

**Outline for News Conference:
The Invisible Face of CFE: New York's Small City School Districts**

Part 1: Overview

We are gathered here today to release a new report by the New York State Association of Small City School Districts that documents the educational challenges in small cities throughout New York State.

The Invisible Face of CFE: New York's Small Cities School Districts in Crisis documents the educational challenges in small cities throughout New York State of which many rival those in New York City.

We are releasing this report around the state exactly thirteen days before New York City's Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) school funding lawsuit returns to the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, and less than three weeks before the New York State Association of Small City School Districts will file written arguments in their own CFE-style lawsuit.

While public debate about CFE, which is a central issue in this year's gubernatorial campaign, has focused on New York City, and to a lesser extent on other large cities in the state, this report presents compelling evidence to demonstrate that many small cities across New York state face educational challenges that often rival or exceed those in larger cities.

Part 2: The Findings:

The report examines three compelling issues that demonstrate that small city school districts across New York state are invisible faces of CFE and that New York state has neglected these school districts just as they have the New York City School District.

The major findings of the report are:

- The report shows most of these small cities have comparable or greater poverty than New York City. (FRPL Chart)
- There are high rates of poverty among students in the public schools in these cities, in most of these districts between 59% and 82% of students come from poor households.
- These cities tend to have far less available wealth than New York City to rely on for local school funding sources and only a fraction of the resources in wealthy districts. (CWR Chart)
- Student performance on fourth and eighth grade math and English language arts exams are far behind student performance in wealthy districts and in many cases behind students in New York City public schools. (ELA Chart)

- **Many school districts across New York State have comparable or greater levels of chronic under funding from the state than New York City.**
- **As a result of the above factors, many school districts across New York State have comparable or greater levels of failure rates than New York City.**

The report shows most of these small cities have comparable or greater poverty than New York City. These cities tend to have far less available wealth than New York City to rely on for local school funding sources and only a fraction of the resources in wealthy districts. There are high rates of poverty among students in the public schools in these cities, in most of these districts between 59% and 82% of students come from poor households.

Graduation rates are generally somewhat better than New York City, but in some cases worse, and in all cases below average needs districts are far behind the state's wealthiest districts. Student performance on fourth and eighth grade math and English language arts exams are far behind student performance in wealthy districts and in many cases behind students in New York City public schools.

Based upon a school aid reform formula devised by the Association of Small City School Districts, on average, these districts would require a 43% increase in state aid in order to meet student need.

“The quarter of a million students in small cities across New York state are the forgotten children of New York State,” said Bob Biggerstaff of the Association of Small City School Districts. “If our political leaders do not have the wisdom and courage to forge a statewide solution to CFE, city after city will drag the state through our courts. As this data clearly shows, children in small cities throughout upstate New York are losing out due to the grinding delays of the state in solving our school crisis.”

In terms of racial demographics of the student bodies, the small cities vary greatly with ten of nineteen having 40% or more non-white students, while six have less than 20%.

Local Results: “This report illustrates the need the Jamestown students have.”

“Our districts are different from New York City, but our students face many of the same challenges.” “This report demonstrates that the state is not meeting its obligation to our student’s under the state constitution.” “That is why there is a small cities CFE case.”

- Based upon a school aid reform formula devised by the Association of Small City School Districts, on average, these districts would require a 43% increase in state aid in order to meet student need. (School Formula Chart)

Part 3: Local Findings

Here in Jamestown Public Schools we have:

- Free/Reduced Lunch counts (2005) = 64.9% of our students. This is an increase of 9.3% points from years 2001 to 2005.
- Funding that is insufficient for all our student needs. But expectations of N.C.L.B. and its 9 subcategories continue to rise. We are beginning to reach a point of “diminishing return.” There is a gap here and it is all about equity in state funding for all students in New York State – a so called Small Cities CFE case.
- Our needs exceed our ability to keep impoverished students on track – we need money for more remediation services, more money to have Pre-K for every youngster in our district, more money to completely implement our planned reading program improvement initiative in all our elementary schools.
- Jamestown administration continues to search for grant opportunities to make up the difference in funding. For example, the preliminary data for 2005-06 shows grants total dollars to be nearly \$10,000,000 and these grants fund
 - Over 120 FTE annual positions and
 - Over 35 FTE summer positions
 compared to 2000-2001 data about \$6,000,000 and 110 FTE’s
- Unfortunately, during the last four years Jamestown has reduced the number of employees working with students by a total of 143 employees.

68.8 FTE Teachers
 66.7 FTE Paraprofessionals (aides)
 6.0 FTE Administrative
3.5 FTE Clerical
 143 FTE

During a ten year period, the percent of our budget paid by state aid has fallen from 72.84% in 1998-99 to 67.5% in 2005-06. As a direct result, the last four years has produced local tax levy increases of:

2006-07 = 5.47%
 2005-06 = 1.90%
 2004-05 = 3.50%
 2003-04 = 7.58%

While the previous 9 years saw only 2 years with a tax increase of 1.56% (1996-97) and 2.77% (2001-02) while the other seven years showed zero % tax increase.

- These are a partial list of reasons why Jamestown Public Schools has joined the Small City-CFE lawsuit. The students of Jamestown should have the same educational opportunities that affluent districts’ students have and our taxpayers should not pay more taxes than these affluent districts do.

- Finally the Small Cities Association January 2004 Report entitled: Funding for Achievement illustrates that in 2002 dollars that Jamestown Public Schools should be receiving \$2,372 more per student or \$12,658,730 per year to be equitable with our affluent school counterparts.

If this funding ever becomes possible our school board could lower local taxes and increase programs that would help our students succeed on an equitable basis with all students in New York State.