

 The **Campaign** for **Educational Equity**

TEACHERS COLLEGE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

REVIEWING RESOURCES

**An Assessment of the Availability of Basic Educational
Resources in High-Needs New York City Schools**

**Preliminary Findings from Informational Interviews
and Pilot Schools**

March 2012

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The Campaign for Educational Equity

The Campaign for Educational Equity is a nonprofit research and policy center at Teachers College, Columbia University that works to define and secure the full range of resources, supports, and services necessary to provide a meaningful educational opportunity to disadvantaged children.

We believe that all children, whatever their family background, wherever they live, and whatever the current political and economic climate, are entitled to a meaningful opportunity to graduate from high school prepared for college success and/or competitive employment and to be capable citizens. We promote a comprehensive approach to educational opportunity that would provide disadvantaged students the full spectrum of resources, services, and supports most critical for school success because we believe their right to meaningful educational opportunity entails access to these essential resources.

Founded in 2005 by internationally known educational law scholar and advocate, Michael A. Rebell, who successfully litigated the landmark school funding lawsuit, *CFE v. State of New York*, the Campaign pursues systems change through a dynamic, interrelated program of research, legal analysis, policy development, coalition building, curriculum development, and advocacy dedicated to developing the evidence, policy models, curricula, leadership, and collaborations necessary to advance this agenda at the federal, state, and local levels.

This report was written by Jessica R. Wolff, Joseph R. Rogers, Jr., and Jaunelle Pratt. It represents the perspective of the Campaign for Educational Equity and does not necessarily reflect the views of Teachers College, its trustees, administration, or faculty, or of any advisors to this study. The authors are grateful to the Booth Ferris Foundation and the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation for their support of this project.



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Executive Summary

The Campaign for Educational Equity has commenced an intensive study of the availability of basic educational resources in eight areas: suitable curricula, including an expanded platform of services for struggling students; instructional materials and technology; a sufficient number of effective teachers and other school personnel; class size and instructional groupings; a safe and supportive climate for learning; services for students with special needs; family engagement and support; and facilities. These areas are based on the minimal resources that, in the *CFE* case, Justice Leland DeGrasse held that the state must ensure in order to provide all students the opportunity for a sound basic education under the New York State Constitution. The study will ultimately include in-depth analyses of the availability of all of these resources in a sample of high-needs schools that includes New York City and seven additional districts around the state.

This preliminary report is based on interviews with school personnel in 34 high-needs New York City schools, including intensive interviews and visits in four pilot schools. We report here on just four of the troubling trends about resource availability that emerged from these interviews. Our preliminary findings indicate serious gaps in schools' ability to provide (1) a suitable curriculum for all students, (2) an expanded platform of services for at-risk students, (3) resources for improving teaching quality, and (4) a safe, orderly environment that provides supportive climate for learning.

In spite of new rhetoric about preparing students for college and career, schools reported substantial gaps in the basic curriculum, including deficits in science, math, social studies, English language arts, technology, languages other than English, health, physical education, art, music, and library skills. They also reported a paucity of experiential learning opportunities and inadequate offerings for more academically advanced students. Schools noted significant gaps in their capacity to provide of an “expanded platform of programs for at-risk students” including insufficient school-based supports; insufficient supports after school; insufficient resources for Saturday programs; and inadequate availability of summer school for struggling students.

Though ensuring effective teachers is touted as a state and city priority, schools reported extensive gaps in availability of resources for improving teaching quality, including insufficient staff and time to support teachers and provide professional development and a lack of resources for external professional development expertise. Schools also reported major gaps in their capacity to provide the personnel and programming required to ensure a safe, supportive climate for learning, including inadequate numbers of security and disciplinary staff, inadequate numbers of appropriate mental health staff, and inadequate resources for the programs, services, and activities for students and staff that proactively foster a safe and supportive school culture.

Our full study, which will be published in the fall, will include focus in more depth on 12 high-needs New York City schools and approximately 21 high-needs schools spread throughout the rest of the state. It will provide additional information in each of these areas, as well as report on the availability of resources in other areas such as appropriate and accessible facilities; appropriate class sizes; sufficient, up-to-date instructional materials and technology; appropriate services for students with special needs; and adequate family engagement and support.

