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The Education Trust—New York

WHO WE ARE

The **Education Trust—New York** is a statewide education policy and advocacy organization focused first and foremost on doing right by New York's children. Although many organizations speak up for the adults employed by schools and colleges, we advocate for students, especially those who are low-income or students of color and whose needs and potential are often overlooked. Ed Trust—NY is affiliated with the national organization, The Education Trust, based in Washington, D.C.

EQUITY-DRIVEN | DATA-CENTERED | STUDENT-FOCUSED

ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY FOR **ALL** STUDENTS

27%

of low-income students in grades 3-8 are proficient or advanced in English language arts.

36%

of schools that serve the greatest share of low-income students outside of New York City have a rich and robust high school curriculum.

30%

of Black students pursuing a bachelor's degree graduate from college on time (*compared to 55 percent of white students*).

24%

less is invested per pupil in the school districts that serve the greatest proportion of low-income students compared to the districts that serve the fewest low-income students.

REPORT
ANNUAL

OUR WORK

In our first year, we issued a series of reports covering critical equity issues. Here are some of the highlights:

TOWARD JUSTICE FOR ALL?
The Opportunities and Risks for Educational Equity in New York State Under ESSA

As the new school year begins, approximately 2.5 million K-12 students have returned from summer vacation to public school classrooms across New York State. Some attend the nation's largest school systems, while others learn in smaller cities, villages, and rural hamlets. Some students — an estimated 1.3 million — are low-income. More than 1 million are African American, Latino, or Asian or Pacific Islander. At least 600,000 are English learners, and more than 400,000 are students with disabilities. All of these students and their families have hopes and aspirations for the coming year, yet their very future is dependent on an education system riven by inequality, inequity in access, opportunity, and performance that deprives too many young people of the essential skills for success.

The simple truth is that New York has fallen behind the rest of the country over the last decade years, dropping from the top half of states in both reading and math to the bottom half — for all students, not only those who are low-income or children of color. And the state's own tests, which indicate real progress in higher standards state-level skill level, reveal achievement gaps between African American and Latino students and their white peers, and between low-income and higher-income students.¹

There are many reasons for these challenges and many components of effective education. But understanding these issues is a fundamental question for New York. Will we close a light in the shadows and schools that need help in order to succeed — and provide the ongoing, support, and research-based interventions to transform their experiences — or will we simply leave them under the rug?

These are the possibilities and risks as New York State's education leaders make key decisions in the coming months about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).² By requiring states to adopt their accountability systems, the law has set off opportunities, challenges, civil rights and education leaders to choose to work together to create a system that focuses on quality for all students — one that is recognized and assessed “genuinely,” not imperatively.

Who focus on ESSA? Because New York's response provides a window into the state's vision and creates the framework for our education landscape. Our accountability system under ESSA will — for better or worse — answer four critical questions:

1. What do we value most about school performance?
2. What are our expectations for performance and the things we value?
3. How do we clearly signal to parents and the public whether schools are or are not meeting their expectations?
4. What are the responsibilities of each component of our education system — the state, school district, and the school — if a school is not meeting our expectations?

To enable all New York students to fulfill their potential, we must use the terms in ESSA not just as clear expectations that our education system must meet

TOWARD JUSTICE FOR ALL? (September 2016)

This report launched our coalition work with major civil rights, education, parent and business organizations from across New York. (see page 4 for additional information).

TO 'EXCELSIOR,' AND BEYOND
New York's Opportunity to Lead on College Access, Affordability, and Student Success

As a centerpiece of this year's state budget, Gov. Andrew Cuomo has proposed a plan to make the nation's first public college tuition-free for all students. This proposed brings needed momentum to the college affordability crisis, one that prevents too many academically qualified students from ever achieving a college education — and the historic economic benefits it provides — and that has saddled many of those who do attend college with staggering levels of debt.

The positive effects of the governor's Executive Order should not be underestimated. A state that offers "tuition-free" college can become a college-going culture by giving parents and students alike hope that a postsecondary education is within reach. Helping students, especially low-income and first-generation students, realize that college is in their future — not just for students themselves — can change the paradigm and improve the perception of college affordability, which can lead to a real barrier to access. To Chicago, where the Chicago Promise makes community college tuition free or nearly free, nearly one-third of first-generation college students participating in the program reported that they would not have gone to college without it.³

Moreover, as the data in this policy brief demonstrate, college affordability is a crisis that directly extends into the middle class — even in a state like New York with relatively low tuition and fees at public four-year colleges and a robust state grant program.⁴

The Executive Order could make a meaningful difference in improving postsecondary affordability

and driving down student loan debt for certain students and their families. It could also help more students complete college and successfully enter their degree, which is one of the program's stated goals.

