



YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



"Achieving Excellence Together"

Testimony Before Joint Legislative Budget Committee

January 23, 2012

Presented By:

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Yonkers Public Schools

JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMITTEE

YONKERS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

I would like to take this opportunity to thank co-chairs Senator John A. DeFrancisco and Assemblyman Herman D. Farrell as well as the Education Chairs Senator John J. Flanagan and Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan for allowing us this venue to speak candidly about the state of education in our districts. As you are acutely aware, the Big 4 School Districts educate over 100,000 children in our state. It is my privilege to address you today on behalf of the nearly 26,000 students and 3,300 employees of the (YCSD) Yonkers City School District.

Some of what I need to convey will sound familiar. The call for change in funding public education has been clear and consistent through the years. The need for a renewed focus on instructional results for our students is universally acknowledged. The need for a fair, equitable and accountable evaluation system is long overdue and we are all favor of this move. However being prodded to move ever so quickly to comply with 3012-c, with the threat of withholding federal and state dollars from the neediest districts, in my mind, is missing its mark.

Today however, I hope to touch upon not only the grave problems before us but some of the solutions that lie within our grasp. Some problems will require an increase in state aid to an equitable level that will help the YCSD realize sustainable growth and vitality where stagnation and mediocrity now threaten. Some solutions will require no more than the will of this legislature, and the support of the Governor, to come to fruition.

However, after all the talk of change and renewal, the same stark realities remain:

- 1. FOUNDATION AID – JUST DOESN'T WORK FOR YONKERS**
- 2. PER PUPIL STATE AID - DRASTICALLY REDUCED TO YCSD**
 - a. Two-Year Impact of Cuts to Yonkers Public Schools**
- 3. THE YONKERS CITY SCHOOL BUDGET – 2012 – 2013**
- 4. ACCRUALS – SPENDING WHAT WE DON'T HAVE**
- 5. UNFUNDED MANDATES – STILL NO RELIEF**
- 6. PRIVATE PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP - FIRST IN THE NATION**
- 7. CHARTS: *The Big Picture and YCSD Graduation Rates***
- 8. CONCLUSION**
- 9. ADDENDUM: *What does it cost to educate a YCSD student?***

FOUNDATION AID – JUST DOESN'T WORK FOR YONKERS

The Foundation Aid formula, which has never truly reflected the needs of the YCSD, even when it was allowed to operate, still remains frozen. Despite public declarations of an “increase” in aid in the local media last week, the \$9.6 million dollar increase in the Executive Budget (EB) is based on reimbursement on aid we earned in the previous year. The additional \$2.8 million dollars, which, in reality was a reduction of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), the EB proposal still keeps Foundation Aid frozen at 2008/09 levels, thereby still reflecting 2008/09 enrollment. Enrollment in YCSD has grown by 1,257 since Foundation Aid was last adjusted to reflect enrollment growth. This is stark contrast to the fact that many districts have lost enrollment. In fact, those who have lost students have effectively realized a per pupil increase in aid. YCSD has therefore been twice penalized, in fact experiencing a decline in aid per pupil aid. If all the legislature did were to let the Foundation Formula run as it was intended to, without adjustment for enrollment, \$21,063,526 would be returned to the District. In summary, if the 1,257 increase in enrollment was recognized, it would yield **\$9,214,476** in additional revenue to YCSD with no overall increase in state education aid.

