

Testimony for New York City Council Committee on Education Fiscal Year 27 Preliminary Budget - Education March 23, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on the proposed education budget. EdTrust-New York is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to educational equity. We work to attain educational justice through research, policy, and advocacy that results in students of color— particularly Black, Latinx, Asian American and Pacific Islander, and Native American students, and students from low-income backgrounds – achieving at high levels from early childhood through college completion.

As the largest district in the state and nation, serving nearly 1 million students, New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) is a key focus of EdTrust-New York's commitment to advancing equity-focused educational efforts across the state. Such investments are even more critical this year due to federal funding cuts and attacks on critical educational equity programs. The following are our top priorities for the FY27 budget:

NYC Reads and NYC Solves

Research is clear that two education indicators, 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math proficiency, are strongly correlated with future student success. 2024-2025 state assessments show that both NYC Reads and NYC Solves, which prioritize the use of evidence based instructional materials and aligned professional learning for educators, are beginning to improve reading and math outcomes as ELA proficiency rose over 7 points and Math proficiency rose over 3 points.

To continue this progress, sustained investment in evidence-based literacy and math instruction, robust coaching and professional learning for teachers, and targeted interventions for students will be critical. **We urge the City to commit \$200 million in dedicated, baseline funding for NYC Reads and NYC Solves—funding that is protected from annual budget fluctuations. Baseline funding ensures continuity for the professional development, coaching, curriculum support, and family engagement that make these programs work.**

This increased support must address multiple priorities, including:



- Professional Learning & Coaching: Sustained, job-embedded support for educators implementing evidence-based literacy and math instruction.
- Family Engagement: Paid parent ambassadors, culturally responsive communications, and citywide campaigns to build awareness and partnership.
- District-Level Support: Staff in superintendent offices to coordinate implementation and provide coaching support closer to schools.
- Curriculum Selection & Materials: Support for districts to select from approved, evidence-based, culturally responsive curriculum options and ensure access to high-quality instructional materials.
- Pre-K–12 Alignment: Ensuring early childhood programs connect to K–12 literacy and math foundations—building on the administration's commitment to universal childcare and the NYC Reads Together literacy ecosystem work.
- Interventions & Tutoring: Evidence-based interventions and high-impact tutoring—delivered by nonprofit and community providers and paid educators—for students who need to build foundational skills.
- Additional support for Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLLs/ELLs) and students with disabilities to ensure they have access to the new curricula. For example, some of the current curriculum is still not available in Spanish, let alone other languages, to support the hundreds of bilingual programs throughout the city.
- Focused resources to help teachers provide scaffolding for students with disabilities and MLLs/ELLs in the curriculum.
- Expanded support for Adolescent Literacy to scale up promising initiatives and provide intensive intervention to more adolescents who need support to become proficient readers.
- Addressing the needs of students experiencing temporary housing or educational disruptions by providing consistent high-quality curricular materials across NYCPS, combined with aligned professional learning.

Immigrant Students and Families

At a time of heightened immigration enforcement, the city must continue its longstanding support for immigrants and their families by:

- Extending the City Council's current funding to NYCPS's [Project Open Arms](#) (POA) to maintain current partnerships with legal aid organizations, connecting families and students to immigration legal support.
- **Allocating \$450K** to expand [Dream Squads](#) in additional schools and provide compensation to school-based staff to serve as Project Open Arms Point Persons to extend the reach of the POA office.



- Providing funding for immigrant family communications and outreach to help families receive information about their child’s education in a language and mode they can access (**\$4M**). A portion of this funding should support the district’s communication to immigrant families about NYC Reads and NYC Solves, focusing on how to support literacy and numeracy in their home languages.

Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner (MLL/ELL) Education

EdTrust-New York commends the Council’s willingness to support the city’s MLLs/ELLs. We request the following new investments to significantly improve their academic and literacy outcomes:

- We ask for a **\$1.8M investment in high-quality dual-language early childhood education**, allowing NYCPS to open additional bilingual Pre-K programs and provide the necessary training and technical assistance to support implementation.
- The district needs **\$3.4M to procure instructional materials for Standalone English as a New Language (ENL)** to improve the quality of language services and expand its current pilot to additional districts with job-embedded training to ENL teachers.
- A **\$8M investment would allow NYCPS to pilot a model providing guaranteed co-planning time and co-teaching partnerships** between content area and ENL teachers to both meet mandated requirements for Integrated ENL services and simultaneously improve the quality of language development instruction integrated in core academic subjects.
- A **\$10M investment** in poorly performing NYC districts to provide multilingual learner-focused training and job-embedded coaching to support the district’s implementation of NYC Reads and NYC Solves. Specialized training will enable teachers to effectively implement high-quality literacy and math instruction to meet the unique needs of MLLs/ELLs.