By covering the costs of tuition for middle-class students, as this plan proposes, will not alone dramatically raise the number of low- and moderate-income New Yorkers who earn a college degree and thereby provide the educational benefits that New York needs, nor will it create economic opportunity for the students who need it the most. In fact, despite lower and middle-income students having significant levels of student loan debt, the Executive Order provides no additional aid to the average \$300K or \$350K graduate with household income up to at least \$40,000 who participates in common federal aid programs.⁵ As a result, a state having behind the very students who are depending on higher education as a pathway to economic security.

As New York State's elected leaders finalize the budget this month, they have the opportunity to build on the governor's leadership proposal and take a historic step to improve college access, affordability, and outcomes for all groups of students.

Student Loan Debt: Who Owns How Much?

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has previously reported that New Yorkers collectively owed \$61 billion in student loan debt in 2015.⁶

As the report of the Education Trust-New York, the New York first reported this data and provided a more

TO 'EXCELSIOR,' AND BEYOND (March 2017)

Our data analysis revealed that while lower-income communities shoulder \$35 billion in student loan debt, students in those communities would see little benefit from the new Excelsior Scholarship program, and we offered recommendations for how to strengthen the program.

OUR EYES ON THE HORIZON
How Strong Standards, Implemented Equitably, Can Help All New York Students

With New York State once again at a crossroads in the ongoing debate over academic standards, it is critical to reflect on what matters most: strengthening teaching and learning so that all New York students receive the quality education they deserve.

All students can achieve at high levels when they are taught at high levels, and strong academic standards are an essential ingredient for students and teachers alike to achieve their full potential. New York's state-level critical decisions about the quality of its new academic standards and how teachers and students will be supported once revised standards are adopted in full-scale, the state cannot afford to fail.

High-quality, rigorous, standards-aligned instruction must become the expectation for all teachers. To make that goal a reality, the state must first ensure the rigor of the standards themselves. It must also commit to equitably providing the tools and resources that will enable teachers and school leaders to deliver their day-to-day instruction and classroom engagements with the demands of the standards, and to foster ongoing learning and education throughout the process.

In fact, in many classrooms across the state, teachers report that the current state standards have provided clarity and reference around expectations for students. This has led to rich professional experiences for educators and, in turn, helped teachers select their students' abilities to become the path that students need to meet the schools and districts where standards implementation has been successful, higher standards implementation has been successful.

The following recommendations are offered by Education Trust-New York, the Education Trust-New York, and the High Achievement Team in order to provide a pathway to improve opportunity for students and achieve greater equity in New York's schools. We centered education on learning from their experiences and expertise, as well as observing what has worked in other states and school districts.

It is essential to consider all of these recommendations as components of a single strategy for equity and achievement. With strong standards for all students, the development of aligned, high-quality instructional materials can help teachers deliver rigorous and engaging instruction, and professional development, focused on the implementation and use of these materials and on social standard work, which will foster continuous improvement. Only by integrating standards-based instructional materials with high-quality professional development — and giving participating educators the tools of financially sound implementation

OUR EYES ON THE HORIZON (November 2016)

The Education Trust—New York, Educators for Excellence, New York Educator Voice Fellowship and High Achievement New York, with input from educators around the state, called for maintaining high standards and enhancing curricular resources and student support.

ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY IN NEW YORK STATE

TO THE POINT

- New York has fallen from the top half of states to the bottom half. And within New York, large achievement gaps separate the "haves" from the "have-nots."
- New York is investing the least resources in the students with the greatest needs and providing inequitable access to rigorous college and career prep coursework.
- New York needs to spend far more on postsecondary education than states with high-quality early childhood education, intended to K-12, and collaborate with completion of a college degree and entry into the workforce.

ACHIEVEMENT AND OPPORTUNITY IN NEW YORK STATE (April 2017)

Our report described the state of New York's education system and offered a series of recommendations for improving equity, achievement and opportunity, from early childhood to K-12 schools to college access and completion.

2017-18 BUDGET
FOUR BIG EQUITY ISSUES IN THIS YEAR'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET

Following the release of Governor Cuomo's 2017-18 Executive Budget, The Education Trust-New York has identified four of the educational equity issues that policymakers should address in order to ensure a high-quality education for all New York students—especially low-income students and students of color—from early childhood through college completion.

1 FOUNDATION AID

What the budget does:

The Executive Budget increases School Aid by \$901 million, including \$428 million for Foundation Aid. The State Education Department estimates that the total remaining "Share in" of Foundation Aid would come to \$1.3 billion. However, the Executive Budget eliminates one of the Foundation Aid formula for increased funding in future years.

Our take:

The Executive Budget takes two steps backward for one step forward—with improvements to target poverty this year outweighed by the loss of predictability and transparency in future years and by not doing enough to ensure that schools serving low-income students and students of color receive the resources they need to increase achievement and opportunity.