I. Introduction

In today's hard economic times, New York State and New York City -- like most states and municipalities around the country -- have substantially reduced funding for public education. While the realities of fiscal constraint may require the state and the city to ferret out waste and inefficiency, eliminate nonessential services, and promote cost-effectiveness in education, what they cannot do is reduce essential educational services to public school students. The New York Court of Appeals made clear in *CFE v. State of New York*, 801 N.E. 2d 326 (NY 2003) that Article I, § 1 of the New York State Constitution entitles all students to a "meaningful high school education," one that prepares them to be capable citizens and competitive workers. These constitutional rights are not conditional, and they cannot be put on hold because there is a recession or state budget deficit.¹

In 2011, the Campaign for Educational Equity established the "Safeguarding Sound Basic Education Project." One of the major components of this project is to gather and analyze data about the availability of resources and services in high-needs schools both in New York City and around the state. A number of groups in the city and the state have issued statistical reports on the numbers of teachers laid off, increases in class size, and reduction or elimination of certain classes and/or activities.² We believe that it is also necessary to complement this information with a detailed analysis of the impact of budget reductions on students' educational opportunities at the school level to investigate the extent to which the reduction in resources and services compromises students' constitutional rights.

To do this, we have commenced an intensive study of the availability of basic educational resources in eight areas: full and rigorous curriculum and expanded platform of services for struggling students; instructional materials and technology; a sufficient number of effective teachers and other school personnel; class sizes and instructional groupings; a safe and supportive climate for learning; services for students with special needs; family engagement and support; and facilities. These areas are based on the minimal resources that Justice Leland DeGrasse held that the state must ensure in order to provide all students the opportunity for a sound basic education.³ The study will include in-depth analyses of the availability of all of

¹ For a detailed discussion of these legal issues, as well as a number of suggestions for how educational services may be provided in a more efficient and cost effective manner, consistent with student rights, see Michael A. Rebell, *Judicial Enforcement of the Right to a Sound Basic Education in Times of Fiscal Constraint*, ALBANY L. REV., VOL. 75, NO. 4, 2011/2012 (forthcoming, spring 2012).

² We intend to compile and analyze all of the available quantitative data of this type and include it in our final *Reviewing Resources* report, which will be issued later this year.

³ Specifically, the court held that "in order to ensure that public schools offer a sound basic education the State must take steps to ensure at least the following resources:

1. Sufficient numbers of qualified teachers, principals and other personnel.
2. Appropriate class sizes.
3. Adequate and accessible school buildings with sufficient space to ensure appropriate class size and implementation of a sound curriculum.

these resources in 12 high-needs schools in New York City and in approximately 21 additional schools around the state.

The study is examining, through analysis of school specific data, interviews with principals, teachers, and other personnel, and intensive visits to each of the schools, the extent to which the resources required to provide all students a meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education are currently available in high-needs schools in New York City and seven districts in the rest of the state (one “Big Four” district, two small cities, two suburban districts, and two rural districts). High-need schools are defined as schools with large numbers of students from low-income families (eligible for free or reduced price lunch), students below proficiency in basic skills (as measured by math and English language arts assessments), English language learners, and/or students with disabilities. We have focused our attention on these students because they have the greatest needs, are the most vulnerable to resource reductions, and, in the view of the New York Court of Appeals, were being denied essential resources on a broad scale even before the current round of budget cuts were implemented.

Our sample includes elementary, middle, and high schools, and will encompass schools from the various boroughs in New York City and all geographic areas of the state. Initial recommendations for schools and districts to include in the sample were provided by a variety of sources: for New York City by our New York City project advisory board (see appendix) and by staff developers working in city schools, classroom teachers, school support networks, principal referrals, community based organizations, elected officials, and a range of other community contacts. Recommendations for districts and schools in the rest of the state were obtained from the New York State School Boards Association, the New York State Council of School Superintendents, and the Statewide School Finance Consortium. After examining the demographic data for the recommended schools to determine their suitability, we undertake extensive initial interviews with superintendents, principals, and other school personnel to collect preliminary data and gauge their willingness to cooperate with an intensive school visit study.

