
Our Children/Our Schools

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NJ SUPREME COURT “ABBOTT” DECISION IN FAVOR OF FACT-FINDING RECEIVES HIGH MARKS FROM STATEWIDE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Organization that mobilized several hundred before September 22 Court hearing optimistic about next step in court process

NEWARK, NOVEMBER 18, 2008 – Today, the NJ Supreme Court issued an opinion in the most recent round of the *Abbott v. Burke* case. The justices, in a unanimous decision, concluded that the issue at hand – application of the School Funding Reform Act of 2008 (SFRA) to the Abbott districts – merited fact-finding in a lower court.

Before a “special master,” the state will have to prove that the SFRA provides sufficient resources to ensure a “thorough and efficient” education to the 300,000 schoolchildren in the 31 poor, urban districts.

Our Children/Our Schools (OC/OS), a statewide education justice campaign whose membership includes education, children’s advocacy and civil rights organizations, welcomes this decision and looks forward to full disclosure of the facts in this case.

“The SFRA was hastily passed last January, and its impact on the Abbott districts has never been fully examined by the state,” said Tina Cintron, president of the Statewide Education Organizing Committee, a founding member of OC/OS. “Now, finally, supporters of public education, New Jersey legislators, the state’s Department of Education and the courts will have a clear picture of what the new school funding formula will do to these districts and the educational progress that has been achieved there.”

Cintron, who spoke at the OC/OS-sponsored rally outside of the Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex on September 22 just prior to the Supreme Court hearing, commended the Court on its decision to build a record in this case.

“The State says that the SFRA can replace the Abbott remedies,” Cintron said, “but how can reduced funding and the absence of accountability adequately replace court mandates providing urban schoolchildren with the resources they need and the requirement that those resources be spent on appropriate programs?”

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Cintron, a parent and grandparent of students in the Newark Public Schools, noted that the OC/OS rally brought out over 200 parents and advocates. She added that supporters of urban schools around the state were looking forward to the important information that would be gathered as the SFRA was “put on trial.”

“Let’s find out what the SFRA will do to the Abbott districts,” Cintron said. “Let’s see how the state expects to remain in compliance with the Court’s landmark Abbott decisions. And let’s understand, once and for all, how significant those decisions have been, and still are, for urban schoolchildren.”

Because OC/OS members have united in support of school funding equity, the organization has taken a very active interest in the current court case, reaching out repeatedly to the press and to individuals and organizations concerned with the adequacy of resources devoted to New Jersey’s public schools.

For more information, please contact info@ourchildrenourschools.org or visit www.ourchildrenourschools.org to learn more about OC/OS and its commitment to school funding equity.