Equity points:

- Schools should have an annual funding formula that provides a "predictable revenue stream to enhance long-term financial planning." These are

the words the Executive Chamber used in last year's budget proposal when it announced a "three-year plan to eliminate the [Gap Elimination Adjustment] (GEA) that allows for school districts to gradually cut state aid to enhance long-term financial planning and support responsible budget practices."

• New York's school funding system is the second most inequitable in the nation. The state should adopt the Executive Budget's formula improvements that better address poverty and district need, while also setting steps to ensure that students receive additional resources—especially in schools that serve low-income students and students of color.

2 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

What the budget does:

The Executive Budget includes a \$15 million increase to expand pre-kindergarten for 3- and 4-year-olds, with a focus on high-need school districts. The budget also begins a consultation of the state's multiple pre-K programs. The Executive Budget includes no new resources to expand the state-funded early childhood quality initiative, QICAT/PreKcNY.

FOUR BIG EQUITY ISSUES IN THIS YEAR'S EXECUTIVE BUDGET (January 2017)

The Education Trust—New York identified four of the key educational equity budget issues to ensure a high-quality education for all New York students: early childhood education, improving K-12 funding, teacher equity and support, and college affordability, access and completion.

SAFE HAVENS
Protecting and Supporting New York State's Immigrant Students
A Statewide Call to Action

TO THE POINT

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- New York is investing the least resources in the students with the greatest needs and providing inequitable access to rigorous college and career prep coursework.
- New York needs to spend far more on postsecondary education than states with high-quality early childhood education, intended to K-12, and collaborate with completion of a college degree and entry into the workforce.

SAFE HAVENS (May 2017)

Issued in partnership with Advocates for Children of New York, the New York Immigration Coalition and the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, our report highlighted positive practices while also raising serious questions about how schools ensure safe and inclusive learning environments for immigrant students.

AND IT'S GETTING ATTENTION!

We are developing strong relationships with media outlets across New York State and are promoting the equity agenda through news articles and opinion pieces.

DAILY NEWS | OPINION

New York's public schools need laser focus on high standards, fair funding

Chalkbeat

Coalition recommends laser focus on academics in state's accountability system

syracuse.com

Only 38 percent of Upstate NY parents think public schools prepare kids for college

EL DIARIO

Encuesta: graduados no están listos para asistir a la universidad

THE BUFFALO NEWS

Every Student Succeeds is coming. What does that mean for New York?

DAILY NEWS | OPINION

How Trump's budget would hurt New York kids

USA TODAY

NYS must address equity in new plan for schools

POLITICO

State Ed looks at ESSA reporting requirements

"NEW YORK'S FUTURE DEPENDS ON CLOSING THE OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS THAT HOLD BACK TOO MANY CHILDREN FROM REACHING THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND ON UPHOLDING HIGH STANDARDS FOR ALL OF OUR STUDENTS."



"THE STAKES COULDN'T BE HIGHER, ESPECIALLY FOR LOW-INCOME STUDENTS AND STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO MASSIVE SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT."

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ESSA COALITION



The Education Trust–New York is working with a coalition of 20 major civil rights, education, parent and business organizations from across New York to offer recommendations for how the state can seize the opportunities provided by the new federal education law, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We aim to advance equity by creating a strong state accountability system that maintains high standards, prioritizes closing achievement and opportunity gaps, ensures transparency and provides the urgency and sustained support to address schools that are consistently underperforming for any group of children.

The coalition is an unprecedented partnership that shows the power of diverse organizations working together to advance equity.

THE EQUITY SCORECARD	
An Initial Review of New York State's Draft ESSA Plan	
<p>The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an opportunity to advance equity by defining what it means to be a successful school, setting clear expectations that schools must raise achievement for <i>all</i> of their students – not just some, and helping schools and school districts by targeting attention, resources, and support to the places where students are struggling. This is a critical moment for the future of accountability and school support and improvement in New York. Our coalition's initial review of the draft state ESSA plan follows.</p>	
Overall Rating: SOME POSITIVE STEPS, BUT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	
Prioritizing Achievement	<p>Issue Rating The Bottom Line</p> <p>Issue Rating The Bottom Line</p> <p>Issue Rating The Bottom Line</p>
Long-Term Goals	
Additional Indicators	
English Learners	

300+ public comments submitted by coalition members and their community partners

THE TEAM

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FUNDERS

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Carnegie Corporation of New York
Collaborative for Student Success
IBM
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
Walton Family Foundation

THERE'S MORE TO COME!

Working alongside our partners across New York State, we will continue to advocate for more access and opportunity to help all students be successful.



The Education Trust–New York

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