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Nea Gives New York Schools A Failing Grade

By Patricia Hawke

Though public schools across the nation are improving their school environments for students, the

New York schools are falling behind, according to the National Education Association (NEA). In a recently posted web page, the NEA cited many failings of the New York schools. Here are some of the challenges that the New York schools continue to face during the 2006–2007 school year.

Average Sizes for Schools and Classes

The elementary and secondary New York schools continue to be among the largest schools in the nation. The average size of an elementary school within the New York schools system is 27 percent higher than the national average. With an average of 558 students per elementary school, the New York schools rank fifth to have the largest elementary schools on average in the United States. Their high schools are even larger, averaging 1004 students per school. That is 33 percent higher than the national average, making the New York schools system the eighth largest in average high school size.

The class sizes in the New York schools also are among the largest with an average of 22 students per class. The NEA ranked the New York schools as the tenth largest in average elementary class size nationally.

Poor Infrastructure

In addition to the overcrowding in the New York schools, their crumbling and aging infrastructure is in desperate disrepair with a third of the facilities in need of extensive repair or replacement. The costs to complete construction and repair needs on school buildings and facilities are estimated to be as high as \$15 billion. During the 2006–2007 school year, the New York schools will have literally tens of thousands of students attending class in mobile trailers, storage areas, and converted bathrooms — not the most conducive environment for learning.

The New York schools rank among the bottom ten states in the percentage of schools with at least one unsatisfactory environment condition. Seventy–six percent of the New York schools fall into this category. There are 36 percent with poor ventilation that is bad for children with respiratory ailments,

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such as asthma, and contributes to higher illness rates of children and staff from passing viruses back and forth through the stagnant air. Additionally, 28 percent of all New York schools have bad plumbing and 31 percent of the schools have roofs that are crumbling.

As important as computers have become to educational opportunities in the United States, more than a third of the New York schools lack adequate outlets and the necessary wiring for computer use in the classroom.

Teacher Salaries

Teacher salaries in the New York schools continue to decline. While other public school systems across the nation have increased salaries over the past ten years, teacher salaries in the New York schools system have decreased in constant dollars by eight percent. This means that many of the

quality teachers are either moving out-of-state to teach or moving into new career fields that pay better. The NEA has designated the New York schools as one of the four worse states for allowing real teacher salaries to decline.

As the NEA points out, the New York schools have many challenges yet to face in order to provide a quality education to the youth within the state of New York.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K-12, providing free, in-depth reports on all U.S. public and private K-12 schools. Patricia has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more information on New York schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/new-york/index.html>

New York Schools Cited As Among The Best In The Nation

By Patricia Hawke

According to the National Education Association, the New York schools have made significant strides in academic achievement over the past few years. In a nationwide comparison, the New York schools have improved student achievement, as well as the schools themselves. Though issues remain that challenge the New York educators, parents and the community can be assured that the New York schools are doing everything in their power to remedy these.

Students Are Achieving

Essential scoring on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) exam has risen for the New York schools.

Fourth grader reading scores have risen by 26 percent between 1992 and 2003 for those students scoring in the highest two levels.

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Writing scores have increased in the New York schools, making them among the nation's best. Fourth graders now rank third in the nation on the NAEP, while eighth graders increased scoring by 43 percent between 1998 and 2002 in the highest two levels of the exam.

Math scores also have improved. Fourth grader scores nearly doubled between 1992 and 2003 at the two highest levels of the exam. Eight grader scores more than doubled at the highest two levels between 1990 and 2003.

The public New York schools have outperformed the private ones on Advanced Placement exams, courses through which high school students may earn college credit. Students attending public schools score higher in calculus, computer science, and physics.

College Entrance Exam scores have improved. More New York schools students are getting high scores on the SAT exam. Graduating seniors also have increased their scores on the math portion of the SAT by 28 percent since 1994, with a high score being 600 or above. Additionally, the New York schools are one of the top ten states, with high school graduates scoring in the top 20 percent nationally on the ACT and SAT exams.

More New York schools students are college bound! The New York schools are among the top eight states in the percentage of 18–24 year olds enrolling in college. This is good news for parents, the communities, and the businesses in New York.

New York Named One of Smartest States

New York has been named one of ten "smartest states" in the nation for its quality public elementary and secondary schools. Education Week gives the New York schools a grade of "A" (97 out of 100) for the high standards and accountability of the public schools.

Advanced Placement coursework is offered by 85 percent of the public schools, while only 60 percent of private schools offer them in the New York schools.

The New York schools students take more advanced coursework. The New York schools are among the top eight states in percentage of high school students taking upper level math courses and among the top ten states for advanced science coursework taken.

The New York schools are leading the nation in cutting edge Foreign Language Immersion Programs (FLIP). They are among the top ten states nationally in the percentage of public elementary schools offering FLIP coursework.

Quality teachers also push the New York schools in front of other states, with their middle and high school teachers among the most qualified in the nation.. The number of teachers in the New York schools that are nationally certified by the prestigious National Board of Testing Standards has nearly tripled since 2000. Math teachers with majors in their field for the seventh through twelfth grades place the New York schools among the top eight states, with similarly-qualified science teachers for the same grades placing the New York schools among the top seven states.

Lastly, the New York schools provide at least one computer for instruction for every 4.2 public school students.

The New York schools have come a long way over the past decade. The educators and administrators have much of which to be proud.

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