



OBSERVATION

# What Kind of Education Will New York Buy?

[By Billy Easton](#) Jan 2007

Over the past thirteen years, the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit grew from a quixotic legal challenge by a handful of parents fed up with poorly resourced schools to a top-tier issue in state politics. Did the entire issue of equitable school funding come tumbling down in November when the state Court of Appeals cut the court-ordered new public education funding for New York City from between \$4.7 and \$5.63 billion to \$1.93 billion? Absolutely not!

In fact now, more than ever, is the time to demand high quality education for every child. That is why the Alliance for Quality Education, CFE and allies statewide launched our 100 Days to Educational Excellence Campaign. Day 1 of this campaign was Eliot Spitzer's inauguration. Day 31, January 31 will be the date he issues his Executive Budget. Day 90, March 31 is the deadline for the Legislature to adopt a budget. And Day 100 is the deadline for Spitzer to sign or veto that budget.

What do we want by Day 100? We want the funds and reforms needed to see excellence become the standard for every child's education.

Throughout the election campaign, Eliot Spitzer said he would provide \$4 to \$6 billion a year in new education funds for New York City, with most of that coming from the state, but the city paying a share. He told *The New York Times* that the \$4 to \$6 billion would be part of a statewide package of up to \$8.5 billion. We will know the exact figures when he issues his budget.

The real measure is not only how much money is provided in the budget, but what kind of education the state will buy for the dollars. Spitzer reiterated central campaign themes during his State of the State when he committed to smaller class sizes, universal pre-kindergarten, improved teaching quality, especially in the neediest districts, and more class time for kids through after school programs and other reforms. He also committed to replace an arcane and unfair school aid formula with a transparent formula that targets funding based upon student need.

He is not merely going to turn money over to the NYC Department of Education, or other school districts, with no strings attached. He is going to hold districts accountable for implementing proven educational strategies such as class size reduction and he is going to hold them accountable to translate increased

funding into significant increases in student achievement. That is good news to parents and students.

We will sponsor a stream of events including town hall meetings, rallies, lobby days and direct pressure on legislators between now and Day 100. These events will culminate with a citywide yellow bus tour that makes stops at the offices of any of New York City's own legislators who are not prepared to support full funding for New York City's school children.

After 13 years, we could truly have the funding and reforms our children need in just 100 days.

*Billy Easton is the executive director of the Alliance for Quality Education.*