The NYC Budget should promote a multilingual New York City by:

- **Investing \$100K for district high schools** to increase the number of MLLs/ELLs who attain the NY State Seal of Biliteracy each year.
- **Provide \$4.1M in dedicated funding** (separate from bilingual education funding) for instructional materials and training for educators to provide heritage and world language instruction in middle and high schools in the top languages spoken at home by NYC students.



Class Size Law Implementation

[EdTrust-New York warned](#) that moving forward without adjustments to the state class size law could put fairness and opportunity at risk. New York City Public Schools' own estimates last year showed that nearly \$1 billion in additional funding is needed, and that 78 percent of those dollars are projected to go to schools serving more advantaged students. Our prior analysis similarly found that schools serving the highest shares of Black, Latinx, and low-income students are receiving significantly less funding per student.

As a result, we believe the state should adjust the timeline for further implementation of the class size law and the City should re-direct the Mayor's proposed \$543 million investment in class size reduction to support the many equity priorities outlined in this testimony.

During this adjusted timeline to get to full implementation, the City should:

1. Work to reach 70% compliance with the law by the 2026-2027 school year, 80% by 2027-2028, 90% by 2028-2029, and full compliance by 2029-2030, with a one year grace period. Ask the State to allow the City to at any point request a pause of this phase-in implementation schedule due to demonstrated fiscal hardship.
2. Create a capital plan to build more schools and classrooms, with a particular focus on elementary schools which is where the evidence is strongest that smaller classes improve student outcomes.
3. Develop a proposal for adjustments to the law and implementation to prevent unintended inequities. A [new report](#) released this week by the Urban Institute found that the city's current compliance stands at 64% across all schools, and the schools serving students with the greatest economic need show higher compliance (98.4%) than those with least needs (34.8%). This means to get to full compliance, the city will need to spend billions of dollars in schools that have the least needs. Adjustments must be made to the law to address this unintended consequence.
4. The City should develop a proposal that considers:
 - Limiting implementation in high schools to just core classes.
 - Urban Institute's report notes that New York City has nearly four times as many high school classes (89,580) as elementary school classes (24,579) and more than twice as many high school classes as middle school classes (36,389). Yet, the evidence that smaller classes are beneficial is strongest for early grades, and limited or non-existent for high school grades.
 - High schools have more classes because they offer many elected classes. Limiting implementation to core content classes would ensure that any class size reduction would benefit the content area classes students need to graduate.



- Adjusting the cap for high school classes.
 - Moving from a cap of 34 students to 25 students is a dramatic shift with little evidence to say that 25 students is the right cap for high school classes.
- Any other adjustments to the law that would ensure funds are driven to the highest needs schools.

Foundation Aid

We urge the City Council to advocate for the State to fully fund the Foundation Aid per pupil funding formula *and make long overdue changes*. Last year, the limited changes made to the formula resulted in NYC schools getting **\$314M less** than they would have had the State made no changes at all. Governor Hochul’s FY 2027 Executive Budget does not make any additional changes to better reflect student needs or reverse the negative impact of last year’s changes on NYC schools.

Fortunately, the Assembly and Senate one-house budgets include a new weight for students in temporary housing or in foster care – with a higher weight proposed by the Assembly – and increase the weight for English Language Learners/Multilingual Learners. We urge the City Council to push to ensure the final FY 2027 state budget includes the Assembly’s proposed weight (.65) for students who are homeless or in foster care, as well as the increase (.60) to the weight for MLLs/ELLs included in both one-house budgets.

Baseline Historical Education Programs

EdTrust-New York is pleased that the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget baselines funding for two essential initiatives that had previously been funded only through this June – preschool special education services and summer programming. However, other important education programs funded through this year only were left out of the Preliminary Budget and are, therefore, at risk of being rolled back or eliminated as soon as this July. These programs include:

- **Learning to Work**, which provides support to over-age, under-credited students to help them earn a high school diploma and develop a post-secondary plan. (\$31M)
- **Sensory Exploration, Education & Discovery (SEED)**, which supports students with intensive sensory needs. (\$12M)
- **Infant/toddler (0-2) child care seats in high-need communities** (\$10M)—programs that just got up and running this January and represent the first city-funded non-means tested child care for infants and toddlers.
- **Restorative justice**, which helps students stay in school, repair relationships, and resolve conflicts instead of being suspended. (\$6M)



- **Mental Health Continuum**, which provides expedited mental healthcare to students at 50 high-needs schools. (\$5M)
- **Early childhood education outreach**, which helps families learn about early childhood programs and will be essential as the City launches 2-K. (\$5M)
- **Immigrant family communications and outreach**, which helps families receive information about their child's school in a language and mode they can access. (\$4M)
- **Student Success Centers**, which allow trained youth leaders to build a culture of college-going and help their peers with the college admissions process. (\$3.3M)

The dollar amounts listed above reflect the funding needed merely to maintain the programs at their current funding levels.

