

**Alliance for Quality Education's Analysis of Governor Paterson's
Education Budget Proposal:
\$1.4 billion in cuts to classrooms across New York State
Equals \$11,678 per Classroom Statewide**

On January 18, 2010 Governor Paterson released a budget proposal that would cut \$1.4 billion in education from New York State. Under the Governor's budget proposal, the average cut per classroom for a school district is \$11,678. The cuts per classroom range in size between \$2,303 and \$24,776.¹ 63.5% of districts would face cuts greater than \$10,000. 24% of districts would have cuts greater than \$15,000 per classroom.

This proposed budget represents a major reversal from the commitment to settle the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. Under the original settlement, schools across New York State were scheduled to receive an increase in funding, with 70% of the funding going to high-need school districts. This proposal adds cuts to the already broken promise from last year's budget that delivered flat-level funding and moves us backwards in delivering a quality education to all students. According to Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, the Governor's "budget proposal cuts school aid by \$1.4 billion and leaves the state \$4.2 billion below what we originally pledged under our CFE commitment."²

Cuts of this magnitude would mean that school districts would be forced to cut personnel, layoff teachers, increase class sizes, reduce extracurricular and college-preparatory courses, moving New York schools away from a full and rich curriculum and quality learning opportunities. Last year, \$1.6 billion in federal funding saved over 18,600 education jobs – these jobs and more would be eliminated with the state's \$1.4 billion in state cuts.³

The New York State Board of Regents, experts on State Aid this year proposed an increase of \$523 million in school aid. State Education Commissioner Dr. David Steiner noted that, "Each year the formula is frozen, it adds to the eventual cost of restoring it when the economy turns around. Under a freeze, the amount of funding going to each district becomes further and further removed from realities in that district. Before long...it will be infeasible ever to get back to the formula. So instead we would suggest that you maintain progress on the formula and achieve savings through other mechanisms."⁴

¹ See methodology for full notes on calculations.

² *Queens Tribune Online*, "State of Shock: New Taxes, Plenty of Cuts Dominate Paterson's Budget Plan" Brian M. Rafferty, 1/21/2010 http://www.queenstribune.com/feature/Feature_012110_stateofshock.html

³ US Department of Education American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Report: State-by-State Data Submitted on: January 30, 2009 <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/spending/arra-program-summary2.pdf>

⁴ LoHud.com "Education Cuts Could Lead to More layoffs, Yonkers School chief says" Cara Matthews, 2/3/2010. <http://www.lohud.com/article/20100203/NEWS05/2030326/Education-cuts-could-lead-to-more-layoffs--Yonkers-school-chief-says>

While this budget attempted to promote a fair distribution of cuts, cuts of this magnitude are detrimental all across the state. The vast majority of districts would face classroom cuts of \$10,000 or more. High-wealth districts are largely spared from the harm these districts would face; under the proposed budget school districts that are low-need/high-wealth receive the smallest dollar cut per classroom.

Methodology

Governor Paterson proposed record cuts to education on January 18, 2010 – his budget briefing book actually proposes cuts in state aid of \$2.1 billion, and then partially restored with \$725 million in federal funds – amounting to \$1.4 billion in cuts to school districts operating aid. This \$1.4 billion cut is shown as the *Gap Elimination Adjustment* in the Governor's *School Aid Runs*. This analysis relies on the Governor's published *Gap Elimination Adjustment Plus Federal Restoration* for each school district in the state in calculating the cut per classroom. Additionally \$367 million in increases were made to support transportation, BOCES, and other services which increase annually in cost and for which districts are reimbursed based upon actual expenditures in the prior school year. While some sources have cited cuts to school districts as \$1.1 billion, the \$1.4 billion cuts to education are in fact the correct number to use according to the budget briefing book and the state's Budget Director.

The Alliance for Quality Education calculated the cut for every district, and divided that total by the estimated public enrollment given in the state aid runs to yield a cut per pupil. AQE then used the total for the Average Elementary Class Size (Common Branch) from the most recent 2007-08 School Report Card database. AQE multiplied the cut per pupil by the average elementary class size to show the average cut per elementary classroom in the district. Four districts in NYS are “feeder districts” that do not serve elementary grades, or did not report their class size average to SED and are not reflected in the School Report Card Database—these districts were excluded from the analysis. Each school district's total cut, enrollment, cut per pupil, class size, and cut per classroom are listed. The data is organized alphabetically by county, then alphabetically by district within each county. County totals are listed at the bottom of each row with the heading ***Totals*** showing the total cut to education for the county, the total county enrollment, and the average cut per pupil in the county (total cut divided by total enrollment.)