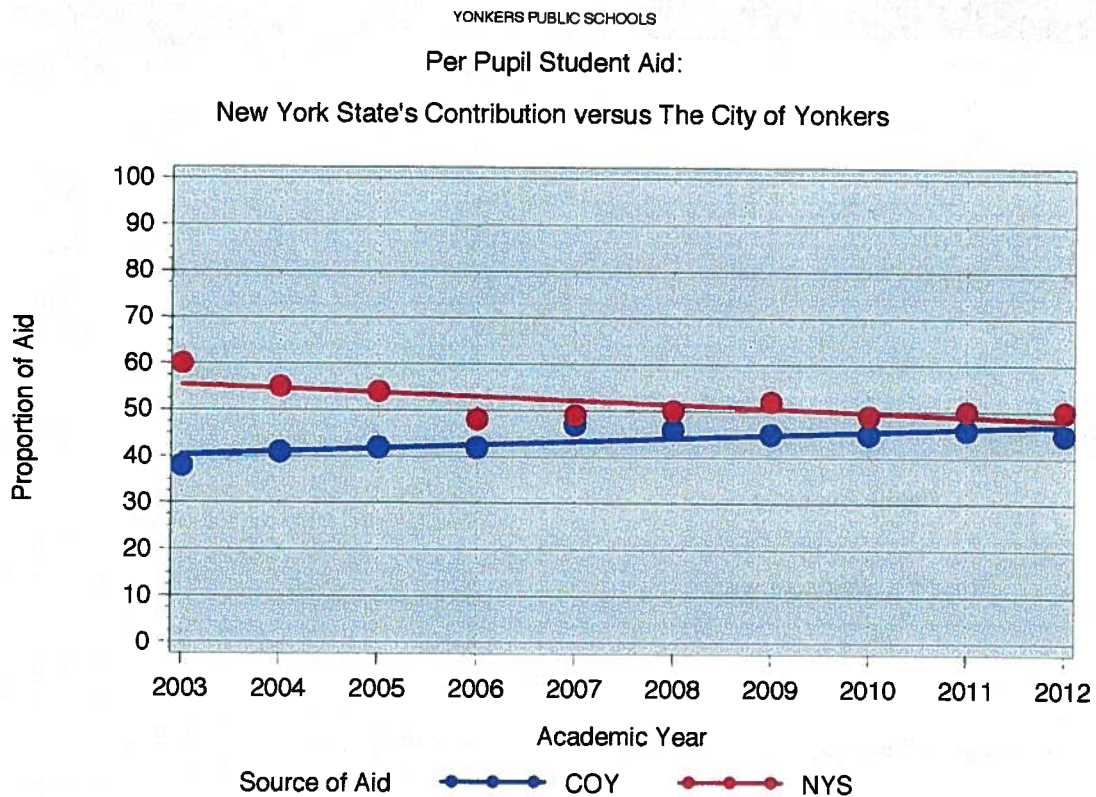
City	Executive Percent Increase	Enroll 2010-2011 w/o PK	Executive Actual 2012-13 Increase	2012-13 Increase Per Child
Buffalo	5.29	39,148	\$32,166,308	\$821.65
Rochester	2.89	33,326	\$12,784,767	\$383.62
Syracuse	6.08	21,305	\$15,799,629	\$741.59
Yonkers	4.64	24,836	\$ 9,609,907	\$386.93

City	Enroll 2010-2011 w/o PK	Executive 2012-13 Total NYS Aid	NYS Aid Per Child	*GEA 2012-13
Buffalo	39,148	640,531,681	\$16,361	+8.3M
Rochester	33,326	454,886,457	\$13,649	+6.0M
Syracuse	21,305	275,670,001	\$12,939	+4.9M
Yonkers	24,836	216,881,996	\$ 8,732	+2.8M

*GEA – Gap Elimination Adjustment (included in \$9,609,907 increase)

PER PUPIL STATE AID - DRASTICALLY REDUCED TO YCSD

Over a ten year period the percentage of aid per pupil in the YCSD has been reduced from 60% to 50% a decrease of 10% while the city contribution has increased 7% from 38% per pupil to 45% per pupil. This year the YCSD is hobbled working with only ten psychologists and seven social workers for 26,000 students. There is little Art and Music and no Library in the elementary schools. The highly successful and award winning full day Pre-Kindergarten has been relegated to a half day program. Always a source of pride, this year, many of our working parents can no longer take advantage of the half day Pre-K program. There are only two guidance counselors assigned to every high school with average case loads of 600+ students.



