



# NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Jonathan M. Pierce, APR  
Pierce Communications  
518.427.1186 or 518.221.1186 (c)  
Jon@AlbanyPR.com

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## **Statement From Dr. Thomas L. Rogers, Executive Director of New York State Council of School Superintendents on Governor Paterson's Proposed Budget**

***“Now is not the time to turn back the progress we are making”***

**(Albany)**– “The strong school aid increases of recent years are one investment that is paying off for New York State’s future.

The economic challenges facing New York and the nation threaten our ability to continue the progress that our schools have been making. But school district leaders are determined to work with state officials to produce a state budget that will keep our schools moving forward.

The strong state aid increases of recent years have helped school leaders hold down local property tax increases, improve learning opportunities for students, and achieve high rates of voter approval for school budgets.

Local school tax increases proposed last spring averaged 3.3 percent, below the inflation rate and down by nearly half from two years ago. At the same time, we have achieved broad gains in state test results and improvement in graduation rates. Schools have used aid increases to help more young people succeed – providing extra help for struggling students, expanding instructional time, and reducing class sizes where needed, for example.

Superintendents must do what state officials do – construct budgets that balance the services that citizens need with costs that taxpayers can afford. We appreciate the hard choices facing Governor Paterson and the Legislators. Our job now is to make the strongest case we can for maintaining the state’s commitment to our schools.

For several decades, Wall Street has been the cornerstone of the state’s prosperity. Now, New York must broaden its economic base. Every study says that the key to future prosperity starts with helping more people develop higher skills. Strong public schools are essential and New York builds from a strong foundation. We will be advocating for a funding level like that recommended by our State Board of Regents – an increase of \$879 million. That would come closer to what is needed to maintain our progress.

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Cutting school aid, eliminating STAR rebates and shifting preschool special education costs to schools would increase school property tax pressures. We appreciate the mandate relief proposals the Governor has made, but we hope that he and the Legislators will consider more. New York's systemic economic problems can only be fixed if and when the Governor, the Legislature and school leaders sit down and make meaningful changes in the mandates imposed on school districts and local government."

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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.*