At this time, we have completed informal informational interviews with school personnel in 34 New York City schools. A number of these schools have agreed to be part of our in-depth study. We have completed intensive visits and interviews in four “pilot” schools and we have commenced intensive school visits in a number of others. On the basis of these initial interviews and school visits, we have developed and tested an extensive methodology for analyzing resource availability in the eight areas we are investigating. At this time, we also have chosen the seven districts for our upstate sample and intend to begin school visits to those sites shortly.

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4. Sufficient and up-to-date books, supplies, libraries, educational technology and laboratories.
 5. Suitable curricula, including an expanded platform of programs to help at-risk students by giving them “more time on task.”
 6. Adequate resources for students with extraordinary needs.
 7. A safe orderly environment.”

CFE v. State of New York, 187 Misc. 2d 1, 114 (S. Ct, NY Co, 2001), *aff’d.*, CFE II, 801 N.E. 2d 326 (NY 2003).

This preliminary report is based on our informal informational interviews with principals, teachers, and other staff in 34 high-needs New York City schools and intensive visits to the four pilot schools, which included elementary, middle, and high schools.⁴ We are releasing this report at this time in order to provide preliminary indications of the extent of the serious resource gaps in high-needs schools that we think the governor and the legislature need to consider at the earliest possible time. A final report that will present detailed evidence and analysis from our full statewide study will be released in the fall.

We report here on just four of the troubling trends about resource availability that emerged from these interviews. In the vast majority of these schools, participants reported gaps in their ability to provide (1) a suitable curriculum for all students, (2) an expanded platform of services for at risk students, (3) resources for improving teaching quality, and (4) a safe, orderly environment that provides supportive climate for learning.

Our sample is small, but we believe that it is representative of the subset of city schools that serve the city's neediest students. While our findings are not generalizable to every school in this group, they nevertheless point to some alarming consequences of the impact of funding constraints and other factors on the availability of basic educational resources for students in high-needs schools that warrant immediate consideration, as well as additional study and documentation.

II. Gaps in the Availability of a “Suitable Curriculum” for All Students

For a meaningful educational opportunity, all students need access to a suitable curriculum that puts them on track to graduate from high school prepared for capable civic participation and to seek competitive employment and post-secondary education. In schools that primarily serve high-needs students, our findings point to a significant gap between city and state rhetoric of high expectations and the curriculum that schools actually provide. Nearly all of the schools (31 out of 34) in our sample reported that they lacked the capacity to provide the complete basic curriculum that students need to meet the Regents learning standards and college and career ready standards. Schools also reported a lack of capacity to provide sufficient hands-on learning opportunities and a lack of programming to meet the needs of their more academically advanced students.

⁴ In keeping with the requirements of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board, the identities of all participants and schools in our sample are confidential.

Lack of Availability of Complete Basic Curriculum

Science

Many schools in our sample reported that they were unable to provide a full science curriculum. Nearly all of the high schools, including a math- and science-themed school, said they were unable to offer courses in all three areas of science: biology, chemistry, and physics. Some high schools that only have biology teachers offer earth science, zoology, and other variations on biology as the three science courses required for graduation.

Many middle and elementary schools reported they lacked the capacity to provide adequate hands-on science experiences for their students, both because they lacked science rooms and adequate lab facilities and because they lacked funding for science materials and field trips. Most elementary schools reported that they no longer had science cluster teachers, and a number said, without a co-curricular science teacher, classroom teachers struggled to provide regular science instruction. One elementary school admitted that their students do not receive consistent or systematic science instruction until April of the students' 4th grade year, just before the state science test.

