

June 2004

Education

From the NYS Assembly • Sheldon Silver, Speaker

Assembly Majority to Governor and Senate: It's time to get the job done

The Assembly stands ready to meet in an open forum with the governor and the Senate to reach an agreement on a plan that will provide each and every New York child with a sound, basic education.

The governor and the Legislature have a July 30 deadline to meet a ruling by the state's highest court to provide children with that sound, basic education. If the governor and the Legislature fail to devise a solution in the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity* case, 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 adequate solution, the 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.

Constructing a feasible school funding plan

The Assembly's plan to help ensure that every school district in the state receives the resources it needs to provide a quality education is the only one to meet the mandates set by the court ruling. In addressing the decision, we must meet this solemn obligation while rejecting an approach that supports some school districts by taking away resources from others.

What the experts are saying...

"Having the courts run the school system would be completely wrong."

- Governor George Pataki

"Better a special summit than a special master. It's great that the governor, the Senate and the Assembly have introduced plans to comply with the CFE decision. Their plans are out in the open. Now they should follow through and resolve their differences in public. But we're running out of road. We don't have time to wait around while Albany plays politics."

- Ed McCormick, Chair,
New York State
Educational Conference
Board

"From the beginning, we have admired the proposal from the New York Board of Regents, and Assembly Democrats appear to have offered an outline similar to that plan...Both Governor Pataki and the Senate Republicans have offered proposals that involve too little state money and too much federal aid, which is either unlikely ever to arrive or already designated for other purposes."

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 school repair and construction, 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.

Making the right decisions for New York's children

The Assembly's plan will provide nearly \$6.1 billion more in aid for schools statewide over five years – with 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, similar to the state Board of Regents' plan, to help stabilize education funding from year to year.

Getting down to business

- The New York Times,
June 10, 2004

"There's no question that a state Assembly proposal to address a court ruling mandating school-aid equity was a leap past the baby steps taken by the governor and the Senate on the issue."

- The Journal News,
June 8, 2004

"Silver's plan sets the stage. Now the players must perform."

- Democrat and
Chronicle, June 3, 2004

"Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver on Wednesday proposed at least an 'open and public discussion' of the school funding plans. His approach should be pursued."

- Democrat and
Chronicle, June 10,
2004

It's time for the governor and the Senate to make the right decisions for New York's school children. We simply can't afford the governor's foot-dragging and the Senate's attempts to play politics. This is not a game, and any attempt to squander the future of our children will not be tolerated.

We 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 Assembly Majority stands committed to working together with the governor and the Senate to iron out our differences, and come up with the best plan for New York's 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://www.assembly.state.ny.us/comm/WAM/20040616/>

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