



“AQE In Action”

March 2010



Gail Gadsden, AQE parent leader, at an event opposing budget cuts in Albany.

Action in Albany

Parents from New York City and advocates held a press conference on January 20, 2010 opposing the Executive Budget which includes a \$1.4 billion proposed cut to education. The parents delivered hundreds of broken pencils to the governor and legislature to symbolize the State’s broken Campaign for Fiscal Equity promise to New York’s schoolchildren by not delivering any additional CFE funding as the 2007 education reform requires. The proposed cuts are on top of the already broken promise parents and advocates stated.

**Click the picture
to take action
now!**



Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian-American

Legislative Caucus Weekend



Ocyntia Williams , parent leader with AQE and CEJ commenting on the devastating consequences of the proposed cuts to education at a budget hearing .

Many parent leaders from around the state attended caucus weekend and participated in the offered panels and workshops on education, as well as in the festivities.



Some fun and learning

Members of the Buffalo AQE committee joined Organizer Chy'Nel Lee at the 2010 Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian American Legislative Caucus weekend gala.

Wyandanch, Long Island Empowerment Day

The Long Island education leaders have been working diligently for several months to organize Wyandanch Empowerment Day. The event will be held on Saturday, March 13 at the parish hall of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal church. They anticipate 50 to 100 people in attendance.

This event gives the opportunity to community members to share their concerns and learn better ways to become involved. Dr. Montrell Greene from *Empowerment 360*, an organization that provides services to schools, students, school boards, and communities to create the atmosphere and opportunities for more engagement, will be our keynote speaker for the day. He will be sharing with us his knowledge on empowering parents, as well as how he has helped organize school districts towards improvement.



Amparo Sadler, Steering Committee Member

Wyandanch Empowerment day will also give parents and community the chance to be heard on issues that most affect their school district. Three years ago the committee began working after we brought together a group of concerned parents and community members to create the Community Platform, which was based on the issues that concerned them most. This event will give people a chance to share their concerns as well as become educated on how to get involved.

We will be holding a panel consisting of several different members of the education committee. It will give people the opportunity to hear how other parents, students, school board members, as well as school administrators got involved with the community or hear how they could best work with the community. For more information, please call Danielle at 516-541-1006 ext 12.

In New York City parents and community members make their voices heard on the issue of co-locations of traditional public and charter schools and other issues



Lydia Bellahcene, a mother from P.S. 15 in Brooklyn, calls for a moratorium on co-locations.

Over the past month, AQE is been playing a leading role in the struggle for parent and community input around the many school closings, the plan to turn around struggling schools and the co-locations of charter schools within traditional public schools.

On both February 23rd and March 2nd AQE was part of organizing a series of events in NYC with the Coalition for Educational Justice, calling for a moratorium on co-locations and school closings until an independent

analysis on the impact is made. Parents and community are loudly telling the Dept. of Education to “Fix our schools - not close them!” and to stop pitting parents against parents and schools against schools through co-locations.

AQE has been attending numerous hearings, engaging in outreach to affected parents, students and communities, organizing meetings and working together with strong allies like CEJ and NY Communities for Change to make parent and community voice heard in decision-making

Faith Initiative

On January 16, 2010 AQE joined the NYC Coalition for Educational Justice at their “Educational Justice Day in NYC” rally honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The rally was held at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York. 1400 parents, youth and community joined in a united voice in support of CEJ’s platform to Redesign and Expand the School Day.

At the rally, AQE invited the 1400 people present to break pencils as a symbol of the broken Campaign for Fiscal Equity promise to the children of NY. It was an incredibly powerful moment when everyone stood up and simultaneously broke pencils. A few days later parents with AQE and CEJ took the pencils to Albany where there was a press conference and delivery of the pencils to the Governor’s office.



Reverend Calvin Butts addresses 1400 Parents, youth and community in support of CEJ's platform to "Make All Schools Great Schools", at Abyssinian Baptist

Through AQE’s commitment to engaging the faith community in the educational justice movement, many clergy leaders joined the educational quality movement. Some of the supporters are Reverend David Dyson, Bishop Orlando Findlayter, Reverend Raymond Rivera, Pastor Gilford Monroe, Rabbi Michael Feinberg, The Right Reverend Catherine Roskam, Reverend Earl Mckay and many more. We believe strongly that to continue to elevate this movement we have to have the faith community as one of the leaders.