Math

Only a few of the high schools in our sample reported having the resources to provide a full math curriculum through calculus. Many schools reported that they lacked the capacity to provide students with sufficient and appropriate instruction and support in math to reach grade level and to be on track to pass the math Regents exam, though some of these schools provide students with an extra period of math each day. Some schools also said they were hampered by the lack of a sufficient number of textbooks and graphic calculators for students to take home for homework.

Social Studies

A number of middle and elementary schools reported that, as a result of providing extra periods of math and English language arts, students are receiving insufficient instruction in social studies. In one high school, students must take the required course in government online with minimal supervision and limited interaction with qualified instructors.

English Language Arts (ELA)

A number of schools in our sample reported that they provide two or more periods of English language arts for all of their students, most of whom are reading below grade level – often far below. Some schools said that they were able only to provide this additional support for some students, although for a meaningful opportunity to meet standards, they should provide it to all.

Languages Other Than English

Nearly all of the middle and high schools in our sample reported that they were unable to offer systematic or sequential instruction in languages other than English. Only one of the high schools in our sample is currently able to provide a full four-year sequence of language courses or a choice of languages. Many of the high schools that we interviewed are able to offer only the required single year of Spanish. Several of the schools that serve students in grades 6-8 reported that they do not offer the opportunity to study a language other than English, even though the state requires that all students receive a year of language instruction before 9th grade.

Technology

Many schools reported that they were unable to provide systematic or sequential instruction in technology.

Health

The majority of the schools reported that they lacked a systematic or sequential health curriculum. A number of schools reported that their health teacher was not certified in that area; at one school, students must satisfy their health class requirements through an online course, with minimal supervision and no interaction with qualified instructors.

Physical Education

Many of the schools in our sample reported that their students are not receiving the required number of periods of physical education and that they lack a physical education curriculum. A number of the schools reported that gym classes are above the maximum class size of 50 students. At other schools, there is no gym class at all; students receive inadequate physical education instruction from uncertified teachers or per-diem substitutes, or the school can only afford to staff gym classes for one set of grades or another. At one school, students receive one period of gym per week, but the school cannot afford to hire a gym teacher. The teachers who attempt to fill-in the gaps are unable to provide the structured, well-planned classes that a certified physical education teacher would provide.

Art and Music

Numerous schools in our sample said that they were struggling to staff even a minimal arts curriculum. Schools say that, as result, many students' talents and skills go undiscovered, unrecognized, and undeveloped – and students' engagement with school is at risk. One school in our sample lacks any art or music teachers and is providing required courses online only. Two arts-themed high schools reported being unable to offer the full range of arts classes students were led to expect when they matriculated. Some schools reported that as a result of grants, PTA funds, and community partners, they are able to provide some additional arts experiences for a limited number of their students, though these resources are not consistently available.

Library Skills

A number of elementary and middle schools reported that their students lack sufficient access to a school library and instruction in library skills. These schools said that their libraries are going unused largely because they have eliminated their librarians, a result of cutbacks and funding constraints.

Inadequate Experiential Learning Opportunities

As one principal said, “Sitting at a desk all day is not the way kids learn,” but many schools reported that they cannot provide a sufficient number of hands-on and experiential learning opportunities, like field trips and experiments, though these may be particularly critical for these learners. Schools also reported that they lacked the capacity to provide fundamental experiential learning opportunities important for developing citizenship skills like student government and school newspaper.

Inadequate Offerings for Academically Advanced Students

Most schools in our sample reported that they struggled to offer a broad curriculum that meets the needs of advanced learners. Almost no schools have the resources necessary to provide the full range of quality curricular opportunities to the full diversity of learners they are responsible for educating.

A number of small high schools said that they offer no advanced placement (AP), honors, or advanced classes. Other schools that have had adequate advanced placement offerings in the past have cut back offerings in recent years. Some small high schools housed in larger campuses allow students to take advanced courses in other schools, but, in practice, for scheduling and other reasons related to accountability, only a very limited number of students can actually take advantage of this opportunity. Students ready for more challenging material lose interest in school, particularly when the high school directory promised specialized courses that, the students discover, only exist on paper. And, as one principal pointed out, the lack of advanced courses also impedes students’ access to competitive colleges and universities. Admissions officials look at their transcripts and ask, “Where are the higher-level courses?”

