

## **Explore Mechanisms for Providing Working Parents with Increased Child Care Options**

In order to hold down a job or pursue the training and educational opportunities that can promote economic advancement, low-income working parents need access to safe, nurturing and productive environments for their children during the day.

New York State's Universal Pre-Kindergarten Program ("UPK") is a vital tool in this effort. At the time of its creation in 1997, the UPK program was pioneering program to offer free access to all 4 year-olds through schools and community-based organizations to "comprehensive supports to foster social, emotional and physical development along with language and literacy" along with collaboration with school districts to ensure curriculum alignment with K-12 programming.<sup>79</sup>

UPK funding for the 2009-2010 school year was \$414 million. The program served 109,000 four year-olds, or roughly 45 percent of the State's four year-old population. Approximately two-thirds of the State's 677 school districts participate in UPK, and

approximately 54 percent of UPK services were provided through community-based organizations.<sup>80</sup> Since the program's creation, UPK has demonstrated gains in emotional adjustment and self-regulation, math and numeracy, and physical and mental health among participants, and the open access system has succeeded in drawing in more children from at-risk backgrounds.<sup>81</sup>

Many child care advocates note that if the UPK program allowed UPK funding to support full-time programs, rather than the half-day programs funded under current parameters, it would better serve the child care needs of parents as well as the early educational needs of children. With limited funds for the UPK program, there will always be a tension between serving more children in half-day programs versus giving fewer children a richer full-day experience and helping to address child care needs at the same time. The Cuomo Administration will review the trade-offs involved in this difficult policy choice.

performance, health and well-being, and skills development.

### ***After School Programs***

After School Programs (“ASPs”) serve as a natural extension of the school day and can, when properly structured, reinforce and complement classroom lessons. ASPs also provide recreational activities, enrichment opportunities in the form of arts and musical programming, and supportive services such as counseling and drug and violence prevention.

Each year, more than \$700 million in local, state and federal funds are invested in New York’s afterschool programs.<sup>111</sup> In 2009, more than 644,000 students – or 21 percent of the State’s three million school-age children – were served by an ASP in a variety of school buildings, community centers, YMCAs, and religious facilities.<sup>112</sup> According to a comprehensive study undertaken by the national Afterschool Alliance, another 1.2 million New York students would participate if an ASP existed in their

community.<sup>113</sup> Despite the value of ASPs, the State's budget crisis has led to significant cuts in State ASP funding. For example, the State's 2009-2010 Deficit Reduction Plan cuts, coupled with funding reductions in the 2010-2011 State Budget, resulted in a reduction of State allocations to the Advantage Afterschool program from \$30.5 million to its current funding level of \$22.6 million.<sup>114</sup>

The New York State Afterschool Network ("NYSAN") has been deeply involved in the analysis of the State's ASP programs, as well as those operating nationwide, and has concluded that, in addition to increasingly severe budgetary constraints, the decentralized nature of ASP funding and implementation across New York State presents challenges in terms of program quality and accountability. Specifically, NYSAN reports that varying standards and administrative requirements of ASP funding sources have become costly and complicated.<sup>115</sup> The report also cites the need for strict measures of accountability that focus on meaningful indicators of success. NYSAN has developed a tool for performance assessment that has

been embraced by the New York State Department of Education and New York City's Department of Youth and Community Development, utilization is not widely employed State-wide.<sup>116</sup>

### ***Community Schools***

Community schools initiatives are a significantly more enhanced version of the ASP model. Also operating out of school facilities and community centers, Community Schools join together the public school system with community-based organizations to implement a curriculum that is focused on building stronger communities through both youth and adult programming. Community Schools are typically open year-round, after school and on weekends. In its simplest terms, Community Schools operate as full-scale community centers. In addition to providing formalized education supports and health services, Community Schools often provide a wide range of recreational and cultural programming, as well as ESOL, literacy, work-

readiness, housing assistance and parenting workshops.

Many of the country's high-performing Community Schools are located in New York City, and include:

- The Children's Aid Society operates the national model for community schools, in partnership with the New York City Department of Education. With 21 community schools in 15 facilities located throughout the City, it serves thousands of children and families each year.<sup>117</sup> In operation since 1992, the Children's Aid Society offers programs that focus on academic, social, cultural and recreational objectives, as well as parent education, immigration and legal assistance, and summer camp. The Children's Aid Society has reported demonstrable improvements in student academic performance, including gains in reading and math, parental involvement, higher student and teacher attendance, as well as improved student physical and mental health.
- The Beacon Community Center Initiative ("Beacon Centers") is another model of success for community schools. The Beacon Centers were first established in 1991 to act as community resources in high-need neighborhoods. Each of the 80 Beacon Centers in New York City is funded by NYC's

Department of Youth and Community Development to the tune of \$400,000 per year, and is operated by a community organization, including two operated by the Harlem Children's Zone. Beacon Centers have carved out an identity in the community as an exemplary resource for furthering both education and enrichment across generational lines.<sup>118</sup> In addition to serving tens of thousands of children annually, the Beacon Centers served 43,000 adults in FY 2010, including a large percentage of adult participants who do not have children.<sup>119</sup>

Advancing the Community Schools model is a key policy goal of the U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. Mr. Duncan has said that the traditional school day, "six hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year doesn't quite work," and that the focus must instead be on an effort to,

redefine fundamentally what it means to be a school... it means all the values and principles around community schools: arts, drama, academic enrichment, GED, family literacy nights. Really engaging the community: health care clinics, early childhood, the whole gamut. Making school the center of family life.<sup>120</sup>