Per pupil Spending_State vs City 0203 to 1112.xls



YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Two-Year Impact of Cuts to Yonkers Public Schools 2010/2011 - 2011/2012

	Number of Positions				Positions Lost
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2011/12 vs 2008/09
Civil Service	1,604.00	1,591.50	1,438.00	1,431.00	(173)
Teamsters	25.00	27.00	20.00	20.00	(5)
Teachers	2,093.00	2,053.50	1,872.00	1,686.00	(407)
Building Administrators	97.00	100.00	89.00	95.00	(2)
Central Office Administrators	62.00	57.00	48.00	46.00	(16)
Total	3,881.00	3,829.00	3,467.00	3,278.00	(603)

Enrollment Growth (K-12)		
Year	K-12 (BEDS)	K-12 Enrollment Change
2007	22,736	
2008	22,894	158
2009	23,381	487
2010	24,002	621
2011	24,241*	239
	Total	1,505

*Unofficial K-12 Enrollment, October 2011

Central Office: Reduction of Personnel Equates to Reduction of Services	
Data Processing	Reduction in staff compromises District's ability to process/analyze payroll and maintain student data
Facilities Management	Elimination of key positions leads to higher reliance on outside contractors
Finance	Reduction of personnel requires smaller staff to assume additional functions and delays turn-around time
Human Resources/Professional Development	Combining Organizational Development with Human Resources limits Professional Development to staff
Information Technology	Reduction in IT staff minimizes ability to address technological needs of District schools
Registration	Elimination of Parent Coordinators hampers parental outreach and navigation of registration process
Public Information	Elimination of three positions encumbers timely and effective crisis communication and outreach to stakeholders
Support Staff	Elimination of support positions burdens every department and negates the benefit of years of experience and institutional knowledge

Two-Year Impact of Cuts to Yonkers Public Schools 2010/2011 – 2011/2012

Program/Department	Reduction/Elimination of Services
Arts Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced to intermittent instruction of Art & Music (Elementary/Middle Years) • Elimination of Instrumental Music (Elementary/Middle Years) • Reduction in Arts & Music course offerings (High School)
Career & Technical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Trades, Vocational and Technical course offerings (High School/Middle Years) • Reduction in \$1.7 million New York State aid
Early Childhood & Elementary Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of Prekindergarten to a half-day of instruction • Increase in class size to capacity • Reduction in both remediation and enrichment of literacy skills • Reduction in clerical support
Food Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in Food Service Cooks and Helpers
Interscholastic Sports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermittent instruction of Physical Education (Elementary/Middle Years) • Elimination of Intramural, Modified and Junior Varsity Sports • Reduction in Varsity Sports • Elimination of Athletic Directors
Library Media Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Librarians in the elementary schools • PK-8 Schools reduced to Library 1 day a week • High Schools reduced to Library 2.5 days a week
Middle Years/High School Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in class size to capacity results in the reduction in the number of core area sections • Electives and enrichment courses significantly reduced
Pupil Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Psychologists service nearly 26,000 students – 2,600 to 1 ratio • High Schools reduced to 2 Guidance Counselors per building – 650 to 1 ratio • Elementary schools limited to once-a-week visits from Pupil Support staff (Psychologists, Social Workers, Guidance Counselors)
School Aides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of School Aides in elementary schools • Elimination of full-time School Aides in Prekindergarten and Kindergarten classes
School Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in School Safety Officers (Elementary/Middle/High)
Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes combined to service students with similar classifications • District falls further behind in monitoring IEPs and testing and classifying students

THE YONKERS CITY SCHOOL BUDGET – 2012 - 2013

This year's budget calls for the restoration 212 positions lost the prior year due to drastic budget cuts and underfunding by the state. It is the only discretionary cost increase contemplated for next year.