III. Gaps in the Availability of an “Expanded Platform of Programs for At-Risk Students”

In New York State, a prime element of the “expanded platform of programs” that the court requires for at-risk students is the academic intervention services (AIS) that are mandated by the commissioner’s regulations §100.2ee. These additional supports, which include small group settings, tutoring, and even socio-emotional supports, must be made available to *all* students who perform at unsatisfactory levels on state exams or are determined to be at-risk of not meeting standards in English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Nearly all of the schools in

our sample (31 out of 34) said that they lacked sufficient staff to provide these academic interventions to all of their eligible students.

Insufficient School-Based Supports

Nearly all schools said they had lost some or all of their academic intervention providers, like literacy and math specialists, Reading Recovery teachers, and speech teachers, in recent years. No school said that it had adequate resources to provide all of its struggling students with sufficient supports to reach proficiency in ELA and math. Schools reported needing two, three, and even four times more specialists, in math and ELA, in order to adequately meet the needs of their students. Academic intervention services for social studies or science are especially rare. Several schools also reported that they lacked funds to provide additional needed academic supports for their English language learners and/or students with disabilities.

Without adequate resources, schools must select which of its struggling students will receive services. Some schools prioritize the lowest performing students, while others work with the students most likely to reach proficiency. A number of schools reported that by pulling in nearly every available staff member, including administrators and paraprofessionals, they are able to provide small group tutoring supports for students in some grades in some subjects, but lack adequate staffing to meet the needs of students in all grades.

Insufficient After-School Academic Supports

Most of the schools also said they are unable to provide sufficient supports through after school or extended day programs to meet their students' needs. Though a large proportion of their students could benefit from extra academic help beyond the school day, schools reported that, as a result of funding constraints, they have eliminated or cut back on the days or weeks that they provide after-school tutoring and support programs. Many schools noted that, this year, their after-school support offerings are limited to a few weeks of test prep. A handful of the schools in our sample have been able to maintain some after-school academic supports as a result of teachers volunteering their time, support from community partners, or private grants. Two schools mentioned that because they lacked funds for extra bussing some students could not participate in after-school programs.

Insufficient Resources for Saturday Programs

About three-quarters of the schools reported that, because of funding constraints, they do not provide, have entirely cut, or have curtailed their Saturday academic support programs for struggling students, in spite of a great need for such programs. Those schools that still run Saturday tutoring programs say that the number of sessions they can offer and/or the amount of staffing they can provide is not sufficient to reach all the students that need the extra help; some are running limited test preparation programs. A number of schools reported that they are able to continue to offer Saturday programming only through volunteer help from teachers, undergraduates, and high school students.

Inadequate Availability of Summer School

Schools reported that they only are able to provide mandated summer school opportunities for students who are at risk of not being promoted, or, in high school, for credit recovery. Many more of their students need academic intervention services during the summer but schools lack the resources to provide them.

IV. Gaps in Availability of Resources for “Ensuring Qualified Teachers”

Nearly all of the schools in our sample (32 out of 34) reported that they lacked essential resources necessary for improving the skills of their current teachers. These schools reported that the time in the school calendar allocated for professional development was insufficient and that district mandates for this time left little room for school-specific priorities. Schools reported that they lacked adequate resources, including per session funds for teacher time outside of the school day or for coverage during the school day, for the additional staff development necessary to meet students’ learning needs.

Insufficient Staff and Time to Support Teachers

Most schools reported that, as a result of cutbacks and funding constraints, many of their current teachers are either new to teaching, new to their school, or new to the grade, subject, or population they are teaching. Many schools reported that they lacked the time, staffing, and expertise to provide these teachers with the additional support and development they need to be effective in their new roles. Numerous schools reported that most teachers, even those who are certified in specialized areas like special education and English as a Second Language, lacked the training and experience required to manage the vast and diverse needs of their students.

Nearly all schools reported that a loss of personnel has led to principal and assistant principals taking on many additional responsibilities. Administrators said that they are spending more time monitoring the lunchroom or taking on clerical duties, which means they are spending less time in classrooms observing and mentoring teachers. One principal admitted that there were teachers in the school who had not been observed in two years due to the limited amount of time the administrators had to do observations and walk-throughs.

In addition, most schools reported that as a result of cutbacks and funding constraints, they currently have few or no assistant principals for instruction, master teachers, curriculum specialists, coaches, or other staff support personnel who used to support classroom teachers. Many schools expressed concern about their capacity to implement the more rigorous expectations of the Common Core standards.

Schools’ opinions of the quality of support provided by their respective Children’s First Networks and school support organizations were mixed. But almost all schools reported that

network staff are spread so thin across so many schools that principals and teachers receive only a fraction of the quantity of support they need to meet students' needs, especially the needs of low-performing students.

Lack of Resources for External Professional Development Expertise

Many schools reported that they lacked resources to make use of outside expertise for professional development services. Schools that were able to maintain contracts with such organizations had access to alternative sources of funding, such as grants from local council members or funds from the PTA.

Schools indicated that they were largely relying on internal teachers or administrators who have attended PD sessions or who are believed to be knowledgeable about a topic to present the information and strategies to relevant school staff. While this turnkey approach allows for the information to be disseminated, schools voiced concern that despite their efforts, these individuals simply lack the expertise required to provide the same effective professional development that staff would receive from outside specialists.

V. Gaps in the Availability of Resources to Provide a “Safe, Orderly Environment”

Nearly all of the schools in our sample (31 out of 34) reported that they lacked essential resources, programs, or services necessary to provide a safe, orderly environment necessary to for supportive climate for learning for their students.

Inadequate General Staffing

All schools in our sample reported that over the last few years, as a result of a loss of personnel, including teachers, school aides, and student support staff, they lack sufficient adult presence in the school to cope with their students' socio-emotional needs. Aside from the instructional difficulties created by these personnel losses, larger class sizes (and less supervision at lunch and recess) result in an attendant increase in behavioral problems, socio-emotional issues, student injuries, fights, bullying, and arguments. As one principal told us, “What suffers [in the staff cutbacks] is the social and emotional stuff; people don't understand this.”

A number of schools also reported that with a smaller staff, increased or changed responsibilities, and increased pressures, staff stress was high and relationships were suffering. Several principals reported that they were seeing more conflict among teachers than ever before, and some reported that this stress was having a negative effect on relationships with students as well.

Inadequate Numbers of Security and Disciplinary Staff

Many schools reported that they have lost school aides and school safety agents and therefore lack a sufficient number of personnel to ensure safety at all of the school exits, in each hallway,

and other “hot spots,” like locker rooms. Principals must spend time covering the floor, and teachers are asked to watch halls, duties formerly performed by school aides. As one principal said, “The systems are in place, but staffing is inconsistent, so they can fall apart.” For lack of staff, some schools have curtailed student access to bathrooms during certain periods. Other schools no longer have sufficient staff to monitor the perimeter of the school or the bus stop.

A number of schools also reported that they currently are unable to provide a sufficient number of deans to ensure effective disciplinary procedures, requiring the principal or other administrators take on additional disciplinary duties. With an inadequate number of people managing discipline, schools report delays in addressing problems, which result in more classroom disruptions, inappropriate disciplinary actions, and a general escalation of disciplinary problems, including more suspensions and arrests.

Inadequate Numbers of Appropriate Mental Health Staff

Nearly all of the schools in our sample report an insufficient number of trained mental health staff in the school building –guidance counselors, social workers, and school psychologists – to provide real expertise with the difficult social and emotional issues that their students regularly bring to school. As a result, schools told us, teaching staff spends more time than ever “putting out fires” and dealing with students’ problems, instead of teaching. Principals sometimes recommend that parents take the child to an outside psychologist or social worker, but this rarely happens because parents lack the time, and resources to do so. Some schools that serve older students said that, without a sufficient number of trained counselors and social workers, teachers and disciplinary staff, they are more likely to handle behavioral issues inappropriately or deal with discipline problems with a “suspend and arrest” strategy.

Guidance Counselors

Nearly all schools said they had lost guidance staff in the over the last few years, often in order to maintain teaching positions. A number of schools reported having no guidance counselor on staff or having a counselor, often part-time, only for mandated services for students with individualized education plans (IEPs).

Schools with some guidance staff report that guidance counselors have little or no time to do “at-risk” counseling. Other typical guidance responsibilities including articulation to middle school, high school, and college, jobs and internships, substance abuse and pregnancy prevention, and grief counseling also get little or no attention.

Social Workers

Nearly all schools said they currently lacked a sufficient number of social workers to meet their students’ needs. Most schools said that they had a social worker assigned to their school part time and only for mandated services related to students with IEPs. Nearly every school said that they should have a full-time social worker to contend with issues of students and their families that interfere with school attendance and learning, and to provide needed crisis intervention and prevention. Several schools mentioned the importance of the Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Specialists (SAPIS), who no longer are available to meet serious needs in this area.

School Psychologists

Nearly all schools said they currently lacked sufficient services of a school psychologist to meet their students' needs. Most schools said that they had a school psychologist assigned to their school part-time and only for mandated evaluations and services related to students with IEPs. These part-time people are often not based in the school building; this means that they often are not available in the event of a crisis because they are servicing another building. Nearly every school said that they should have a full-time school psychologist to contend with students serious mental health issues that interfere with school attendance and learning, as well as to provide continuing counseling and proactive programs for students who need them for school success.

Inadequate Resources for Programs, Services, and Activities to Foster a Safe, Orderly Environment

Many schools said they lacked sufficient resources to provide programs and activities to actively promote a safe and supportive climate. These include professional development for staff; programs designed to build a culture of respect and foster relationships among students and between students and staff; mentoring programs; arts and other programs that would provide students an opportunity to express themselves; and sports and team activities. Most schools also reported a dramatic reduction in electives and clubs, which they considered an important tool for supporting student engagement with school, because of teacher cutbacks, reassignments, and overload. As one principal said, "We're losing everything that can keep the interest of kids."

VI. Conclusion

Our preliminary findings, based on interviews with principals, teachers, and other staff in 34 high-needs New York City schools, including intensive interview and visits in four pilot schools, indicate serious gaps in the availability of suitable curricula for all students and of appropriate supports for struggling students, and in resources for improving teaching quality and for providing a safe, orderly environment for learning. Our full study, which will be published in the fall, will include in-depth analyses of 12 high needs New York City schools and approximately 21 schools from seven districts statewide. It will provide additional information in each of these areas, as well as report on gaps in the availability of resources in other areas such as appropriate and accessible facilities; appropriate class sizes and instructional groupings; sufficient, up-to-date instructional materials and technology; appropriate services for students with special needs; and adequate family engagement and support.

Appendix

New York City Advisory Council

The members of the advisory council to the Safeguarding Sound Basic Education project are:

- Miriam Aristy-Farer, parent, P.S. 153M
- Richard R. Buery, Jr., president and CEO, Children's Aid Society
- Billy Easton, executive director, Alliance for Quality Education
- Dr. Eddie Fergus, deputy director, NYU Metropolitan Center for Urban Education
- Arthur Foresta (retired), former director of principal mentoring, New Visions for Public Schools
- Clara Hemphill, senior editor, Center for NYC Affairs at The New School
- Megan Hester, research coordinator, NYC Coalition for Educational Justice
- Hon. Robert Jackson, chair, Education Committee, New York City Council
- David R. Jones, president and CEO, Community Service Society of New York
- Ernest Logan, president, Council of School Supervisors
- Jennifer March-Joly, executive director, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc.
- Dr. Ernest Morrell, professor of English education and executive director, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College, Columbia University
- Kim Nauer, education project director, Center for NYC Affairs at The New School
- Dr. Celia Oyler, associate professor, special education, Teachers College, Columbia University
- Kim Sweet, executive director, Advocates for Children of New York