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**No More Excuses: Educate Every Student Day**

**Talking Points**

* Upstate, downstate, rural, urban, suburban, our schools have experienced far too many cuts—we’ve lost arts & music, afterschool programs, Advanced Placement courses, tutoring and more over the last five years.
* Across the state, students have lost more than 35,000 educators
* My school in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (enter your location) or my kids has lost \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Even last year, our schools did not have enough\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* That’s why we are here. Enough is enough. These cuts are failing our students every day. Since 2010, since the tenure of this administration, inequality has grown!
* Yet, the governor says that it’s not just about the money, that money doesn’t matter. But, we know that to be false. We see how money matters when back in 2008, when our school had more funding, our students had \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (smaller class sizes, art, music, sports, etc)
* Of course money matters. Without it my kid’s school (\_Fill in the Blank\_\_)!
* New York State has got to fully fund our schools and put an end to the two systems that exist. Rich and Poor should all have great schools
* That’s why we are here today, to ask that:
1. You demand a $1.9 billion investment that is equitably distributed to get the state back on track with the Campaign for Fiscal Equity ruling that all students deserve a “sound basic education.”
2. Ensuring statewide universal full-day pre-K for all 4-year-olds--an early start and strong foundation for academic success. In New York City Mayor de Blasio has proposed a small tax hike on people earning over $500 million a year in order to fund full-day pre-K. New York City needs the state’s approval to enact this local tax hike. Governor Cuomo is also going to propose a statewide pre-K plan, all four year olds across the state need full-day pre-K. But the Governor’s plan will not serve as many children in New York City as Mayor de Blasio’s plan. The state needs a major expansion of pre-K statewide in the state budget, but should not stand in the way of New York City financing full-day pre-K for all its four year olds.
3. Funding community schools to address not only student academic needs, but also the social, emotional and health needs students carry with them every day.
4. Funding for supports and interventions which include restorative practice programs which keep students in school ($20 million).

***Responses:***

**If the legislator says** “I am with you, I agree or I support you”

**You say:** “It’s great that you support us, but we need you to make sure the $1.9 billion is in the final budget. What will you do to make that happen?”

**If the legislator says:** “I signed a letter that AQE supported asking for the $1.9 billion increase.”

**You say:** “Thank you. That is an important start. What else can you do to make sure the $1.9 billion will be in the final budget?”

**If the legislator says**: “The state has no money.”

**You say:** “Governor Cuomo is proposing $2.2 billion in election-year tax cuts. This includes eliminating taxes on banks, lowering taxes on corporations and giving larger property tax cuts to the rich than to the middle class or the poor. Some of this money should go to schools.”

**If the legislator says: “**But we invest so much in education, we spend too much.”

**You say:** New York State is an expensive state. Costs associated with anything are high. Our neighboring New Jersey which spends as much as we do, gets better results because they are spending more money in high needs areas. For every dollar NYS spends in a wealthy district, it spends 87 cents in poor districts; whereas, in NJ, every dollar they spend in a wealthy district, they spend a $1.47 in a poor districts. They are equalizing education, and that takes money.

**If the legislator says:** But we can’t keep throwing money at the problem.”

**You say:** Of course money alone cannot solve the problem. That’s why are advocating for solutions like more pre-K, a better curriculum, more art and music. And, all these cost money. We have not been adequately funding our schools. In fact, 90% of schools have less funding now than they did in 2008- back when the state was providing the Campaign for Fiscal Equity funding. Our data shows that back then, progress was made in many areas. We need to get back to that.

**If the legislator says:** The Governor is not going to support the de Blasio pre-K plan he has his own plan and he opposes the tax hikes

**You say:** We need pre-K all over the state and the state should fund it, but that should not be an excuse for the state to stand in the way of Mayor de Blasio’s plan. Will you support the de Blasio plan and support statewide full-day pre-K both?

**General Points to remember before and during your lobby visit**

* Be calm. Legislators love to hear from constituents to learn what is important to them.
* Your lobby visit leader and the group should decide who will be speaking /presenting BEFORE the meeting.
* Keep the introductions short so that your meeting time is not wasted, i.e. “Hi, I’m Mary Jones. I have 3 children attending public school in \_\_­­­\_\_\_\_ school district”.
* Tell a **short** 2 minute personal story about the impact of the state budget and education cuts on the schools in your community.
* Stay on topic and be sure to complete your “asks.”
* Ask how the legislator, specifically, plans to stand up for your local community.
* Be confident and respectful.
* Take notes on what the legislator or staffer says. If you are not sure of something, it’s ok. We can follow up.
* Thank the legislator and/or staffer and make plans to follow up (if needed).
* Debrief with those who attended after the meeting and fill out the lobby report form.
* Hand in lobby report form to staff before getting on your bus.