



NEWS RELEASE

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Statement by the NYS Council of School Superintendents Regarding Governor Paterson's Proposed Budget Cuts

"No one understands the importance of trying to make a budget work in these difficult times better than school superintendents and, while we firmly disagree with many of Governor Paterson's proposals, we applaud him for demonstrating forthright leadership in confronting the state's budget problems. He is attempting to do the same thing that school superintendents must do every day: develop a budget that provides constituents with the best possible programs while controlling costs.

New Yorkers, however, deserve to know that their children's futures will be protected during these difficult times. Making mid-year budget cuts is especially disruptive in schools. First, schools have only half a year in which to execute what, for some, are dramatic reductions. Second, over 70 percent of school spending is devoted to personnel, mostly for teachers. When we eliminate teaching positions in mid-year, it means that students suffer the disruption of having their classes reshuffled.

We do not expect the state's fiscal problems to be over in just one year. So, for the same reason that the Governor opposes using the state's "rainy day" reserves to close this year's state deficit, we question the soundness of expecting schools to use their reserves now to close a state-imposed gap in their budgets.

School districts have already been taking steps to cut costs. Many have imposed hiring, purchasing and travel freezes; curtailed professional development for staff, eliminated field trips for students, redesigned bus routes, implemented energy saving measures, renegotiated health insurance plans, and expanded their use of shared services with other districts or BOCES.

School districts could use more help from the state in further cutting costs. We commend the Governor for seeking to streamline planning and reporting requirements. But, more is needed. We look forward to working with Governor Paterson to give school leaders more tools to reduce costs at the local level while preserving our ability to provide the best possible education for all New Yorkers.

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*The New York State Council of School Superintendents is the professional association
of more than 700 superintendents and other school district leaders.*