

CFE REPORTS

The Newsletter of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc.

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New York's Schools Need \$7 Billion More to Provide an Adequate Education for Every Student



CFE's Executive Director Michael Rebell

WHAT ADEQUACY COSTS

Providing the opportunity for every public school student in New York State to meet the Regents Learning Standards will require an additional \$7 billion (in current 2004-2005 dollars), according to the preliminary findings of the New York Adequacy Study, a state-of-the-art independent costing-out study released on February 4th. The study's report also recommends universal pre-kindergarten, small class sizes, and additional resources for English Language Learners, special education students, and children growing up in poverty.

This issue of "CFE Reports" provides some answers from CFE's Executive Director Michael Rebell about the study's findings and their importance.

Q: Why was this study done?

A: Despite its well-crafted academic standards, New York has never figured out what it would cost to give every student a fair shot at meeting New York State's learning standards. When CFE won its case, the court ordered that a study be done as a first step in assuring every student an opportunity to a sound basic education.

Q: So, did CFE carry out the costing-out study?

A: No. An independent panel of the nation's leading educational economists and school finance experts conducted the study, with funding provided by three major foundations. CFE just initiated the study along with 30 other organizations around the state, like the New York State School Boards Association and the Business Council of New York State.

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Q: A "costing-out study" sounds pretty technical. Why should the average New Yorker care how much a decent education costs?

A: A few reasons. First, one in eight New Yorkers is a public school student. If you add all the teachers, parents, and school-related staff – nearly every person in this state is affected by the quality of our public schools in some way. Second, the strength and health of communities across the state depend on strong schools that ensure every child the opportunity for a quality education. This issue isn't about whether or not you send your children to public school, this is about believing that every child deserves a chance to succeed.

Q: How will this thorough, 15-month study help to give every student a chance to succeed?

A: Delivering a quality education to every student has always been the key to securing our children's future, and now we know what it will cost. Of course, the next steps are ensuring that the resources reach the schools and the kids, and putting in place a method to ensure that any reforms actually provide a better opportunity for a quality education.

Q: Is CFE doing anything about the next steps in ensuring every student has the opportunity to a meaningful education?

A: Yes, CFE has a Task Force developing a detailed new accountability plan and we are reviewing the practices of other states throughout the country with national experts.

Q: Can you summarize some of the costing-out study's conclusions?

A: Sure. Not including the costs of paying for school buildings or transportation, the study recommended that schools around the state need \$7 billion more than they currently receive to give every student an opportunity to meet the Regents Learning Standards. Of that money, New York City needs about \$4 billion. High needs districts in rural areas need approximately half a billion more, as do high needs districts in urban and suburban areas. The "Big 4" – Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers – need \$419 million, and districts with average needs require an additional \$1.3 billion.

Q: Can the state of New York afford another \$7 billion for education?

A: When thousands of children's lives are on the line, we can't afford not to provide them with the basic opportunities they need and are entitled to by law. But beyond that, this amount of money is in line with the increased support for education New York State provided from 1997 to 2000. During that time state support for schools increased by more than 50%, so adding \$7 billion over the next three or four years would be quite comparable.

Q: And what will this money buy?

A: It will vary, as each school district plans for the most effective use of those funds for their students. Students, and teachers, might get classes of 18 instead of an overcrowded 32. Schools will finally have up to date libraries, laboratories, and computers. Parents will be able to drop their kids off at school in the morning knowing their children are in a safe and healthy learning environment.

CFE Strengthens Call for Fundamental Reform - Every Child Deserves a Chance

Each January, New York's governor releases an executive budget, marking the start of an annual dialogue with the legislature about the state's spending priorities. This year, many education advocates have expressed concern that the governor's proposed 1% increase for education, less than the cost of inflation, is not enough for schools across the state to even maintain their current programs and services. As a result of proposed budget cuts for 250 districts, students from Buffalo to the Bronx may again be forced to attend overcrowded schools with insufficient staff and services, and out of date textbooks, libraries, and laboratories.



Thirty states around the country, from Alabama to Wyoming, contribute a greater share of state support to education than the state of New York. Everyone knows that quality teaching, a healthy learning environment, and up to date facilities and supplies are key to better education for our children, but districts need help to pay for them. New Yorkers across the state should be proud that they have supported schools in their local communities. Now it is time for the state to step up its commitment to education. All children should have the opportunity and the resources to do their best.

