



AQE Milestones: Key Events in the History of the Alliance for Quality Education and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity Case

1993

NYC parents file a lawsuit that challenges the underfunding of NYC public schools by the State. The lawsuit is called Campaign for Fiscal Equity vs. State (CFE).

2000

The Alliance for Quality Education (AQE) is started to push for a statewide solution to the broken school aid formula and to address state underfunding of schools.

January 2001

In the CFE litigation, a state trial judge (State Supreme Court Justice Leland DeGrasse), finds that the Governor and the Legislature violated the state constitution by failing to provide NYC children with the opportunity for a "sound basic education" (SBE).

October 2001

In his appeal of the January 2001 DeGrasse decision, the Governor claims that a "sound basic education" means an 8th grade level education. To protest this outrageous position, AQE brings a horse-and-buggy to Albany to dramatize that the state's arguments, if adopted by the courts, would bring education back to the horse-and-buggy age.

2002

A state middle level court, called the "Appellate Division," agrees with the Governor's outrageous 8th grade position, reversing the January 2001 DeGrasse order.

By 2002, AQE has over 200 endorsing organizations, organized campaigns in 7 regions of the state (New York City, Capital District, Central New York, Western New York, the Southern Tier, Finger Lakes, Long Island), and an active steering committee.

From January 2001 to January 2002, AQE generates over 140 media stories on our work (our media statistics are unable to capture all of our press coverage).

October 2002

During the Gubernatorial race, in protest of the infamous appellate division "8th grade decision," AQE organizes a 14-stop "12th Grade Express" tour of a yellow school bus to demand that the Governor immediately settle the CFE case under terms that guarantee a 12th grade education for all children. Stops are made in Long Island, Plattsburgh, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, NYC (all five boroughs), Binghamton, Elmira, and Ithaca.

2003

AQE significantly increases its media outreach, generating roughly 300 media stories statewide, double the previous year.

May 2003

Robert Jackson, the lead plaintiff in CFE and a Harlem parent (and now a NYC council member), leads march from NYC to Albany to generate public support for a favorable ruling by the State Court of Appeals. AQE helps CFE with organizing march, called "Walk a Mile for Your Child."

June 2003

The Court of Appeals, reversing the 8th grade decision, holds that a SBE is a "meaningful high school education" (almost a finding that a 12th grade level education is mandated). Court orders the Governor and Legislature to determine the "actual cost" of a meaningful high school education in NYC, and to appropriate that amount. Accountability measures are also required. The state is ordered to act by July 30, 2004.

2004

A public outcry follows the failure to implement the June 2003 CFE court order. This is shown in several ways, including: editorials, letters to the editor and opinion pieces statewide calling for statewide funding reform and protesting the failure to comply with the court order; public events (for example, AQE sponsored several regional and constituency-focused "advocacy days" in Albany to fight for a CFE solution, attended by over 2000); and impacts on statewide elections (education contributed to the defeat of two long-term Senate incumbents).

June 2004

AQE organizes a prominent group of leaders for a civil disobedience action at the State Capitol in Albany. The leaders symbolically block the State Legislature from going out of session without addressing the CFE court order.

July 2004 to December 2004

The Governor and the Legislature fail to meet the July 30th Court of Appeals deadline.

Therefore, the case is referred to Justice DeGrasse, who appoints a distinguished panel of "special masters" to determine the "actual cost" of a SBE in NYC.

The special masters make their recommendations in November. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity then convenes a statewide taskforce of education advocates (including AQE) to write legislation to apply the principles of the special masters' recommendations statewide (the 2003 CFE court order and the recommendations only mandate reforms for NYC), and to establish a fair statewide education funding formula.

2005

AQE initiates a new web-focused campaign to contact state officials to advocate for funding reform. The web page is called OurKidsCantWait.Org. Over 40,000 contacts with decision-makers are generated in 2005 as a result of the campaign, and AQE's email list is doubled to over 10,000 supporters.

February 2005

Justice DeGrasse accepts the recommendations of the Special Masters, ordering that a plan be enacted to provide \$5.6 billion after 4 years to provide a SBE to NYC students, in city and state funds. The Governor eventually appeals.

April 2005

Due to efforts of AQE and its allies, Legislature enacts \$848 million school aid increase for the 2005-06 school year, the largest annual increase ever (to be topped by the 2006-07 enacted budget), including \$303 million for NYC.

June 2005

The AQE/CFE reform bill, the "Schools for New York's Future Act," is introduced into the Assembly, with a standard dollar amount for every child, adjusted for each school district in the state to account for student needs.

September 2005

AQE brings parents from throughout New York State to Iowa, where the Governor was delivering a speech to about 1000 business leaders, for a press conference to release a "report card" on the Governor's failed education record. The action generated extensive press coverage in both states.

December 2005

AQE delivers a "geography lesson" to 6 upstate members of the Senate Majority that under our school funding reform plan 18 of 23 update Senate districts would receive a larger increase in school aid than the average NYC Senate district.

March to April 2006

The Appellate Division slightly modifies the DeGrasse decision, ordering the state to provide NYC \$4.7 billion - \$5.6 billion, through a plan that goes into effect on April 1, 2006. Both CFE and the State eventually appeal the decision to the Court of Appeals.

The Assembly passes a long-term plan to address CFE as part of the Assembly budget proposal. The Senate Minority also introduces a budget amendment similar to SNYFA in the State Senate. The Senate Majority rejects both proposals. As a result, a solution to CFE is not included in the final state budget for 2006-07.

While the final state budget (passed on April 1) did not reform the state school funding system or address the funding requirements of CFE, it did increase education funding by a record amount of \$1.1 billion and address many of the capital funding requirements of CFE, due to the efforts of AQE and its allies.

The Senate Minority also introduces a stand-alone bill (S.7112, Oppenheimer). The bill is now pending in the Senate but does not have a Senate Majority sponsor.

May 2006

CFE convinces the Court of Appeals to speed up the hearing of the latest appeal to the high court. Oral arguments are scheduled for October 10, 2006.