



# NEWS RELEASE

**FOR RELEASE:  
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## School superintendents react to state budget agreement

**Albany, NY – March 31, 2009** – “School leaders and state leaders confront painful choices in developing budgets this year. We appreciate the efforts of Governor Paterson and the Legislators to give us a chance to make better choices, by producing a timely state budget and by eliminating some of the major education cuts from the budget the Governor proposed back in December.

“School district leaders also appreciate the economic worries that taxpayers are facing now and are trying hard to hold down spending and tax increases in the budgets they will present to voters this spring. Based on anecdotal reports, we expect that proposed local tax increases will average well below what we’ve seen in past years when state aid has been cut or frozen.

“The state budget freezes the Foundation Aid formula for two years. This is the major aid category that helps schools pay for basic operating costs such as teacher salaries, health insurance, and utility bills. With no new help from the state, schools have to turn to reserves, spending cuts, and local taxpayers to fund their inflationary costs. With the effort to avoid local tax increases, we expect many school budgets will include significant cuts, including layoffs in some cases.

“The freeze on Foundation Aid will probably hurt the state’s poorest districts most because they depend on state help the most. Some of these poor districts have little they can cut that is not mandated. Also, trying to generate enough local revenue to match what they need from the state would require tax increases greater than their taxpayers can afford.

“The freeze on the Foundation Aid formula is discouraging for another reason. Its adoption was a breakthrough for the Governor and the Legislature in 2007. It helped resolve the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit and gave our state and our schools a more equitable, more predictable, and more accountable aid system. Now the state risks losing this accomplishment. By freezing the formula for two years, we risk falling so far behind in implementation that we can never catch up, and end up abandoning this reform.

“We are grateful for the help from the Administration, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and other members of New York’s Congressional delegation for the federal aid that enabled the state to reduce its budget cuts.

“The longer-term fiscal outlook for schools is alarming. During the time remaining in this legislative session we will be asking state leaders to act on mandate relief and other cost containment strategies.

**Robert Lowry  
Deputy Director**