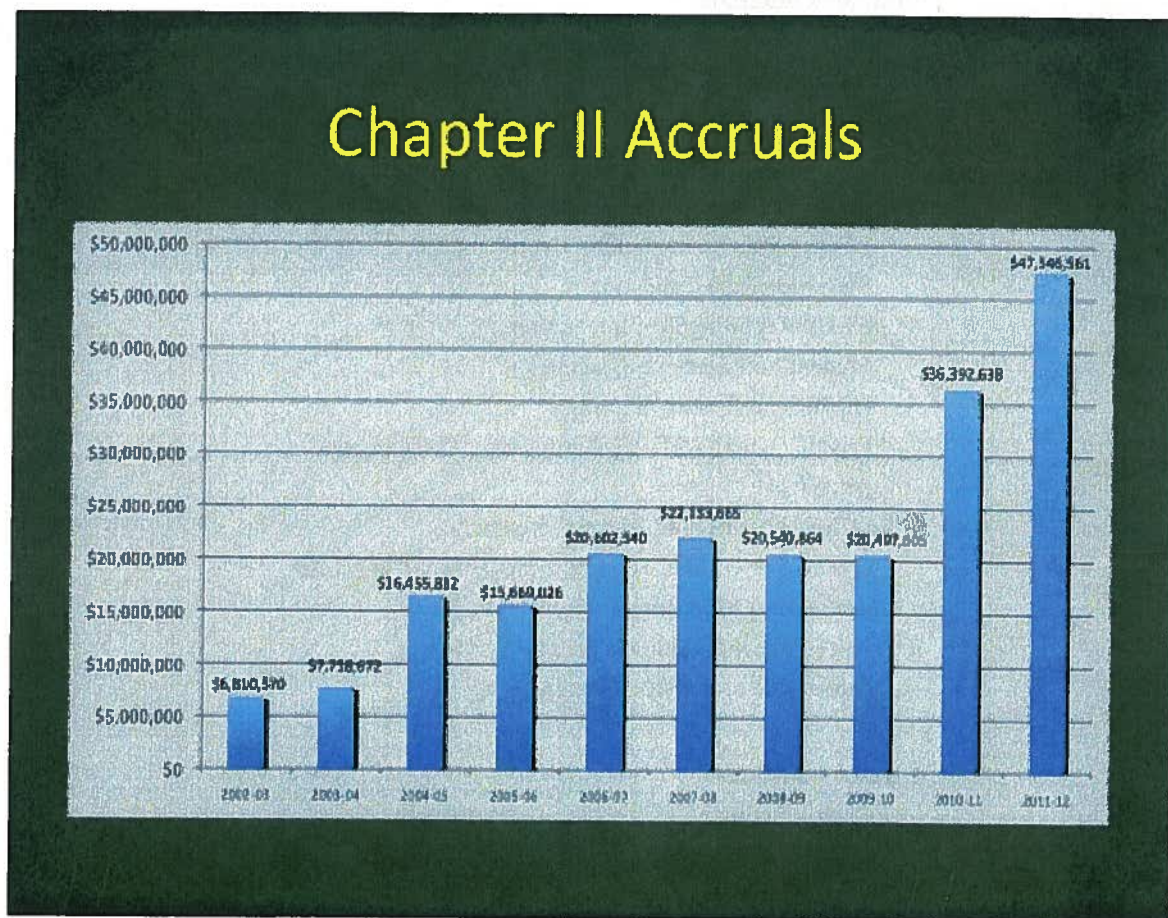
Anticipated Revenue 01/17/12	508,002,516
Less: Expense Estimate	(547,185,088)
Estimated Budget Shortfall	(39,182,572)

Major Expense Changes - (Increase)/Decrease

Salary - Due to Steps	(6,804,856)
ERS	(1,525,899)
TRS	(2,613,155)
Unemployment	1,857,771
Other Fringe Changes	(112,246)
Restored Staff - Salary	(22,535,600)
Restored Staff - Fringe	(7,699,895)
Tuitions	(4,240,379)
Charter Schools	(1,936,736)
BOCES	520,634
Contractual	(1,627,029)
Debt Service	(614,326)
Fuel Oil	(622,080)
Other Utilities	(355,632)
Supplies, Equipment, Textbooks, etc	679,561
Transportation	1,445,925
Miscellaneous	(90,681)
	<u>(46,274,623)</u>

ACCRUALS – SPENDING WHAT WE DON'T HAVE

While the state enacted the (GEA) Gap Elimination Adjustment over the past three years the YCSD has been allowed to accrue this elimination as revenue moving forward. In 2002-2003 the district accrued \$6.8 million dollars and by 2009-2010 it grew to \$20.4 million dollars. This year the expected Chapter One accrual will reach \$47.5 million dollars. Simply moving revenue into the following year is not solving the inequity of the Foundation Aid Formula. The formula must be adjusted for a district with a 70% free and reduced school population, which happens to be located in affluent Westchester County. A frozen Foundation Aid formula and a permanent GEA deduction against state aid have led to a dramatic increase in our reliance upon accruals.



