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NEWS RELEASE

Parents and Community Leaders Highlight Evidence that “Money Makes a Difference” in Improving Our Schools

Speak Out Against Mid-Year State Education Cuts Along with Elected Officials

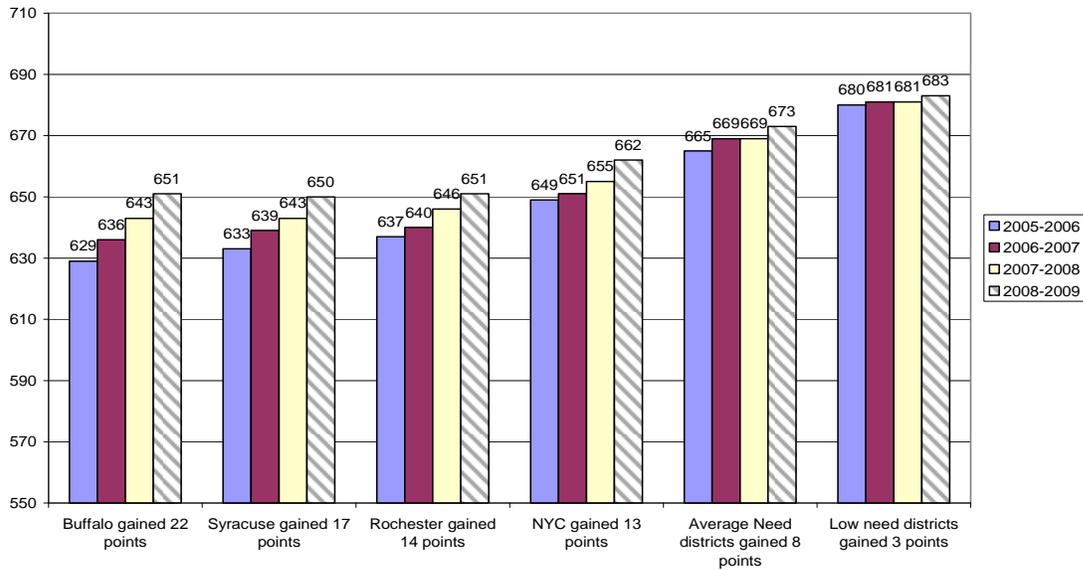
(New York City) Declaring that, “money makes a difference in improving our schools,” parents, community leaders, labor leaders, and advocates spoke out against possible mid-year education budget cuts today. In the coming weeks, Governor Paterson will convene the legislature to consider budget cuts in response to a \$2.1 billion budget deficit. While in past years proponents of educational equity would have waited to respond to mid-year budget proposals made by the Governor, this year state leaders have made it clear they will not return for special session prior to reaching a budget agreement – leaving no opportunity for public debate.

In arguing against education cuts, advocates noted that the governor and the legislature made no payment of the CFE funds due to New York City schools. In the first two years since the state enacted a 2007 CFE settlement over \$1 billion in new state classroom aid was delivered, but this year the state failed to pay the third installment. Based upon the commitment made in 2007, city schools were due to receive over \$600 million in new classroom aid (also called foundation aid). Instead New York State level-funded schools for the current 2009- 2010 year, which, with rising costs, already amounts to a cut.

Advocates pointed to positive outcomes in high needs districts across the state, as a consequence of targeted funding increases mandated by the state’s highest court and contained in the 2007 legislative reforms. The 2007 reforms targeted foundation aid (basic classroom operating aid) to key proven programs and policies such as smaller class sizes and services for English language learners. The groups highlighted the gains in high needs districts across the state. Scale scores went up 22 points in Buffalo, 17 points in Syracuse, 14 points in Rochester, 12 points in New York City, 7 points in average need districts and 3 points low need districts (low need districts have low poverty and high wealth). During this time New York State delivered record funding increases.

"The message today is loud and clear – money makes a difference in our schools," said Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education. "But we have a long way to go. Our school children cannot afford a single penny in cuts to our schools, too many have been in under-resourced classrooms for far too long. The state did not make any payment of the money due under CFE this year and as a result school children statewide gave up \$1.5 billion in classroom funding towards deficit reduction. As the state goes into special legislative session now, cuts to our schools must be off the table, no ifs, ands or buts."

