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# CFE REPORTS

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The Newsletter of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc.

October 2003

## FOLLOWING VICTORY, CFE FORMS SOUND BASIC EDUCATION TASK FORCE

**C**FE's tremendous victory in the Court of Appeals in June has put New York State on the road to reform. Now CFE, in partnership with New York's education community and citizens throughout the state, has begun to focus on the next steps to assure that the state adopts solid, well-grounded policies that will result in the effective statewide implementation of the CFE decision.

To assist in developing such policies, CFE announced the formation of a Sound Basic Education Task Force at CFE's *Following Victory: The Journey Toward Reform* Education Summit meeting on September 30. CFE Executive Director and Counsel Michael A. Rebell explained to an audience of 200 supporters from around the state that, for the Task Force, CFE will bring together expert researchers and key education stakeholders to analyze the issues thoroughly and to devise objective, nonpartisan policy proposals for reform.

Directly following the Court of Appeals decision, CFE had called on the governor and legislature to form a high-level commission to study

these issues and develop proposals in the areas outlined by the decision. Governor Pataki responded in September, forming the Commission on Education Reform; however, because of the process by which that commission was created, there is now widespread concern that it will be hampered by partisan politics and distracted by other agendas. As plaintiff in the case, CFE has a responsibility to initiate an independent process to ensure that the full range of issues is properly analyzed and aired. The Task Force has been established to fulfill this responsibility.

The Task Force will build on the precedent of the New York Adequacy Study, an independent, cutting-edge costing-out study initiated by CFE and partners that got underway in anticipation of the court decision. Task Force working groups will include the nation's top experts, representatives of New York's education community, and key CFE staff members. They will tackle the major areas (in addition to costing out) required by the court order: reforming the school funding system, including both operating aid and building aid, and ensuring accountability.

In order to assure the effective statewide implementation of the court order, the Task Force will work with a broad array of key partner organizations that already includes the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA), the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE), Midstate School Finance Consortium, and the New York City Department of Education. CFE is also reaching out to collaborating

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organizations and interested individuals statewide through a series of public engagement forums. These meetings, co-sponsored by CFE and AQE, will work to ensure that proposals for reform receive broad representation and thorough analysis from a wide range of stakeholders.

The Sound Basic Education Task Force will share its research and analysis on an ongoing basis with the governor’s commission and relevant legislative committees. It expects to release a full set of proposals in spring 2004.

**CFE CALLS FOR “DOWN PAYMENT” IN COMING FISCAL YEAR**

CFE and its supporters are pressing the state to act quickly to address the urgent education-funding needs of districts across the state, even while comprehensive, lasting reform policies are being developed. With the help of its supporters, CFE is urging the governor and legislature to act in the coming fiscal year to address students’ immediate needs. CFE believes the governor must take the lead and include a good faith down payment on vital education resources in his executive budget in January.

By the end of November, CFE will partner with the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) and other citywide and statewide groups to issue a strong, joint proposal for a specific down payment for immediate consideration by the governor and legislature. This proposal will be informed by public discussion of local needs at forums held in New York City and throughout the state in October and November.

**NEW YORK STATE ASSEMBLY CONVENES HEARINGS ON CFE DECISION**

On October 1, 2003, the New York State Assembly Committee on Education convened its first hearing “to obtain input and hear comment regarding the implementation of the Court of Appeals decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit.” Committee members from New York City and elsewhere in the state heard testimony from students, teachers, and members of the education and advocacy communities, including CFE Executive Director Michael A. Rebell.

Fifth graders from P.S. 116 in Manhattan spoke first, telling the committee that their school was overcrowded and lacked needed supplies and materials. New York City schools Chancellor Joel Klein next urged the committee to work quickly to implement the CFE decision statewide. He called on legislators to craft a new state school funding system that allows districts greater flexibility and more discretion in the way they spend their education dollars, arguing that this was necessary for accountability for results. In response to a question from Assemblymember Barbara Clark of Queens, the chancellor stressed the importance of maintaining high standards and aligning resources with the standards to ensure all students have the opportunity to meet them.

In his testimony, Michael Rebell reminded the committee that the Court of Appeals’ order sets a constitutional standard that entitles every New York student to the opportunity for a meaningful high school education, which is defined by the Regents standards. He argued that there is, therefore, a practical and legal necessity for a statewide remedy.