UNFUNDED MANDATES – STILL NO RELIEF

Unfunded mandates continue to be the subject of countless committees, reports and speeches and continue to be as prevalent and pernicious as ever, taking millions of dollars from the basic education of our children. In the EB that was presented last week we see two more unfunded mandates being thrust upon school districts. One is the early intervention for preschool special needs students, which is now paid by the state and local county. The EB recommends the County cost now be born by the school district...a multi-million dollar cost shift. In addition, the recommended budget calls for all 3020-a (disciplinary hearings for professionals) now be born by the district and union. In the last fiscal year, unfunded mandates accounted for 12.53% of our budget or \$62,366,147. We support the mandate relief proposals suggested by the Big Five and Lower Hudson Council of School Superintendents and will not reiterate them here. And we further urge the legislature not to enact new mandates (like the proposed shift of costs for preschool special education to school districts and the proposed pilot program that would require school districts to provide services to children hospitalized at State Office of Mental Health facilities) unless full state funding is also provided.

Unfunded Mandate	Cost
1. Special Education:	17,887,082
2. Charter School Payments from District State Aid:	3,354,813
3. Supplemental Education Services (SES) Programming:	275,000
	\$21,516,895
4. Data Warehousing – Student Information Systems:	-
District Data Manager/CIO Requirements	117,500
Statewide Data Collection	315,000
BEDS Reporting/DW Integration	75,000
Student Management Systems	325,000
HS Regents Testing/Scoring	175,000
Private School Software/Hardware Loan/Textbooks	450,000
Attendance	60,000
5. No Child Left Behind Requirements:	745,000
Grades 3-8 Testing, Scoring, Analyzing and Mailings	1,700,000
6. Construction Mandates Under Wicks Law:	775,000
7. Private/Parochial Schools Health Services:	1,761,600
Nurse Care to private/ parochial schools	298,100
	\$6,797,200
8. Audit Functions:	
Claims Auditor	68,400
Comptroller's Office Audit (6 FTE x 20%)	28,772
External Auditing	125,000
GASB 45 – increased independent auditing costs	
· Internal Auditor	181,440
· External Auditing Contract for Excellence	10,000

	<u>\$413,612</u>
403(b) Mandates January 1, 2009	<u>55,796</u>
	<u>\$55,796</u>
10. Facilities:	
Administration of State Environmental Quality	
Annual AHERA Inspection	51,000
Annual Visual Inspection	50,000
Asbestos Inspection & Management Plan	65,000
Building Condition Survey (every 5 years)	363,604
Building Level School Safety Plan	20,000
District Wide School Safety Plan	30,000
Electronically Operated Partitions re-fitting	150,000
Environmentally Sensitive Products ("Green Cleaning")	300,000
Fire Extinguisher Testing and Monitoring	25,000
Hazardous Waste Removal	40,000
Integrated Pest Management	60,000
Radon Awareness & Testing	1,000
Fire Safety Inspections	20,000
Tank Testing and Repair	166,103
Fire Alarm Testing and Repair	180,000
Boiler Inspections	12,000
Integrated Pest Management	60,000
Comprehensive Maintenance Plan	30,000
Triennial AHERA Inspection	51,000
Right to Know Law & Hazard Communication	12,000
	<u>\$1,686,707</u>
11. Health:	
Health Services Other Districts	1,761,631
	<u>\$1,761,631</u>
12. Instruction:	
Student Calculators	44,856
	<u>\$44,856</u>
13. Personnel:	
Leave for Prostate & Breast Cancer Screening	595,000
	<u>\$595,000</u>
14. BOCES Tuition Discrepancies	11,500,000
15. Student Transportation	16,500,000
16. Health Care Screening	1,041,250
17. Family Medical Leave Act	433,400
18. NYS Accountability System	19,800
	<u>\$62,366,147</u>
GRAND TOTAL:	<u>\$62,366,147</u>

