

# New York CAN Education



## Fact Sheet

Americans respect education and put a high value on learning. In a society riddled with inequality, education can level the playing field and enable young people to achieve their highest potential.

An effective public education system also holds the key to renewing New York's economic vigor. The emerging "knowledge economy" requires workers with critical problem-solving skills and the ability to master technology in the workplace. Strengthening our educational system will not only help young people, it will help New York businesses remain competitive and ensure a thriving civil society.

In 2007, New York greatly expanded funding for our public education system in return for greater accountability in how school districts use their additional funding. Through "Contracts for Excellence" with school districts around the state, the Governor and Legislature aim to properly fund high-need schools, and at the same time stimulate innovative programs. New York's educational system faces many challenges, but state policymakers have at least taken action to create positive change.

### Key Facts\*

- Reading and writing proficiency decline sharply between early and middle grades. While 7 out of 10 of fourth-grade students showed proficiency on the 2008 state English Language Arts Examination, only half of eighth graders did.
- Graduation rates are still too low, especially for minorities. Seven out of ten students who entered high school in 2003 graduated on time four years later - but only half of all black and Hispanic freshmen. Still, on-time graduation rates have improved for both black and Hispanic students.
- Too many students drop out and become disconnected. Of all black and Hispanic students who entered high school in 2003, about one in five dropped out before graduation day 2007. Yet dropout rates have actually fallen somewhat over time. Incredibly, 20% of high school dropouts are children who are considered gifted and talented.

### What's Needed:

New York needs to continue to fully fund the Contract for Excellence commitment, which calls for a \$5.5 billion increase in classroom operating aid over four years. Those funds should be distributed fairly and equitably based on student need. As each school district designs its Contract for Excellence to qualify for state funds, the state should ensure that the public has a chance to fully participate.

\*For source information, refer to the New York State Education Department, [www.emsc.nysed.gov](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov).