



STUDENTS' ESSENTIAL NEEDS MUST DRIVE APPROPRIATIONS
EQUITY FOR YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENTS' SUCCESS



**BUDGET TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK STATE
JOINT LEGISLATIVE FISCAL AND EDUCATION COMMITTEES**

**PRESENTED BY
DR. EDWIN M. QUEZADA, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

FEBRUARY 8, 2023

Distinguished members of the Joint Legislative Fiscal and Education Committees, thank you for the opportunity to address you on behalf of the Yonkers City School District. I am Superintendent of Schools Dr. Edwin M. Quezada and this is the 9th time that I have come before you to advocate for Yonkers' magnificent students and their families.

This year, I begin with a heartfelt thank you to our state, local and federal leaders for the commitment and collaboration you have provided the Yonkers Public Schools during the very challenging past 3 years. Together, we acted on the belief that there are no excuses when it comes to elevating the learning and lived experiences of young people in urban communities.

Yonkers' students are thriving today because our elected officials made the right investments, which enabled a fiscally responsible education spending plan in Yonkers focused on putting resources where they are most impactful – the classrooms – educators, pupil support services, safety and security. This momentum must continue. A sustainable solution for students' success is within our grasp.

During the last 10 years Yonkers, New York's 3rd largest city, has demonstrated that with commitment, resiliency, and collaboration a model urban community can be created with excellence in government and quality education. The school district with its many challenges has shown that ALL students' needs can be met, children can reach their potential and academic success is achievable. Over the past 7 years, Yonkers has had the highest graduation rate of the Big 5 City school districts with more than a 90% graduation rate for the last 3 years. This was achieved because we say NO to a deficiency model.

Yonkers assumes that our students are brilliant and ready to achieve, we maintain high expectations for students, educators and staff, and provide equity and opportunities to enrich and accelerate academic and social emotional learning.

Today, Yonkers Public Schools is a model urban district, with a balanced budget and a strategic plan that requires all stakeholders to work collaboratively to meet the academic and social emotional needs of students. The City of Yonkers, the State of New York and the federal government's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) funding have made the right investments in our schools; they must be credited for the success of our students.

STUDENTS' ESSENTIAL NEEDS DROVE YONKERS \$74.7 MILLION ARPA & ESSER APPROPRIATIONS FOR STAFF & RESOURCES

Some facts about Yonkers Public Schools students...

- **73%** (17,820) of in-district students are **Economically Disadvantaged**
- **32%** (509) of in-district kindergarten students have **no formal prekindergarten experience**
- **24%** (6,137) in-district students receive **speech, counseling, occupation or physical therapy**
- **19%** (4,716) of in-district students have a **Special Education Individual Education Plan (IEP)** and an additional 842 are in out-of-district programs
 - **83%** of the in-district are children of color
 - **67%** of the in-district are male
- **13%** (3,165) of in-district are **Multilingual Learners**

Yonkers ARPA-ESSER Investment in the Classroom

THE 2024 CHALLENGE – POST ARPA SHORTFALL – WE MUST BE PREPARED!

PROJECTED 2023-2024 POSITIONS

| TITLE | FULL TIME EMPLOYEES | TITLE | FULL TIME EMPLOYEES | TITLE | FULL TIME EMPLOYEES |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| Assistant Principal | 6.00 | Public Safety Officer | 3.00 | Teacher - Library Media Specialist.. | 7.00 |
| Clerk | 1.00 | Registered Professional Nurse | 5.00 | Teacher - Physical Education | 7.00 |
| Custodial Worker | 5.00 | School Aide | 17.00 | Teacher - Reading | 5.00 |
| Facilitators..... | 1.00 | School Counselor | 36.40 | Teacher - Special Education | 3.00 |
| Lifeguard/Swim Instructor | 2.00 | Social Worker | 14.00 | Teacher - Speech | 4.00 |
| PC Technician | 4.00 | Teacher - Art | 12.00 | Teacher - Aquatics Program..... | 1.00 |
| Pool Maintenance Worker..... | 1.00 | Teacher - Career and Technical Education..... | 8.00 | Teacher - ELL | 7.00 |
| Pool Operator Day..... | 1.00 | Teacher - Foreign Language..... | 5.00 | Teaching Assistant | 14.00 |
| Program Specialist..... | 1.00 | Teacher - Instrumental Music..... | 10.00 | | |
| Psychologist..... | 40.70 | | | | |
| | | | | FULL TIME EMPLOYEES TOTAL 221.10 SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S ESSENTIAL NEEDS | |

These data clearly demonstrate Yonkers' need for these staff positions, programs and services supported by ARPA-ESSER funding. **Students' essential needs will not change.** When the funding runs out, the programs must not run out. Yonkers will not be able to sustain these positions. **Help us carry forward the progress we have made transforming educational and social-emotional learning for ALL Yonkers students.**

CONSIDER THESE VIABLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE SUCCESS OF YONKERS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



FOUNDATION AID

Above the Governor's Proposal, increase Yonkers' Foundation Aid by \$40 million dollars over the course of the next 2 fiscal years guaranteeing that the total ARPA appropriation becomes recurrent revenue.