We join with the [Coalition for Equitable Education Funding](#) in calling for the City to extend and baseline funding for these programs in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget, so that students, families, educators, and providers will know that they can continue relying on these programs in future years. We also join with the coalition in calling on the City to make additional investments that are needed to support students, especially those who have the greatest needs.

Universal Child Care and Child Care Workforce

EdTrust-New York appreciates new childcare investments. However, a universal childcare system cannot succeed without a stable and well-supported workforce. The first three years of a child's life shape lifelong development, and childcare professionals provide vital developmental support during this critical period. Yet they earn less than 96% of workers in other New York occupations. There was a 79% increase in family-based care between 2019 and 2024 and a 43% increase in center-based care. Yet only a 13% increase in average earnings. These low wages are exacerbating an already strained system and threaten to handicap bold child care investments in the future.

We urge the City to enact the following universal child care recommendations:

- **New York City leaders should join the child care community and state lawmakers calling for the State Budget to implement a child care workforce compensation fund** to provide ongoing and reliable compensation supplements to all members of the child care workforce until New York has achieved statewide universal child care that pays providers adequate rates to pay the workforce a thriving wage (\$1.2 billion).
- **New York City leaders should urge New York State leaders to adopt the Governor's proposed \$1.2 billion in new investment in the Child Care Assistance program** and



add the funding necessary to fully meet demand for CCAP/vouchers in New York City as the City and State move toward statewide universal child care.

- New York City leaders must ensure that New York City meets any matching requirements to draw down all CCAP funds.
 - New York City must act without delay to ensure that no early childhood seats are left empty while children from low-income families are languishing on the voucher waitlist.
 - **It is also critical to note that the voucher waitlist is playing a role in keeping compensation for child care educators low, particularly those working in home-based settings.** A November 2025 report by the New School’s Center for New York City Affairs, [Dignified Pay for Quality Care](#), demonstrates the extent to which under-enrollment in New York City home-based programs contributes to low-pay. They found that home-based provider average hourly wages in 2023 were \$7.33 for Family Child Care (FCC) and \$5.98 per hour for Group Family Child Care (GFCC), their hourly wage increased threefold if they had full, or close to full enrollment, to \$18.84 and \$17.62, respectively. However, only 29 percent of the FCC providers and 51 percent of GFCC providers surveyed had “good enrollment” in 2023. Across the state, licensed home-based providers serve 38% of families receiving CCAP/vouchers, leaving this type of care particularly vulnerable to the impacts of low-enrollment because families are languishing on a CCAP/voucher waitlist.
- **Adopt the Governor’s proposal to invest \$73 million to launch 2-K in New York City** focusing initially on high-need areas, and ensure that 2-K is implemented in a manner that guards against the loss of infant and toddler seats, with flexibility to adjust the model to a multi-age, community care or other model if these issues arise. Further, it is essential that all modalities of child care—including center and home-based child care providers—are able to fully participate in 2-K.
 - **Expand pre-K and 3-K in coordination with full funding of CCAP.**
 - **Prioritize communities with high rates of low-income families with young children** for universal projects and 3-K expansions.

Career and College Pathways

With major changes coming to state graduation requirements, it is critical that NYCPS continue their important work to provide students with real world skills and early career insights. To accomplish this, New York City must ensure that all students have equitable pathways to college and career success, particularly students of color and students from low-



income backgrounds. Systemic barriers, including inequitable access to college in high school programs and inadequate emergency financial support in college, limit opportunities for many students. We urge the City to:

- Strengthen supports and emergency aid for students in college, including targeted resources for programs like CUNY’s [ASAP](#) and [ACE](#)
- Increase city investment in college in high school programs and map program locations to identify gaps in access
- Evaluate college in high school programs and student outcomes to guide evidence-based expansion of high-quality programs
- Invest resources in pathways into the teaching profession, particularly for educators of color, including by following the [state’s guidance](#) to help develop and expand “Grow Your Own” initiatives in New York City, pipelines for school-based staff to become educators, and programs to recruit and retain bilingual educators and special education teachers

School Integration

NYCPS is the [most segregated school district in the](#) country. Today, our school zoning is more reflective of red-lined communities in 1930 than any other time. This root cause issue has perpetually facilitated learning and opportunity inequities for decades and stands in the way of holistically advancing the bulk of all equitable policies and practices intended to better serve all the city’s children.

We urge the baseline funding of \$2 million annually, beginning in Fiscal Year 2027 and continuing for three years, to support the Community School District Diversity Working Groups, as required under [Local Law 225 of 2019](#).

Thank you for the opportunity to share our testimony.

