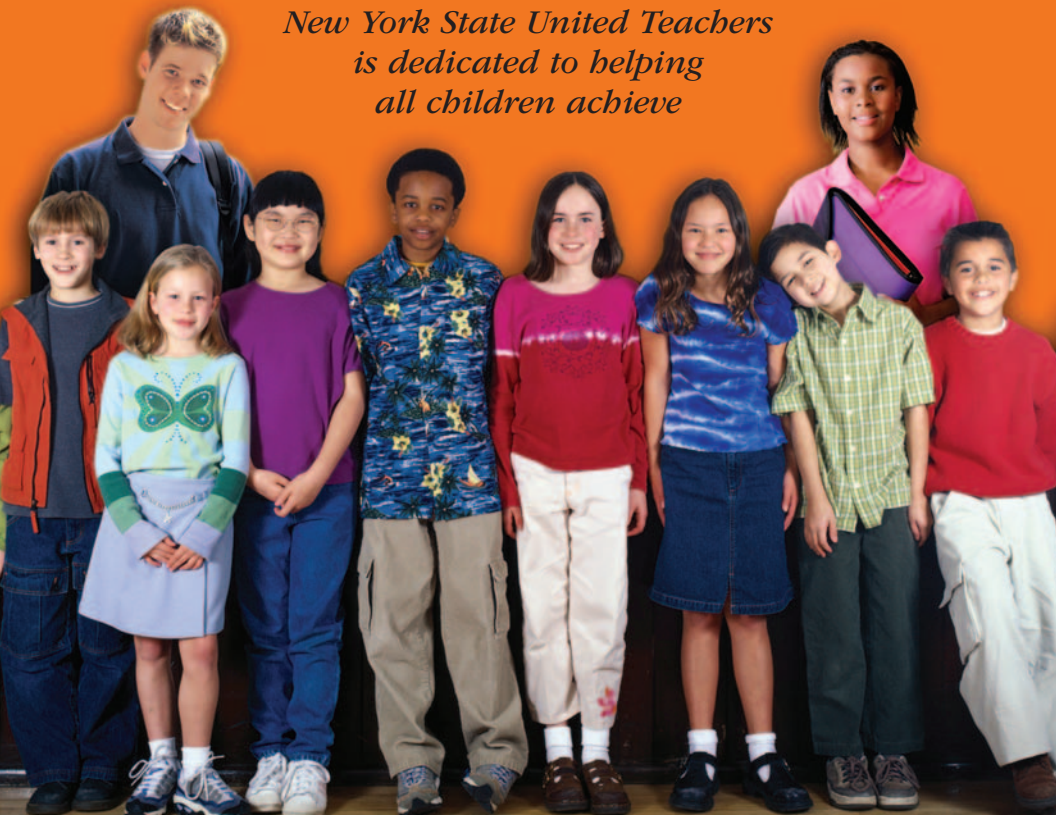


ENDING THE GAP

A complex social challenge

*New York State United Teachers
is dedicated to helping
all children achieve*



**TOGETHER, WE CAN END
THE GAP FOR OUR
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

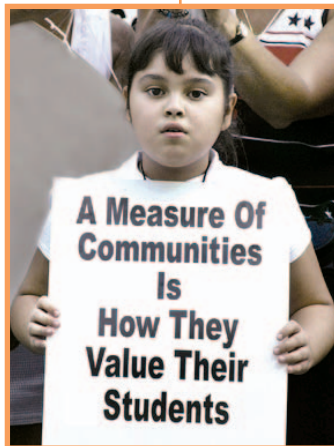


When it comes to education in New York, there's much to celebrate. New York's schools and universities are regularly ranked among the best in the country, and our top student scholars shine.

But New York state's many successes mask a problem with dire consequences — a wide achievement gap that discriminates by income and race. Thousands of New York's urban and rural poor children are being left behind with low test scores, high dropout rates and dimming opportunities for success. At-risk students, predominantly children of color, deserve our united efforts to help break the relentless cycle of poverty and underachievement.

NYSUT and its 575,000 members

are taking the lead in advocating the urgency of ending the achievement gap — a challenge that requires broad-based action on a number of fronts. Research shows achievement for at-risk students is jeopardized by sweeping social issues, such as poverty; inadequate health care; standard housing; insufficient early childhood education; and lack of education resources.



As we work with all our might to improve low-performing schools, we also want to partner with parents, elected officials, business owners and other community leaders to address the social factors that contribute to the achievement gap. NYSUT believes this team approach is essential to help our students succeed.



POVERTY

The link between poverty and the achievement gap is undeniable. When children are worried about how their basic needs are going to be met, school becomes less of a priority. Plus, parents living in poverty may be forced to work several jobs, cutting into the amount of time they can spend supporting their children academically. There are currently more than 900,000 children under the age of 17 living in poverty in New York, and children in New York City are nearly twice as likely as adults to live in poverty. They must not be left behind.

