

**Our children. Our state. Our future.
2006 Priorities for New Hampshire**



**Public Education:
Foundation for a strong economy**

Highlights

- ✓ Quality public education is critical to a prepared workforce, a healthy democracy, and a strong economy.
- ✓ Statutory definition of an “adequate education” is a critical step toward quality public education.
- ✓ Statewide quality public education depends upon a reliable, sustainable and equitable funding system.
- ✓ Efforts to reduce or divert public funds away from public schools undermine statewide quality public education in New Hampshire.

Issue overview

Public education lays the foundation for a healthy democracy, a prepared workforce and a flourishing economy. The link between quality education, individual success and community prosperity is unquestioned. To promote quality education, we need to protect the right of all children to a quality public education; we must adopt a credible definition of what constitutes an adequate education; and we must embrace a reliable and sustainable system of education funding.

All children should have access to a quality tuition-free public education. But just what is a quality education? Certainly a quality education must at least meet the threshold test of adequacy. And yet, even though the Supreme Court ordered the State to define adequacy in the landmark 1997 “Claremont” decision, no legislative definition of adequacy exists. This means that our legislature is focusing on HOW to fund education without first knowing WHAT to fund. The most recent revision to the education funding formula actually eliminates references to “adequacy”, moving the state further from the goal of universal quality public education.

Given the failure to define adequacy, it is not surprising that state funding for public education has fluctuated dramatically over the past decade. It is impossible to fund services that remain undefined. Recent consideration of education vouchers further detracts from the goal of reliable funding - threatening to reduce the state’s commitment to all children in our public schools for the benefit of select individuals pursuing personal choices.

Action plan

While the failure to define or fund quality public education is longstanding, it is not intractable. The good news is that something can be done—and that students, parents, communities and business have a shared interest in improved educational outcomes. There are things that each of us can do to support quality public education across New Hampshire. For example:

- ◆ Recognize and applaud efforts to define adequacy such that all children are assured a high quality education for all children regardless of town of residency.
- ◆ Actively oppose legislation that will have the effect of weakening our state's public education system, including legislative efforts aimed at reducing and/or diverting public funds from public schools.
- ◆ Support public engagement and legislation to maintain the constitutional right of all students to a high quality education sufficiently, reliably and fairly funded by the state.

What can I do?

- ✓ **Read the Child Advocacy Updates and Alerts to track the progress of these efforts.** (To sign up to receive these e-mails, send an e-mail to childrensalliancenes@childrennh.org and ask to be added to the e-mail list.)
- ✓ **Contact your legislators and let them know you support defining and funding an "adequate" education for all children in NH.** (Hint: Use the Children's Alliance legislative action center to contact your representatives: <http://www.childrennh.org/capwiz.php>.)

To learn more

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