

Campaign for Children

A partnership of The Emergency Coalition to Save Child Care and the NYC Youth Alliance.

New York City's Diminishing Investment in NYC Children and Working Families

STATEN ISLAND IMPACT BRIEF

Introduction

Much like the rest of New York City, the economic downturn has had a profound impact on the 470,000 residents of Staten Island, and it has hit children and working families particularly hard. The borough of Staten Island has seen significant increases in poverty and unemployment. While the need for services and assistance has increased, the availability of child care and after-school programs on Staten Island has decreased significantly. **Now, under the Mayor's proposed budget, Staten Island faces even further cuts to these critical programs.**

- In the past three years, the number of children from low-income working families receiving child care subsidies **on Staten Island has declined by almost 27 percent.**
- The Out of School Time (OST) after-school program is facing a **32 percent reduction in programs on Staten Island.**
- The Mayor has **already announced that the Beacon Program** at Tottenville High School is scheduled to close – where more than 1,300 Staten Island residents are served each this year.

Early childhood and after-school programs are critical to Staten Island families. Research has proven their effectiveness in preparing children for school, improving academic performance and producing positive outcomes later in life. These programs also play an important role in the local economy.

As a result of cuts over the last couple of years, many Staten Island children and youth have already lost the opportunity to participate in early childhood and after-school programs, and thousands more are facing additional cuts.

A Picture of Staten Island

From 2008-2010, Staten Island's economic indicators all reveal troubling trends of increasing poverty and unemployment, and decreasing median income. According to the 2010 Census, there were 469,363 residents in Staten Island, of which almost 25% (108,904) were children under age 18. **The poverty rate in 2010 was 11.8%, up from 8.9% in 2008, which is a 32% increase in the percent of families in Staten Island living below the federal poverty level**

during this two year period. Notably, 17.1% of the children in Staten Island were living in poverty in 2010, compared to 12.5% in 2008.

The unemployment rate in Staten Island has dramatically grown throughout the economic downturn. The unemployment rate started at 4.4% in 2007, grew to 5% in 2008, ballooned to 8.4% in 2009 and then continued this disturbing trend by reaching 9.1% in 2010. Similarly, the median household income decreased from \$78,416 in 2008 to \$70,560 in 2010.

As parents and their children continue to face increasing economic instability in Staten Island, child well-being indicators have worsened. For example, only half of Staten Island's children were reading at grade level in 2010 and only 65% were at grade level in math (based on whether children in grades 3-8 scored 3 or 4 on the state tests). Not surprisingly then, Staten Island's high school dropout rate grew from 7.9% in 2008 to 9% in 2010. Youth dropping out of school are struggling, as 6.3% of youth are not in school and not in the work force. Twenty-five percent of Staten Island's youth were unemployed in 2010.

What the Cuts Mean for Staten Island

Staten Island families have already experienced reductions in child care and after-school programs, and now the Mayor's plans will further reduce the options available to working families.

- In the past three years, the number of children from low-income working families receiving child care subsidies on Staten Island has declined by almost 27 percent – decreasing from serving 1,323 children in 2009 to only 968 in 2012.¹ The pending citywide cut of 15,900 child care subsidies will affect all boroughs and further decrease the availability of child care for low-income working families on Staten Island.
- The Out of School Time (OST) after-school program – which has already shrunk by more than 35,000 youth citywide since 2009² – is facing a 32 percent reduction in programs on Staten Island, going from 19 programs to 13 programs for the entire borough.³
- The Mayor has already announced the closure of the Beacon Program at Tottenville High School Jewish Community Center of Staten Island in Staten Island – a program that served more than 1,300 Staten Island residents this year.

These cuts will have a broad impact on Staten Island, but it is the children that will pay the biggest price. The loss of early childhood options will leave many children unprepared to start

¹ ACS Child Care Snapshots, January 2009 & January 2012.

² Fiscal Year enrollment data contained in the Mayor's Management Reports.

³ DYCD Request for Proposals for the Out of School Time system.