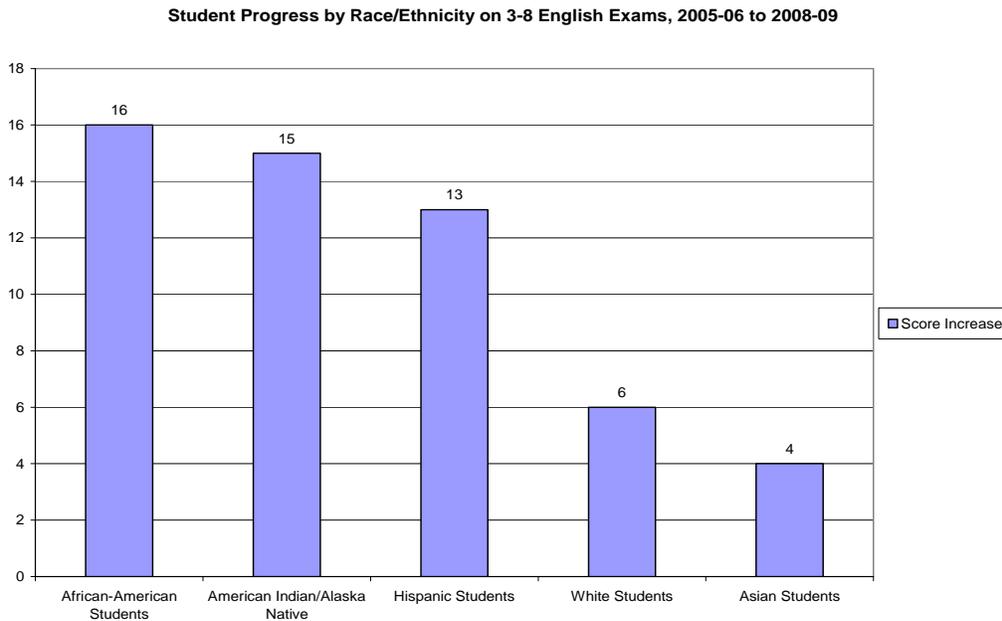
Students in High-Need districts are progressing faster than Low-Need Counterparts on 3-8 English Exams, 2005-06 to 2008-09



"New York State's commitment to our public schools must remain a priority, even in this difficult economic time— particularly in New York City, the subject of the CFE court order. Here alone, nearly half a million public school children still attend class in overcrowded buildings and too many still fail to graduate on time. These problems are replicated throughout the state. Without sustained investment, further progress in improving graduation rates, academic performance, and test scores will be impossible. Now is not the time to turn back the clock on the gains we've made and return to the bad old days of underfunded schools," said Geri D. Palast, Executive Director, Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

As a result of funding increases, the achievement gap among white students and students of color across the state has also narrowed, though much more progress is needed. On average, students

of color across the state have gained 7-10 points more than white students.



"This is a difficult time for our economy, but we need to keep our promises to children. Mid-year budget cuts do tremendous harm to our schools, and we have to ensure that our children get the education they need," said Michael Mulgrew, President of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT).

"We know that the money that CEJ won for low-performing middle schools has made a big difference in helping those schools raise their achievement faster than the citywide average," said Esperanza Vasquez, Parent Leader with New Settlement Apartments and Coalition for Educational Justice. "In my child's school, they are now using technology that has helped the students move ahead. Now, as high school graduation requirements are becoming more rigorous, this is not the time to make cuts that will put our children's education in danger."

"Less than half of the immigrant and Latino kids in Bushwick and around the city are not reading at their grade level, and the majority are not graduating on time," said Teofilo Menon, a father from Bushwick with Make the Road New York. "Last year, we saw some improvements in reading and writing scores for many of our neighborhood schools, but if the governor cuts the school budgets, all the improvements will go away. I am worried that my grandson, who will be entering school next year, will have to go to schools that do not have enough teachers, books, and support to make sure that he does not become another young Latino boy who can't read and write."

"I see children in my community struggling to reach good educational outcomes and not getting the educational support they need due to schools' financial constraints," said Leticia Alanis, Co-Director of La Union. "I urge Governor Patterson and the legislature to keep and even increase funding for New York children's education. Governor Paterson and the legislature must look for ways to balance the state budget that protect children and their education, the only path to a bright future for our communities and our state."

"Governor Paterson and the legislature should not shortchange our schools, particularly immigrant students who need more services, not less," said Kevin Kang, Youth Program

Coordinator, YKASEC: Empowering the Korean Community. “We need to ensure that the students in our communities are protected and prioritized in the face of budget cuts.”

“Education cuts should have no part in the governor’s budget plan,” said Hector Figueroa, Secretary-Treasurer of 32BJ SEIU – the largest private sector union in the state representing 5,000 public school cleaners. “Balancing the budget shouldn’t come at the expense of our children, their schools and the people who work there.”

“District Council 37, AFSCME and Local 372, DC 37 are opposed to the pending layoffs of over 700 school employees scheduled for October,” said Santos Crespo, Vice President, Local 372, DC 37 School Employees. “Any cuts in staffing will hurt the learning environment for children. There will be less supervision at lunch and recess, fewer staff available for Substance Abuse prevention work, and less parent involvement as outreach staff are cut back. The Mayor, the State Legislature and the Governor must come up with funding solutions that support the entire school day for children.”

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