS PTA to participate in Virtual Lobby Day.

*******Take Action*******

- ◆ Go to [PTA Lobby Day/Virtual Lobby Day](#)
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the issues
- ◆ Find sample letter, talking points and legislative contacts' information
- ◆ ***Starting immediately***, write letters and/or postcards to your representatives in Albany.
- ◆ On **March 17th** join the chorus and let your New York State legislative representatives know how you feel about the state budget and education.

2010 National PTA Public Policy Agenda

The 2010 National PTA Public Policy Agenda focuses on three key priorities:

- Parent engagement in education
- Equity and opportunity for all children
- Child health

PTA will work to **reauthorize important provisions within federal legislation** to promote these priorities, including:

- focusing on the key **parental involvement provisions within ESEA (Elementary Secondary Education Act)** under Section 1118 of Title I and the Department of Education's Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs);
- recommending important changes pertaining to family engagement and parent involvement in the reauthorization of the **Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)**; and
- Addressing vital issues of children's nutrition and health by working to reauthorize the **Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act**, which is set to expire in September, 2010
- Targeting **federal funding for education** to help schools implement specific interventions designed to improve student achievement
- Protecting the rights of children and youth involved in the justice system through working to reauthorize the **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)**
- http://www.pta.org/public_policy_agenda.asp