By the numbers

- 10% of New York's children were living in "extreme poverty" in 2004; national average was 8%.
- Only one-third of the state's black and Latino children graduate from high school in four years, compared to three-quarters of white students.

ENCOURAGE

- At the close of 2004, 731,586 children in New York — 16% of all children — were in households that received food stamps.

HEALTH CARE

When a child is in poor health or not getting treated for health problems it makes it difficult to focus on school and can lead to prolonged absences. In 2005, there were 415,000 children and teens without health insurance in New York — nearly nine percent of the state's children. Seventy percent of them are eligible for state-sponsored health insurance, but are falling through the gap because they are not enrolled.



By the numbers

- The number of uninsured children in New York state increased from 354,000 in 2004 to 415,000 in 2005.
- Public health care expansion has resulted in a decrease in uninsured children from 14% to 9% since 1994 — but too many still lack health care.
- Children growing up in poverty are more susceptible to a variety of illnesses, such as asthma, which is a leading cause of missed school in New York.

Support



PROVIDE

HOUSING

Life for families in poverty is exacerbated by a shortage of affordable housing. Housing in New York is the fifth most expensive in the nation, and nearly half of renters in New York are spending 30 percent or more of their income on rent. The lack of affordable housing in New York leads to problems that impact student achievement, such as frequent moves, often to multiple school districts, and homelessness. Children currently represent 40 percent of New York City's 32,000 homeless shelter residents.

By the numbers

- The hourly wage a family must earn to be able to afford rent and utilities in the private housing market in New York is \$20.70, making the state the fifth-most expensive in the nation.
- Low-income families are forced to spend a much greater percentage of their income on housing.

- 26% of renters in New York pay 50% or more of their income on rent; 49% pay 30% or more.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Research shows that children have a better chance of academic success if they have access to early childhood education. Unfortunately, pre-K and early childhood ed services are unavailable or cost-prohibitive for many low-income New York families. As many as 130,000 4-year-olds do not have the opportunity to participate in an approved early childhood program. More than half of pre-K-eligible children in New York are not enrolled. Although New York has been increasing the number



of children receiving pre-K and early intervention services, there are still far too many children being excluded who could truly benefit from these programs.

By the numbers

- Less than half of New York's 4-year-olds were served by pre-K programs in 2004.
- Child care subsidies serve only 44% of children estimated to be eligible.
- 47,791 children ages 3-5 were in pre-school special education programs in 2004, an increase of 33% since 1996.

Improve



EDUCATE

RESOURCES

Children in poverty deserve at least the same commitment to resources made for children in affluent communities. Because of the variety of social problems at-risk children face, their schools must be equipped to provide extra support in ending the achievement gap. But in New York state, we spend less per student in poor urban and rural areas than we do in wealthier suburbs. In fact, New York shamefully leads the nation in the disparity between what it spends on wealthy districts vs. what it spends on low-income districts. We need to give New York's high-need schools the resources they need to succeed.

By the numbers

- New York ranks first in the nation in the gap between per-student spending in high-poverty vs. low-poverty school districts.
- New York ranks third in the nation in the gap between per-student spending in high-minority vs. low-minority districts.

- Research shows that low-income students and students of color carry more college loan debt than any other student demographic.

EDUCATION

When it comes to helping high-need schools succeed, we must be creative and aggressive. Desks packed wall to wall — a common sight in urban districts — must be a thing of the past. We need smaller class sizes and more individualized attention to better educate students at risk. We must invest in research-driven instructional strategies and provide incentives for teachers to work in high-need districts.

We cannot accept high dropout rates and must do all we can to ensure students at risk finish high school, so they will not be doomed to a lifetime of poverty. Students at risk must have



access to public colleges with affordable tuition, strong aid programs and intervention services that help ensure student success.

By the numbers

- Achievement levels for low-income students are often several years and grade levels behind higher-income students.
- Only 28% of fourth-grade students with disabilities were found to be proficient in reading; that figure drops to 10% by eighth grade.
- For every 100 white kindergartners, 33 go on to obtain at least a bachelor's degree. For African-Americans, it's 18; Latinos, 11.

Access

NYSUT'S SOCIAL AGENDA

NYSUT as a statewide organization is dedicated to working in concert with parents and community members to end the achievement gap. We share research on best educational practice to help policy-makers make informed decisions. NYSUT also hosts conferences and institutes for key stakeholders from around the state. *New York Teacher*, NYSUT's award-winning publication, regularly highlights the urgent need to end the gap and strategies that

have been successful. Each issue, which has a circulation of 575,000, offers a feature on the achievement gap. NYSUT's Web site at www.nysut.org also contains a wealth of resources. We will continue to vigorously lobby for legislation that will help bring more resources to schools with large

at-risk populations. Policies like need-based school aid formulas can make a difference. To learn more about the achievement gap and what NYSUT is doing, visit www.nysut.org.



Commit



ACT!



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in education and health care.**

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