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(518) 432-5315

NEWS RELEASE

EDUCATION ADVOCATES DISCLOSE NUMBER OF NYC & NYS STUDENTS IN SCHOOLS THAT DO NOT MEET NCLB OR STATE STANDARDS

GROUPS DELIVER THOUSANDS OF PLEDGE CARDS TO GOVERNOR URGING \$8.5 BILLION IN NEW EDUCATION FUNDING, AS PLEDGED DURING CAMPAIGN

(Albany, NY)— A stunning 450,000 kids in New York City – more than the total population of the school enrollment in Chicago – are in substandard schools according to NCLB and other data released today by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and the Alliance for Quality Education. Statewide, more than 725,000 students – nearly the size of the entire Los Angeles school district -- attend failing schools according to the same data.

“These startling new numbers underscore the need for Governor Spitzer’s promised new investment and the implementation of an accountability system that assures that the money is invested in strategies that work— universal pre-kindergarten, quality teachers and class size reduction,” said Geri Palast, the Executive Director of the CFE.

AQE and CFE released the data at a news conference at the Legislative Office Building while calling upon Governor Spitzer to increase investment in New York State schools by \$8.5 billion statewide over the next four years, as he pledged during the campaign. Immediately after the news conference the groups delivered pledges from over two thousand New Yorkers to Governor Spitzer along with an oversized pledge card representing all the pledges collected statewide. The pledge, signed by parents, teachers, students and others, is a commitment to be Governor Spitzer’s partner in education reform and to fight for his vision for excellence in education. In the past two weeks thousands of similar postcards, letters and e-mails have arrived at the governor’s office and by the time he submits his budget he will receive over ten thousands pledges.

“The appalling number of New York children who continue to fall short of the federal standards demonstrate the absolute need for an increased investment in our schools statewide,” said Billy Easton, Executive Director of AQE. “We anticipate that when the governor releases his Executive Budget it will include the education reforms, the accountability and the billions of dollars in new funding needed to move from failure to excellence in these schools.”

As of 2005, there were 699 schools state-wide (422 in NYC and 277 throughout the rest of the State) that failed to meet NCLB standards or state standards. 725,177 students attended these schools that year, according to the numbers obtained by CFE and AQE from state and city officials. Of these, 452,583 attended New York City schools and 272,594 attended schools throughout the rest of the state.

“Candidate Spitzer acknowledged during the campaign the severity of the education crisis in New York State, Geri Palast, Executive Director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity said. “These numbers confirm the crisis at hand and the need for the full investment as promised by Governor Spitzer.

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During the campaign and in his State of the State Address Governor Spitzer said that the debate will no longer be about money but achievement, and the goal will no longer be about adequacy but excellence. He called for the additional investment of \$8.5 billion in education statewide, smaller classes, more time in the classroom,

after-school programs and access to state of the art internet libraries. He also announced an initiative to make universal pre-kindergarten available to every four-year old

One week from today Governor Spitzer will present his first executive budget. Although he did not specify a dollar amount, Governor Spitzer announced during his State of the State address that he would include a significant increase in funding in his proposed budget.

Wednesday's news conference came on day 24 of the "*100 Days to Educational Excellence Campaign*", a statewide campaign to secure increased educational aid to needy districts across New York State along with a revised school aid formula and stronger accountability standards. Through his campaign and in his State of the State address Governor Spitzer articulated a need for much of what AQE and CFE have been calling for and promised to dramatically reform education beginning on Day One of his administration.

"We are confident that Governor Spitzer will invest enough resources to ensure that his vision of excellence will become a reality for every child," said Doug Williams of Schenectady. "It will be hard for the Governor to deliver on his vision for less than the \$8.5 billion statewide that he has previously called for"

"A good education does have a price tag on it and in cities that price can be high," said Shawn Morris, President, Albany Common Council. "Albany families deserve to have the same opportunities as those in other districts, and Albany taxpayers deserve the same support. We need the State of New York to provide its full fair share of funding and enact the education reforms our students need for success.

"During his campaign for governor, Eliot Spitzer promised to provide a political solution to the glaring inequities that pock the educational landscape," said Michael Cohen, Superintendent, Brentwood School District. "We believed him then and we believe now that he will seek the high moral ground of fairness and justice for the children of Brentwood and all of the young people across our state that look to their leaders to help them fulfill the promise of the American Dream in their lives. We ask for nothing more or less than funding to decrease class sizes, to provide a full-range of academic support to our children, and to be held accountable for our actions."

"In 2005, a staggering one in four ninth graders in Kingston were held back," said Rev. A.L. Coston, a member of the Kingston City School Board. "We should be providing more for these students. However, our homeowners are overstretched so our teachers and principals are left to make due with less under an austerity budget. Our kids are the ones who suffer. It is time for New York State to fulfill its obligation to our children."

"In the State of the State Governor Spitzer spoke eloquently about his commitment to expanding Prekindergarten in four years so that every parent who chooses it could enroll their child," said Karen Schimke, Co-Convenor Winning Beginning NY and President/CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy. "We echo that commitment and believe that the first year commitment should be \$150 million in the Executive Budget to be released next week."