Rebell then reviewed the three parts of the court’s order to the state: to assess the costs of a meaningful high school education, to create a funding system that ensures that all schools have adequate resources, and to create a system of accountability to measure the success of these

reforms. He called on the governor and the legislature to work quickly to enact these reforms, reminding the committee that Justice Leland DeGrasse has announced his intention to appoint a Special Master to oversee the state's efforts. Rebell also provided the committee with an overview of CFE's vision for reform and plans for developing the data and solid nonpartisan proposals necessary to ensure the effective statewide implementation of the Court of Appeals' order and sharing this information with the governor and the legislature.

Finally, Rebell stressed the importance of the governor including a "down payment" for educational reforms in his executive budget in January. Assembly members agreed that this would send a crucial signal to citizens across the state that the governor recognizes the urgency of addressing New York's students pressing educational needs at the same time that lasting reforms are being crafted.

## **CFE AND AQE BEGIN FALL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SERIES**

**C**FE and the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) launched their fall series of public engagement forums in Buffalo on Thursday, October 2. The meeting, one of a dozen forums to be held around the state, drew a crowd of concerned parents, educators, elected officials, education advocates, and community members to discuss important next steps in implementing the CFE decision statewide.

As they did in Buffalo, forum participants throughout the state will exchange ideas on what constitutes a fair, statewide funding system as mandated by the Court of Appeals in *CFE v. State*. Participants will also help determine funding priorities for a "down payment" for education reform that CFE, AQE, and others believe must be included in the governor's January executive budget proposal.

In Buffalo, many participants cited the lack of quality teachers, overcrowded classes, and inadequate academic intervention services as among the most serious obstacles to student success there. Administrators and teachers pointed to the absence of a stable and predictable funding system as a

severe impediment to efficient, successful planning.

### **CFE and AQE will hold the following forums throughout the state during October and November:**

**QUEENS:** Tuesday, October 21  
6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.

Queens Borough Hall, Room 213  
120-55 Queens Blvd, Kew Gardens  
Contact: Jessica Garcia, CFE 212-867-8455

**ROCHESTER:** Wednesday, October 22  
6:00 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.

Downtown Community Forum, St Mary's Church  
Contact: Maria Behncke, AQE 585-288-4693

**BINGHAMTON:** Thursday, October 30  
Contact: Daphne Gathers, AQE 607-723-0110

**CAPITAL DISTRICT:** Saturday, November 8  
9:30 A.M. - 2:00 P.M.  
Contact: Shanna Goldman, AQE 518-465-4600  
x103

**SYRACUSE:** Tuesday, November 11  
6:15 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.  
Wyndham Hotel, 6301 Rte. 298, East Syracuse  
(right off Carrier Circle)  
Contact: Bob Cohen, AQE 518-465-4600 x104

**UTICA:** Wednesday, November 12  
Contact: Bob Cohen, AQE 518-465-4600 x104

**NEW YORK CITY:** Thursday, November 13  
6:00 P.M. - 9:00 P.M.  
Contact: Christine Marinoni, AQE 718-222-1089

**ITHACA:** Saturday, November 15  
1:00 P.M. - 4:00 P.M.  
Contact: Daphne Gathers, AQE 607-723-0110

**LONG ISLAND:** Saturday, November 15  
8:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.  
Contact: AQE Long Island 516-541-1006 x15

**WESTCHESTER:** TBA  
Contact: Christine Marinoni, AQE 718-222-1089

# TIMELINE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS LEADING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CFE DECISION

## October - November 2003

CFE and the Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) hold statewide public engagement meetings on implementing the CFE decision.

## Late November 2003

Independent research team to issue preliminary costing-out report of the New York Adequacy Study.

## December 2003

New York Adequacy Study stakeholders conference.

Release of CFE-AQE "down payment" proposal for governor's executive budget.

## January 2004

Statewide public engagement conference on preliminary report of the New York Adequacy Study.

Release of Governor Pataki's executive budget proposal.

## February 2004

Independent research team to issue costing-out report: The New York Adequacy Study.

## March 2004

Report of the governor's "Commission on Education Reform" due.

## April 2004

CFE's Sound Basic Education Task Force proposals to be issued.

## April - May 2004

CFE to hold statewide public engagement meetings on proposals to implement the CFE decision.

## July 30, 2004

Court of Appeals' deadline to the state for the implementation of CFE decision.

*For complete details, please visit [www.cfequity.org](http://www.cfequity.org)*



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