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP - FIRST IN THE NATION

Given the relatively low building aid that YCSD receives, we needed to find a way to build new schools and rebuild buildings that are literally crumbling around our students. Past capital plans, poorly funded by a city concerned with assuming more debt through municipal bonds, could not keep pace with the rate at which our buildings were falling apart. Walls are collapsing, boilers exploding, roofs leak, vermin infestation continues and those windows that still work rattle in the wind; our buildings are deteriorating faster than they can be repaired under the current capital model. We are fighting a losing battle to provide safe, healthy buildings for our students that are also functional 21st century educational environments.

We have developed a three-phase Educational Facilities Plan (EFP) to meet the ambitious goal of re-creating the physical milieu of YCSD over course of an aggressive 15-year reconstruction of YCSD.

Phase I anticipate alterations, additions and sorely needed infrastructure maintenance to 40 schools and the construction of a new Gorton High School. It is anticipated to take five years to complete at a cost of \$682,906,686 (The complete EFP will be completed in three phases over 15 years and cost \$1,656,178,696). Phase I will address immediate health and safety issues in all of our schools and alleviate chronic overcrowding in 12 schools.

Yonkers' school buildings are the oldest in New York State. Our "average" building is 73 years old, nine buildings are over 95 and our oldest building is 117. Ninety-five percent of our buildings have been rated "Unsatisfactory" under state-mandated guidelines. In addition to literally crumbling around our students, our schools were built to the educational standards of another, bygone eras. They are dark, poorly ventilated and uniformly too small. We rank second to last in square footage per student.

Exacerbating the problem is the increasing size of our student population. In 2010, our buildings were overcrowded by 20%. A recently completed demographic study projects enrollment growth of 12% over the next ten years – an addition of nearly 3,000 new students to a system already taxed beyond its limits.

The EFP will address the issues of deteriorating infrastructure and over crowding and, in doing so, will offer massive and much-needed economic stimulus to the region. Phase I of this project alone will create over 13,560 jobs in the region. This is a plan that will deliver improvements to schools as well as the promise of economic vitality to a District where 72% of our children live in poverty.

PAYING FOR THE EDUCATION FACILITIES PLAN – P3

Such a reconstruction plan is little more than a dream without another plan; a plan to finance the EFP without relying upon the state or city government to incur hundreds of millions of dollars of bond debt. In keeping with the Governor's intention to use public/private partnerships (P3) to leverage government assets and competencies, the YCSD intends to pursue partners in the private sector to design, build, finance and maintain the buildings addressed in the EFP. We have already completed an RFP for advisors for this endeavor that has attracted proposals from the largest and most highly regarded finance, legal and technical advisors on the planet. The advisory team chosen will guide the YCSD in its ultimate selection of the concessionaire group that will ultimately help us realize the EFP.

A P3 offers several clear advantages to the public sector and, particularly, to a public school system:

- P3 provides a new source of funding for YCSD without incurring more debt;
- P3 accelerates delivery of the EFP – some students currently in the system will directly benefit during their life at YCSD;
- P3 allows YCSD to leverage private sector efficiencies to reduce costs and provide value to stakeholders;
- P3 investors are incentivized to use state-of-the-art design and project execution methods, as well as meet rigorous energy efficiency and air quality standards
- P3 shifts risks outside of YCSD's core competency – design, construction, financing, and maintenance – to the private sector without privatizing the buildings or the program. YCSD can focus on what it does best – assuring the functional program of the buildings meets our standards;
- P3 will create over 13,500 jobs in the region in the next five years.

This will be an historic event - the first public school system P3 in the United States, ever. The accommodations-based P3 model has been pioneered in other countries but is relatively new to our shores. It is exactly the kind of new thinking that the Governor has encouraged, it is the kind of relief from an increasing spiral of debt our taxpayers deserve, it is the best and most lasting kind of job creation plan and, most of all, and it will finally repair a broken physical plant for the schoolchildren of Yonkers.