Syracuse Parents and Advocates Respond to Governor's \$1.4 Billion Cut to Schools On Top of the Broken CFE Promise

The Alliance for Quality Education held press conferences across the state to oppose the Executive budget proposal to cut \$1.4 billion from education. In Syracuse, AQE held our press conference at Edward Smith Elementary school to explain why education funding cannot be cut. If the proposed cuts to education are voted, with the cut to **Syracuse totaling \$11 million, the school system would lose approximately 165 teachers.**

At the press conference, all of our members, including retired teachers, parents, and grandparents expressed their outrage with the cuts. They also explained how the state has repeatedly broken its promise to fully fund public schools so that all students get a sound basic education. The Alliance for Quality Education continues the fight against the proposed budget cuts to education.



A student holding a poster he made for a rally on March 4, 2010 rejecting cuts to the education.

Buffalo: Local and State Work



Local parents speaking at the press conference

Parents and students alike are starting see AQE's local campaign for School Safety – Universal Dress Code become a reality. With just over 60 days left until the deadline for submitting a petition, we currently have over 3000 signatures.

Buffalo received an incredible response from the media on their January 2010 press conference opposing proposed cuts to education on top of an already broken promise. This press conference was covered but nearly all the local media outs and helped gain support from concerned citizens for the issue. Below are links to some of the coverage. Click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) for media coverage for this event.

Leaders from organizations such as the Buffalo Exchange Club and the Somali Bantu Community Organization spoke and shared their stories of what they stand to lose if education is cut.

Turnaround schools

The federal government is requiring the lowest performing schools to dramatically restructure. These schools have the lowest state test scores and graduation rates under 60%. Each state must identify 5% of its low-performing schools. In New York, there are [57 low-performing schools](#).

The Alliance for Quality Education has been one of the lone and loudest voices for a long time advocating that the lowest performing schools need dramatic action to become successful. Even though we are pleased that action is being taken to make these schools successful, we would like to see the proven educational strategies. We believe that parental and community input and practices based on research are key ingredients in making this happen. We are working hard to make sure that the plan that school districts choose is based on the practices that successful schools use, and that parents' voice is heard.



School districts with a school on the list have four options:

- redesign the school and replace the principal and **all of** the teachers, even though 50% of them can be rehired (as it happened in [Central Falls, RI](#)), even though there is little evidence that such practice works;
- convert the school into a charter, even though charters do not have a track record of turning around low performing schools and have no transparency;
- transform the school so that
 - the principal and the teachers are given professional development,
 - the school day and year is extended;
 - comprehensive instructional reform;
 - close the school..

Each school can receive between \$500,000 and \$2 million per year.

AQE believes quality education is a civil right. All students should have access to excellent schools. Dramatic action is needed to make every school excellent. We are working hard to make sure that the community is engaged in the plan development process. Quality education involves parents and the community as equal partners to make sure that all students succeed to the maximum of their ability.

For more information on Federal and State Guidance on the topic click [HERE](#).



Make a donation today

All children in New York State deserve a quality education. Help make this right a reality by clicking the envelope to donate.



Your gift will support our successful work to win funding to reduce class size, expand pre-kindergarten, and provide essential education services for millions of New York children. Our organizing and advocacy has shown proven results: millions of dollars in funding, while holding education officials accountable for how the money is spent. Your gift will enable us to educate the public, involve parents and community members, and inform our elected officials.

Your donation today will help give every student the opportunity to learn. Donations will be used to fund advocacy as well as media relations to keep education issues in the news and at the forefront of statewide issues. No matter the amount, each donation makes a difference. Please make the choice to make a difference by giving now.



Get involved. Contact your regional office:

Albany **518-465-4600**
Buffalo **716-855-1522**
Long Island **516-541-1006**
New York City **718-222-1089**
Rochester **585-288-4693**
Syracuse **315-435-2480**

We welcome your feedback on both the newsletter and our work! Please send comments to Nikki Jones, Communications Coordinator: njones@aqeny.org