



## **Where We Stand** On Governor Cuomo's Budget Proposal February 2015

**State Education Aid:** The proposed school aid increase is \$1.1 billion or 4.8 percent, well short of the Regents' \$2 billion request. Governor Cuomo also fails to acknowledge the revenue lost by the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) that robs schools of much-needed funds in order to close the state's budget gap.

Furthermore, the Governor's proposed increase in aid is hostage to the rest of his education agenda. He has stated that if legislators fail to adopt his reforms highlighted below, he would hold aid increases to the legal minimum of 1.7 percent.

Cuomo has told districts to assume the 1.7 percent increase when planning their budgets and will not provide additional information on budget allocation for individual school districts, hampering the ability of districts to plan budgets to present to taxpayers.

**Teacher Evaluation:** Cuomo's budget would drastically change the current Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) system, removing local control and the use of local assessments. He is proposing that 50% of a teacher's rating be based on state test scores with the other 50% based on classroom observation.

This will likely penalize the teachers of our neediest students, and we fear will drive special education teachers from the profession and affect the willingness of future teachers to work with these students.

He also fails to recognize that lower test scores are a result of new tests of questionable validity being given to students before teachers had the time to implement and teach the new Common Core Standards.

**Attacks on Due Process:** Cuomo would amend the current 3020-a process for removal of a tenured teacher. Two consecutive ineffective ratings would be considered sufficient evidence of incompetence. A teacher would be allowed to rebut charges of incompetence only if they can prove fraud in the calculation of the summative rating.

**Attacks on Tenure:** Cuomo's plan will gut tenure for new teachers, requiring five consecutive effective or highly effective ratings on their APPR. Coupled with his proposed changes to APPR, new teachers would likely remain on probation indefinitely and be robbed of the due process rights afforded by tenure.

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## How Parents Can Help

Contact your legislators and demand that schools be adequately funded and that the Governor's so-called education reform initiatives be decoupled from the budget.

Personal stories and anecdotes, along with praise for your child's teachers, will help make your point. As a parent, taxpayer and voter demand that your legislators:

- Adequately Fund Public Education
- Discontinue the Gap Elimination Adjustment
- Reduce the over-emphasis on and misuse of testing by opposing the Governor's APPR plan for teachers

## How Students Can Help

At home, write letters to the Governor and your legislators. Personal stories help drive the point home. Some suggested themes are:

- How my teachers helped me
- Things that my teacher taught me that can't be measured on a state test
- "My teacher means more to me than a score because..."

## Our Position on Opt-Out

We support parent rights. Although we do NOT advocate opting students out of state tests, it is the position of WITA that parental rights trump education policy. It is the right of parents, including parents that are our members, to determine what is in their children's best interests.

## Legislator Contact Information

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### **The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo**

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