The Big Picture: Where does YPS fit in New York State?

2010-11 marks the second year in a revised New York State testing program that applied higher cut scores to more rigorous ELA and Math 3-8 examinations. Despite these substantial changes coupled with staggering budgetary constraints, YPS outperformed all other Big 5 Districts, with the exception of New York City (Figures 1 & 2). Consistent with the State average and Big 5 Districts, the proportion of Yonkers students achieving proficiency on the English Language Arts exam remained virtually unchanged from the previous year, dropping an insignificant 1.4 percentage points from 39.2 percent in 2010 to 37.8 in 2011. Similarly, 40.4 percent of Yonkers students achieved proficiency on the mathematics exam, reflecting a non-significant one percent drop from 2010.

Figure 1. ELA 3-8 Combined: Percent of Students At or Above Proficiency

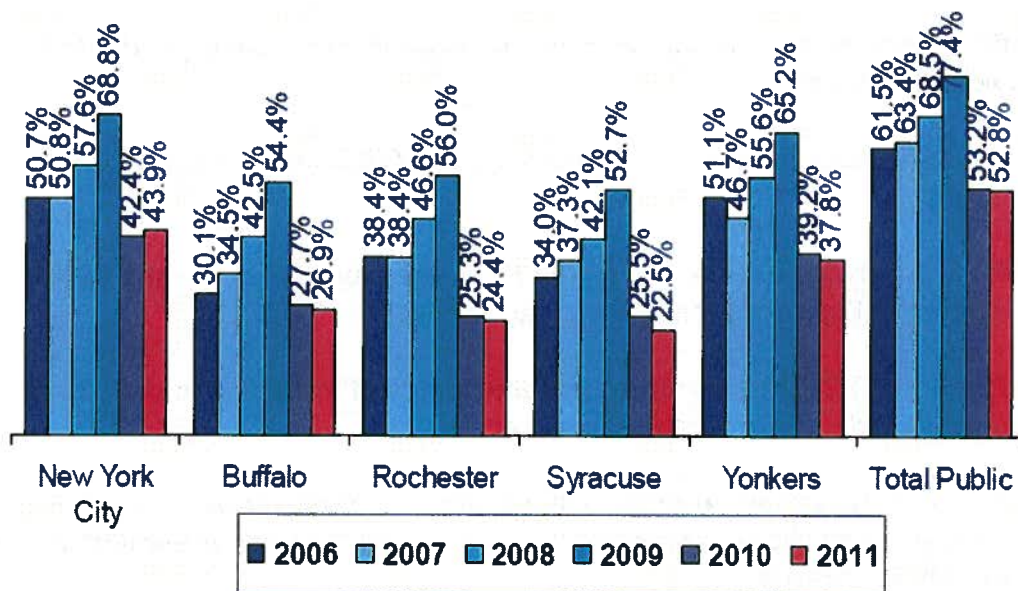
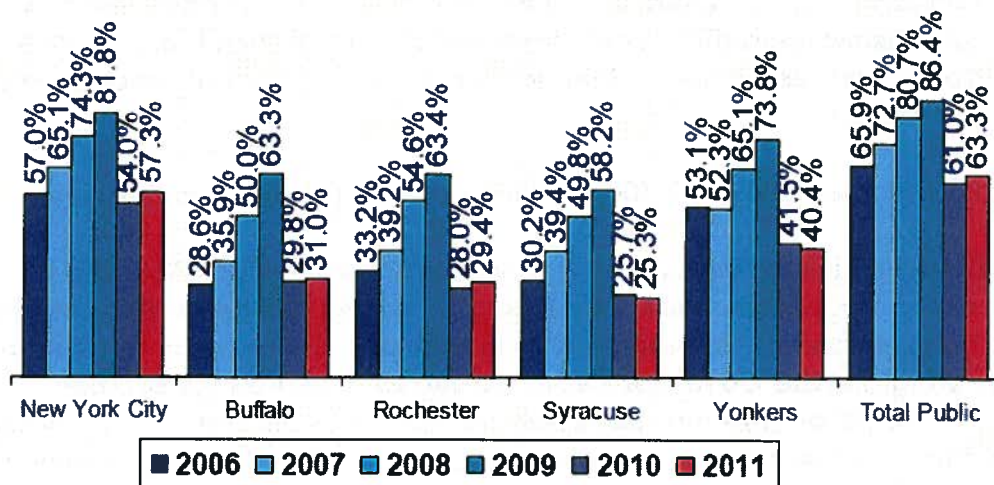