Equally important, however, is fundamental reform in the way New York funds education. Governor Pataki has repeatedly said, "Our archaic system of education finance must be thrown out and replaced with a system that is fair, sustainable and understandable." He is absolutely correct. When school districts are burdened with an unstable and unpredictable school funding system, they cannot focus fully on their primary responsibility – educating our children. Districts should not be forced to play a guessing game each year about whether and when they'll be able to hire teachers, provide pre-kindergarten, or guarantee textbooks for each of their students. New York should create a fair school funding system this year that offers every child a chance for a bright future.

Forty-three other states use a "foundation formula" that is simple and fair, and provides sustained and stable funding to school districts. Reform is long overdue. New York State should "throw on the ash heap of history" the old, unfair formulas, and replace them with an objective, simple, sustainable system. In December, the state's Board of Regents proposed a foundation plan, and CFE will soon release a comprehensive proposal based on a foundation approach as well. Student need should be a determining factor of school funding, not political deal-making.

In light of the court decision in *CFE v. State*, New York has an historic opportunity to make a quality education for all of its students a reality. With the governor and legislature's support, and the endorsement of parents, teachers, students, and concerned citizens across the state, this can be the year we begin to give all children what they need to achieve their dreams.

Learn More About How the Costing Out Study and CFE's Operating Aid Proposal Would Affect Schools in Your Communities

CFE is committed to getting input from people around the state who are affected or who care about changes in the way education works in New York. We hope you will be able to join us at one of the following town-hall meetings, each **from 6:30-9:00 p.m.**, to discuss some of the changes that CFE is proposing. A local superintendent and a school board member will also offer their perspectives at each meeting.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>CITY & LOCATION</u>
Thursday, March 4	New York City Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies 281 Park Avenue South
Tuesday, March 23	Buffalo McKinley High School Auditorium 1500 Elmwood Avenue
Wednesday, March 24	Salamanca Salamanca High School 50 Iroquois Drive
Tuesday, March 30	Long Island-Farmingdale Farmingdale High School 150 Lincoln Street
Wednesday, March 31	White Plains White Plains High School 550 North Street
Thursday, April 1	Lake Placid Lake Placid Middle/High School 250 Main Street
Tuesday, April 6	Rochester East High School 1801 E. Main St.
Thursday, April 8	New York City TBA
Tuesday, April 13.	Syracuse Onandaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES Building C 6820 Thompson Road
Thursday, April 14	New York City TBA
Tuesday, April 20	Binghamton Broom-Delaware-Tioga BOCES 435 Glenwood Road
Thursday, April 22	New York City TBA



"New Yorkers of the Year" and "The Best of Public Policy"



The Campaign for Fiscal Equity and New York City Council Member Robert Jackson, a CFE founder, were named "New Yorkers of the Year" for 2003 by television station New York 1 for their tireless, ten-year effort in the courts to provide each student in New York with a real chance at a quality education.

CFE was also honored as among the best of public policy in 2003 in the Drum Major Institute's nationwide review for "finally balancing the scales of educational justice."

Money Matters

Dollar bills may not educate students, but, in a recent publication, CFE's Executive Director Michael A. Rebell, and co-author Joseph Wardenski, conclude that money spent on quality teaching, smaller class sizes, preschool initiatives, and academic intervention programs boosts student achievement dramatically - especially for poor and minority students. The authors wrote this article to debunk the myth that has existed for decades that schools have enough resources and that it's simply the poor socioeconomic backgrounds of many students that prevent learning at high levels. The authors expose this myth at a timely moment in our country's history -- on the eve of the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, America's most famous reminder that the opportunity for a quality education must be offered to all children in this country. In *Of Course Money Matters*, Rebell and Wardenski effectively demonstrate that no student comes to school unfit to learn, and that we need to provide the resources that offer every child a chance for a bright future.

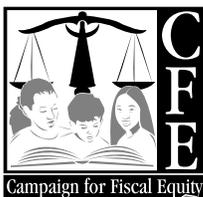


One Year Ago...



CFE filed its final appeal asking the state's highest court "to throw on the ash heap of history the notion that an 8th grade education is good enough for our children." Over the course of a month, countless groups and individuals stood up for a meaningful high school education for every student in the state of New York, including the following organizations who filed briefs that month in support of CFE: the Alliance for Quality Education, the New York State School Boards Association, the National School Boards Association, the Council of Great City Schools, the League of Women Voters of New York State, the City of New York including the Mayor, the Chancellor, the City Council, and all 5 borough presidents, and the Midstate School Finance Consortium. Subsequent briefs were supported by hundreds of other advocacy groups and New York City Council Members, and were filed by the Black, Puerto Rican and Hispanic

Legislative Caucus, the NAACP, the Partnership for New York City, the United Federation of Teachers, Rochester City School District, the New York State Association of Small City School Districts, and the New York State Coalition for 853 Schools.



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