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State’s School Superintendents Respond to Governor Spitzer’s “State of the State” Address

“Governor Spitzer recognizes that education reform is essential to adapting to the innovation economy,” said Dr. Thomas L. Rogers, Executive Director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents. “We are glad to have a Governor who will commit the resources and remove the impediments necessary to realize that promise,” Rogers added. “New York’s school superintendents look forward to working with his administration to achieve more success for more schoolchildren.”

“The Governor’s speech today shows that he recognizes education is an investment, not a cost,” Rogers observed. “We applaud his recognition that for too long, a broken property tax system has been asked to shoulder the cost of raising standards and transforming education for the innovation economy.”

Rogers added, “We are encouraged by the Governor’s promise of a new, transparent school funding formula that dramatically increases investment. His property tax relief proposal takes the prudent approach of targeting help to taxpayers who need it most.”

The Governor said greater accountability should accompany greater resources. Rogers said, “We have no fear of accountability – school districts already publish more data on successes and shortcomings and give voters more opportunities for input than any other institution. We are prepared to make recommendations on how to sensibly build on the accountability system already in place.”

The Governor also called for legislation to authorize more charter schools. Rogers explained that, “The Council has always said that whatever might be gained by the state’s experiment with charter schools should not come at the expense of traditional schools – where the vast majority of children are educated. So we applaud his promise of fiscal relief for districts like Albany and Buffalo that have been hurt by charter schools.” Rogers added, however, that “further reforms are needed to help districts accommodate charter school enrollment swings.”

“Finally,” Rogers concluded, “more must be done to remove the obstacles that poverty throws in the path toward success for too many schoolchildren.” He explained that UNICEF found that the U.S. has the second highest rate of childhood poverty among 24 developed nations. “We support the Governor’s proposals to give more children a better start by expanding prekindergarten opportunities and health insurance coverage,” Rogers said.