Figure 2. Math 3-8 Combined: Percent of Students At or Above Proficiency



YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS GRADUATION RATE

Cohort Year	Academic Year	Number of Students in Cohort	Number of Graduates Graduating by August	Graduation Rate Percent of cohort graduating by August
2007	2010-11	1858	1339	72%
2006	2009-10	1667	1144	69%
2005	2008-09	2072	1316	64%
2004	2007-08	1768	1149	65%
2003	2006-07	1668	1051 (Change in NYS Metric)	63% (Change in NYS Metric)
2002	2005-06	1301	976	75%
2001	2004-05	1261	832	66%

2006-07 – NYS changes metrics for graduation rate to the more rigorous standard adopted by the National Governors Association (NGA).

POSTSECONDARY PLANS

Graduates Reported Plans to Attend a Postsecondary Institution – includes students who graduate after five years.

Graduation Year	4-Year College	2-Year College	Total 4 & 2-Year College	Number Graduates (Annual)	Percent Graduates Attending
2009-10	543	443	986	1349	73%
2008-09	557	545	1102	1362	81%
2007-08	450	461	911	1279	71%
2006-07	501	517	1018	1188	86%
2005-06	610	345	955	1159	82%
2004-05	459	307	766	1049	73%

CONCLUSION

As I have noted in past years, the problem of funding of public education in New York is not a failure of spendthrift districts; by and large, we admirably control those costs actually within our control. And we are creative making do with what we have and what we are given. The promise of the P3 project, which may ultimately be responsible for \$1.7 billion dollars of new and refurbished schools, and tens of thousands of jobs, is evidence of the kind of new thinking and creative use of resources that we are capable.

But we may control only what we truly can control. We cannot change the formulas of "permanent law" that work for 99% of the state but not the YCSD; or provide for basic fairness in funding; or continue to service those students who have the greatest needs or magically fund costly mandates.

The Governor has taken up the mantle of the "Students' Lobbyist" and I am glad that he is joining us and there is an advocate in our state's highest office. Let's join together. Let this session mark a turning point where the business of education stopped being about how little we need to invest in the future of our children and started being about how much we need to achieve in a fiscally sound and pedagogically accountable environment.

Thank you.

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Yonkers City School District – Representatives

Board of Education President Paresh Patel

Mayor Michael Spano

Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Senator Jeff D. Klein

Assemblyman J. Gary Pretlow
Assemblyman Thomas J. Abinanti

What does it cost to educate a Yonkers Public Schools student?



**2011-12
Annual Budget**

\$501 million

**Per Pupil
Expenditure for
26,000 Students**

\$19,269.00

Required Operating Expenditures

\$128 million

Employee Benefits*
Health & Pensions

\$4,923 per pupil

\$48 million

Operations
Utilities, Postage, Insurance,
Maintenance & Repairs

\$1,846 per pupil

\$45 million

Transportation
Special Education* & General

\$1,730 per pupil

\$20 million

Debt Service*
Capital Improvement

\$769 per pupil

\$18 million

Administration
Civil Service, Central Office
& Building Administrators

\$692 per pupil

Classroom Instruction

\$242 million⁺

Teacher Salaries,
Equipment/Library Books,
Text Book, Software,
Materials & Supplies

\$9,309.00 per pupil*

⁺\$158 M for general education
⁺\$84 M for special needs students

* NYS/Contractual Mandated Expenses

^{*}\$6,991.00 per general education student
^{*}\$24,705.00 per special needs student