

December 2015

Is Summer Out for SONYC Youth?

City's Budget Plan Leaves 17,500 After-School Slots in Jeopardy

Summary

The de Blasio Administration initiative School's Out New York City, commonly known as SONYC, began in September 2014 and quickly tripled the number of after-school program slots available for the city's middle school students. The expanded after-school program offers educational, recreational, and cultural activities for middle school students during the school year and in the summer. But the summer portion of the program, which provided more than 17,500 slots for middle school students in the summer of 2015, is now in jeopardy, with no funds budgeted for the upcoming summer—or summers after that.

IBO has reviewed the expansion of the program, along with expansion of after-school programs for elementary and high school students. Among our findings:

- Compared with fiscal year 2014, the total number of school-year after-school program slots grew by 57 percent in 2015, and totaled 87,914. The summer component grew by 14 percent and provided 57,845 slots.
- For middle school students, the school-year program added nearly 36,000 slots for a total of 49,086 in the current fiscal year. Last summer saw the addition of 17,679 slots for a total of 29,539.
- The budget for after-school programs, during the school year and the summer, has grown from \$150 million in 2014 to \$317 million in the current fiscal year.

Despite the increased budget, funding for the upcoming summer program for middle school students is in doubt. Last May, the executive budget shifted \$27.7 million from the summer program to the Mayor's Renewal Schools initiative. Although funding was later added to cover the cost of last summer's middle school program, funding was not included for the summers ahead, leaving the availability of more than 17,500 slots for middle school students in doubt.



The de Blasio Administration began a major expansion of the city's after-school program for middle school students in September 2014. The program, now known as School's Out New York, or SONYC, more than tripled the number of slots available to middle school students during the school year and during the summer. That expansion has continued in the current fiscal year. But looking ahead six months to the upcoming summer, which begins with the start of fiscal year 2017, there is no funding currently in the city budget for the summer portion of the program. This puts more than 17,500 slots for students at risk of elimination during the longest stretch of the year when school is out for most middle school students.

Funding for SONYC's school-year programs has been included in the city's financial plan through 2019, but not for summer slots, which the de Blasio Administration had not initially made part of its expansion plan. But after a campaign by activists and elected officials the plan was revised to include summer sessions. That revision became jeopardized last May when the Mayor's Executive Budget shifted \$27.7 million in funding from the summer slots to the [Renewal Schools initiative](#) in the Department of Education. While the budget adopted for the current fiscal year restored funding for the summer of 2015, the city's financial plan includes no funding for the summer program in future years. (The cost of each year's summer program is budgeted in the new fiscal year starting July 1 so that the program costs for summer 2015 are part of the 2016 fiscal year.)

Since 2005, the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) has administered the city's primary after-school program. Originally known as Out-of-School Time, the program was renamed Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS NYC) beginning in 2015. The program provides activities for school-age youth during after-school hours, on weekends, and during school vacations. COMPASS programs are offered at no cost to participants and provide a mix of academic, recreational, and cultural programs for elementary, middle school, and high school students. (SONYC is the name given to the COMPASS middle school programs.) COMPASS service providers operate mostly in public school buildings, with a smaller number operating in facilities of the parks department and the New York City Housing Authority.

Increased Capacity and Participation. As expected, the implementation of SONYC greatly expanded the number of students receiving after-school services in 2015 (all years refer to fiscal years unless otherwise noted). Compared with 2014, overall COMPASS enrollment increased by

57 percent for school-year programs and 14 percent for summer programs.

In 2015, the overall COMPASS program included a total of 87,914 school year slots and 57,845 summer slots. Elementary school programs made up 45 percent of all school-year slots and 68 percent of all summer slots, while the expanded middle school programs accounted for 49 percent of school year and 26 percent of summer slots. Among the school-year programs, 29,636, or 34 percent, of the total slots were new SONYC slots. Because SONYC did not begin until September 2014, there were no new SONYC summer slots in the 2015 budget. With SONYC expanding further in 2016, the overall COMPASS school-year program is budgeted to increase by 11 percent to 97,502 slots, while the summer program was scheduled to increase by 31 percent to 75,899 slots.

