

June 2004

Education

From the NYS Assembly • Sheldon Silver, Speaker
Steve Sanders • Chair, Education Committee

Assembly Majority: It's now or never for our children

Reform + Resources = Results

The State of New York has a constitutional and moral obligation to provide each and every child with a sound, basic education. In addressing the decision made by our state's highest court in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, we must meet this solemn obligation while rejecting an approach that supports some school districts by taking away resources from others.

The Assembly recently released a plan to help ensure that every school district in the state receives the resources it needs to provide a quality education. It's also the only plan to meet the mandates set by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity's court ruling.

Preparing all of New York's children for a bright future

The Assembly's plan will provide nearly \$6.1 billion more in aid for schools statewide over five years – with New York City schools receiving 63.9 percent of that funding and over 86 percent going to high-need schools across the state – ensuring them more resources than either the governor's or Senate's proposals.

The plan provides a transparent, predictable school aid formula – which, along with two-year school aid budgeting, will allow districts to better plan their programs and budgets. The formula reflects student need and regional cost, and is based on enrollment, not attendance. It establishes a foundation formula,

What the experts are saying...

"The Assembly has presented a good, sound proposal. Speaker Silver has lived up to his word and given New York a plan with realistic dollar figures that comes close to meeting the court's requirements."

- Alan B. Lubin,
Executive Vice
President, New York
State United Teachers

"Speaker Silver has put forward a positive first-year down payment and multi-year plan that brings us closer to achieving that goal."

- Robert Lawson,
Spokesman for New
York City Mayor
Michael R. Bloomberg

"Speaker Silver's spending plan, for which we have been waiting, does not disappoint. It establishes the magnitude of the state's responsibility to provide a sound, basic education for all our kids, supplemented of course by federal funds and a strong local commitment."

- Randi Weingarten,
President, United
Federation of Teachers

similar to the state Board of Regents' plan, to help stabilize education funding from year to year.

The Assembly's plan will also help schools across the state:

- Renovate and repair unsafe buildings
- Relieve overcrowded classrooms
- Provide quality early education programs
- Update technology
- Maintain crucial services and teachers

"The Assembly plan addresses the heart of the funding issue. It provides major resources to high-needs districts, like Buffalo, where our 4,000 member/educators struggle to affect student achievement, despite the city's fiscal crisis. The Assembly also deserves praise for its focus on the needs of rural and suburban districts."

- Robin Rapaport,
President, National
Education Association
of New York

The Assembly will not allow the state to gamble any further with our children's education, especially as the governor continues to fail to obtain our fair share of federal dollars.

Investing in education now

For this year, the Assembly's plan increases school aid by \$1.22 billion -- with all school districts receiving an increase -- including:

- Increasing operating aid by \$784 million using a newly reformed operating aid formula
- Increasing aid for programs for students with limited English proficiency by \$95 million
- Restoring the governor's cuts to BOCES, Transportation Aid, Building Aid and Teacher Support Aid
- Restoring the governor's cuts to programs for children with disabilities

Additionally, the Assembly plan establishes in the next school year a \$2.2 billion program for meeting the capital educational needs, helping ensure that NYC schools can address the needs identified in their five-year plan and targeting funding to needy districts across the state.

The plan also calls for New York City to strengthen its own educational investment with an additional \$1.2 billion over the next five years. These city funds should be targeted to directly impact student achievement, such as professional development and creative approaches to attract teachers to high-need schools.

The Assembly plan strengthens accountability measures instituted by the Board of Regents and the state Education Department, by helping schools that are having trouble meeting standards identify and resolve those issues, and providing the necessary resources for training, technical assistance and staff.

Ensuring equal opportunities for all New York school children

The Legislature and the governor have a responsibility – an obligation – to meet the court’s July 30 deadline and ensure that all New York schools have the resources they need. The governor’s foot-dragging has gone on for long enough. If the Legislature and the governor fail to devise a solution, a special master appointed by the court will have to step in and overhaul the funding formula – creating a further delay – forcing our schools, our communities, and our children to wait longer for reform.

In addition, if we don’t find an equitable solution, a court-appointed special master – who is obligated to follow the facts of the CFE decision and therefore can only address the financial needs of New York City’s schools – will devise a new school aid plan. We must make every effort to address the CFE decision now, so we can do it equitably and we can do it statewide, not just in New York City.

The Assembly is fighting for such a solution. It’s time for the governor to do the same and make the right decisions for New York’s school children.

The complete details of the Assembly’s plan – including a detailed list of the [aid each school district would receive](#) this year – are available on its Web site at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/Press/20040602a/>.

[Click here](#) to view the *Report of the Ways And Means Committee on the New York State Assembly School Aid Reform Proposal*

CFE Checklist



Establish the Cost of a Sound, Basic Education



Reform the Funding Formula



Ensure that Every School has Sufficient Resources



Enhance Accountability

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