FOUNDATION AID SET ASIDES

Eliminate all unnecessary Foundation Aid set asides such as Community Schools and High Impact Tutoring. Children's needs are significantly different in every community. Yonkers' 90% high school graduation rate proves we know that each student's essential needs must drive our work.



HOST COMMUNITY CASINO APPROPRIATION

Increase the Yonkers Public Schools host community casino appropriation by \$12 million dollars over the course of the next 2 fiscal years, for a total of \$31.6 million annually.



TRANSPORTATION REIMBURSEMENT

Cost of student pupil transportation has increased by \$14 million dollars. Increase to 80% the reimbursement rate.



EARLY CHILDHOOD

Appropriate an additional \$10 million to Yonkers to fully fund Universal Prekindergarten. Stop treating it as expense-based aid depending on enrollment. For urban communities, the uneven flow in enrollment does not change the expense.



SPECIAL EDUCATION

Make a \$20 million dollar investment to Yonkers for special education services due to the increase in the number of students being identified and the complexity of services they require.



MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Invest an additional \$10 million dollars for services to Yonkers annual increase of approximately 400 English language learners/multilingual learners, especially to support certified staff to provide mandated services.



SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

Appropriate an additional \$5 million dollars to develop safety initiatives that address community violence; hire additional school safety officers and increase training, as well as establish youth-based programs in schools and work in collaboration with the police and the courts.



ADDRESS THE TEACHER SHORTAGE CRISIS

Appropriate an additional \$3 million dollars for Yonkers to partner with post-secondary institutions to certify teachers in shortage areas identified by the district. Yonkers has successful models.



CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Appropriate an additional \$5 million dollars for Yonkers to further develop and create new Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs focusing on industry needs. Increase the per pupil appropriation that has been flat for over a decade at \$3,900 and include 9th grade students.



INFRASTRUCTURE

Increase Yonkers' Building Aid Ratio from 69.5% to 90% to address infrastructure upgrades needed for school buildings that average over 80 years old and 25% were built over 100 years ago. Yonkers 2020 Building Condition Survey indicates \$520 million is needed to principally address health and safety issues in schools across the district.

YONKERS OFFERS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION SOLUTIONS FOR 2023-2024 AND IN THE FUTURE

This budget period is an opportunity to assure Yonkers children that the services they require cannot be optional but guaranteed. I am inviting this joint committee to set in motion a plan of action that will establish the conditions for Sustainable Solutions for years to come in Yonkers.

For decades, Yonkers Public Schools has relied on non-recurrent revenue to sustain essential programs, for which we are immensely grateful. Unfortunately, it was not enough to provide and sustain the essential equitable programs – art, music, physical education, library, social-emotional support and, most importantly personnel – teachers, school counselors, psychologists, social workers, school safety officers that our students receive today, which enables them to thrive. This trajectory requires actions from our elected officials that provides recurring revenue for these equitable essential programs and services for Yonkers students.

As a model urban school district and one that gets a high mark on return-on-investment, Yonkers Public Schools deserves the opportunity to continue reimagining education for marginalized students without fearing the potential financial challenge of 2024.

The next two years are crucial for the future stability of the Yonkers Public Schools. Our students continued achievement is dependent on your commitment to our children. I invite you to dream with me, give the Yonkers Public Schools the resources to sustain and improve an educational system where marginalized children thrive having sustained access to essential enriched learning and pupil support services. They deserve it!

Yonkers Public Schools does not subscribe to a model that speaks to learning loss. Our children have only lost the time to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for lifelong success. With the right investment, as was done 3 years ago, this time loss can be reversed. You are the leaders to accomplish this and the time to do it is now.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada

Superintendent of Yonkers Public Schools



YONKERS STUDENTS TODAY

30,064 Urban Students

25,375

Prekindergarten to Grade Twelve Students

- Prekindergarten ages 3 & 4 - **1,391**
- Kindergarten to grade 12 - **22,958**
- Students with Disabilities in Out-of-District Schools - **842**

17,820 Economically Disadvantaged (73%)

4,716 Students with Disabilities (19%)

3,165 Multilingual Learners (13%)

15,005 Hispanic (62%)

3,825 African American/Black (16%)

5,438 White, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, Multi-Racial (22%)

4,689

Yonkers Students attend:

- Charter Schools - **814 students**
- City of Yonkers Parochial/Private Schools - **3,875 students**

These students receive **transportation, textbooks, library resources, nursing services, pupil support services, Title I, II, III and IV funds** and **special education services**.



REVISED

Dr. Edwin M. Quezada, Superintendent of Schools

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