Not all students attend after-school activities every day, so DYCD estimates that each program slot can serve approximately 1.25 students. Total enrollment in COMPASS school-year programs reached 112,600 students in 2015. This includes 47,123 students in elementary school, 58,745 in middle school, and 6,732 in high school. Overall summer enrollment totaled 58,131: 42,395 in elementary school, 13,781 in middle school, and 1,955 in high school. While enrollment did not surpass available slots in the summer programs for middle and high school students, with the increase in capacity this year middle school enrollment is expected to rise in 2016.

Uncertain Summer Funding. As a result of the expansion of middle school programs, the total budget for COMPASS, excluding administrative costs, increased from \$150 million in 2014 to \$264 million in 2015, and the budget grew to \$317 million for 2016.

The de Blasio Administration had initially hoped to finance expansion of the middle school after-school program with an increase in the income tax on high income earners. When the state nixed the tax proposal, the Mayor turned instead to using a portion of the largest component of state education aid—Foundation Aid—which flows to the city's Department of Education. The de Blasio Administration arranged to transfer some of the city's allocation of Foundation Aid to DYCD to help fund the expansion of SONYC. Foundation Aid is determined by formulas that take into account enrollment, student need, and a school district's relative wealth. The year-to-year fluctuations in Foundation Aid received by the city is largely determined by changes in the fiscal condition of the education

COMPASS Programs Grow, Fiscal Years 2015 and 2016

As of June 2015 Adopted Budget, dollars in millions

| | 2015 | | | | | 2016 | | |
|---|----------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Budget | School Slots | School Enrollment | Summer Slots | Summer Enrollment | Budget | School Slots | Summer Slots |
| Middle School Programs | | | | | | | | |
| Program Prior to SONYC | \$49.1 | 13,114 | 18,869 | 14,785 | 13,781 | \$47.4 | 13,130 | 11,860 |
| SONYC Public Schools | 81.6 | 27,154 | 39,876 | - | - | 112.2 | 31,578 | 15,767 |
| SONYC Nonpublic | 4.0 | 2,482 | - | - | - | 13.4 | 4,045 | 1,912 |
| Department of Education District 79 (Special Education) | 1.0 | | | | | 2.0 | 333 | - |
| SONYC Subtotal | 86.6 | 29,636 | 39,876 | - | - | \$127.6 | 35,956 | 17,679 |
| Total Middle School | \$135.7 | 42,750 | 58,745 | 14,785 | 13,781 | \$175.0 | 49,086 | 29,539 |
| Elementary, High School & Option II | | | | | | | | |
| Elementary School | \$116.4 | 39,290 | 47,123 | 39,242 | 42,395 | \$125.3 | 42,545 | 42,542 |
| High School | 4.4 | 5,874 | 6,732 | 3,818 | 1,955 | 4.4 | 5,874 | 3,818 |
| Total | \$120.8 | 45,164 | 53,855 | 43,060 | 44,350 | \$129.7 | 48,419 | 46,360 |
| Evaluation & Support | \$7.5 | | | | | \$12.2 | | |
| Total COMPASS Budget | \$264.0 | 87,914 | 112,600 | 57,845 | 58,131 | \$316.9 | 97,505 | 75,899 |

SOURCE: Department of Youth and Community Development

NOTES: Excludes administrative costs. All new SONYC programs started in September 2014. Option II is a component of COMPASS that serves children of all ages and is designed to help programs that use private funds to subsidize 30 percent of their budget.

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department as it carries out its core educational mission; nothing in the formula reflects the costs of after-school programming. This creates uncertainties regarding the stability of Foundation Aid as a funding source for DYCD's SONYC program.

While this year's state budget allocated sufficient Foundation Aid to fund the planned expansion of the SONYC program, the Mayor's 2016 Executive Budget shifted \$27.7 million of this aid from the DYCD budget to the Renewal Schools initiative. The Renewal Schools plan seeks to avoid the closure of 94 of the city's lowest-performing schools. These schools receive additional services such as additional physical and mental health

practitioners, guidance counselors, adult literacy teachers, and a host of other services. Renewal Schools also receive funding for extra tutoring, new after-school seats, summer programs, and additional teacher training.

The reallocation of Foundation Aid from for 2016 would have resulted in a large reduction in summer slots for participants in the SONYC program. After complaints from service providers and parents, the Mayor agreed to use city funds to restore a portion of the summer money (\$20.3 million), but for only one year. Without additional funds, the SONYC program will lose 17,679 slots next summer.

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