Kindergarten. It is well-documented that positive early childhood learning opportunities lead to more positive outcomes later in life. Over 75 percent of brain development happens by the age of five. Children who attend quality early childhood programs are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to be involved in crime and less likely to become teen parents.⁴ These cuts will leave many Staten Island children without the opportunity to attend an early childhood program.

Youth will also lose out on the opportunity to be engaged in quality, structured programming that helps support academic success. The cuts to after-school programs, such as OST and Beacons, will leave many children and youth with nowhere to go after the school day ends. High-quality programs that provide academic support, enrichment and structure during out-of-school-time hours greatly enhance a child's success in school. These programs improve student connectedness with school and improve attendance. And, sadly, without access to after-school programming, many children and youth will be unsupervised or under-supervised after-school while their parents are still at work, potentially leading to many problems for children, parents, communities and schools.⁵ As Mayor Bloomberg said when testifying at a New York State Budget Hearing, "what happens after the final bell of the day rings is as important to students as what goes on in the classrooms."⁶

Working families will be facing difficult choices as these programs are eliminated. Most families currently accessing these services – and many more who are already unable to enroll their child as a result of previous cuts – are not able to afford child care and after-school in the private market. Working parents who lose access to child care and after-school programming will be forced to make the difficult decision between making alternative, less stable arrangements for their children and leaving the workforce. Working parents need safe, stable and supportive environments for their children while they are working – and these cuts will make it even more difficult for Staten Island families to access these programs.

These cuts will also hurt Staten Island's already fragile economy because of the direct and immediate impact that child care and after-school have on the local economy. Research has found that child care is one of the best local economic engines returning \$1.89 for every \$1 spent. As the child care and after-school programs close, staff will lose their jobs. These staff usually live in nearby communities and most are likely from Staten Island. In addition, if parents are unable to keep their job because they do not have an alternative option for their child or if the parent must now pay for private care, that parent will have less money to spend

⁴ W. Steven Barnett, Ph.D., National Institute for Early Education Research, *Preschool Education and Its Lasting Effects: Research and Policy Implications*, September 2008; Richard Tremblay, Jean Gervais, and AmeliePetitclerc, *Early Learning Prevents Youth Violence*, 2008;

⁵The Afterschool Alliance, 2007: *Afterschool Programs: Keeping Kids – and Communities – Safe*
http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_briefs/issue_CrimeIB_27.pdf

⁶ Mayor Bloomberg testimony before the State Assembly Ways and Means Committee and State Senate Finance Committee on the Governor's Executive Budget and Reform Plan, January 24, 2012.

in their local community on other necessities such as food, clothing and transportation. Overall, the loss of spending by now unemployed child care and after-school staff, as well as the loss of money spent by the parents who must either stop working or spend their money to pay for care, will hit Staten Island hard as the borough continues to struggle to recover from the economic crisis.

Conclusion

Staten Island's children and families deserve the opportunity to succeed. It is widely recognized that quality early childhood and after-school programming are critical to educational and economic success. Investing in these programs now will help Staten Island continue to move forward with its economic recovery and create a stronger New York City now and in the future.

Cutting these programs directly contradicts the Mayor's priorities for education, economic development, and juvenile justice reform. Mayor Bloomberg has made high-profile commitments to reduce racial and economic disparities in education and even invested his own money for the Young Men's Initiative, which is focused on improving the outcomes of young men of color in New York City. The significant reductions in the number of children who are able to access high-quality child care and after-school programming directly undermine these priorities because both early childhood education and after-school programs put all children on the path to success and prevent youth from engaging in risky behaviors, getting involved with the juvenile justice system and dropping out of school.

Now is the time to invest in preparing children for academic success, keeping youth engaged in school and supporting working families. Our children – our future – should not be sacrificed because of budget shortfalls. Staten Island's children, and all of New York City's children, must be the priority. The legacy of the Mayor and his Administration's lasting impact mark on New York City will be judged by the decisions he makes right now.