

High-Impact Tutoring Set-Aside

The Executive Budget proposes to require over 60% of the state’s school districts to set-aside a total of \$250 million in Foundation Aid to support “high-impact tutoring.” This service would be defined as small group or individual tutoring sessions for students at-risk of not meeting state standards in grades 3 to 8, with a focus on reading and math to be held at least twice a week for a duration of no less than 30 minutes, either before, or after, or during the school day, or on weekends.

We ask that this proposal be rejected.

- Districts have already been expanding extra academic help to students—it is one of the priorities for use of federal COVID-relief aid. In a Council survey, 79% expected their district budgets this year will have a positive impact on extra academic help for students who need it; 78% anticipated a positive impact on that priority from their 2021-22 budgets.
- Districts were required by the American Rescue Plan Act to devote at least 20% of their basic ARP funding to address “learning loss”—nearly \$1 billion statewide. The 2022-23 state budget also directed nearly 60% of districts to spend a total of \$629 million in additional ARP funding to reverse learning loss among students.
- The proposed budget language this year would effectively restrict use of the set-aside to providing tutoring for students in grades 3 through 8, precluding help to younger and older students. These restrictions lack any sound educational basis.
- Some districts with set-asides serve only elementary school grades and do not have students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The state’s three central high school districts have no students in the targeted grades yet all would have these set-asides.
- Many districts report being unable to find staff to provide all the help they believe their students should have. It is predictable that some would find it impossible to employ all the staff needed to fully expend their set-aside amounts.
- The set-aside could preclude districts from devoting funds to address other needs, including improving student mental health services, or offering competitive pay to fill essential positions, or holding down reliance on local property tax revenue.
- Finally, on principle, we oppose the use of Foundation Aid set-asides. The intended purpose of that aid as unrestricted general operating support should be honored.