



# New Hampshire Citizens' Voice Project

## Press Statement

June 19, 2006

Ten years ago this month, five New Hampshire school districts, five students, and five taxpayers went through a six week trial as part of the Claremont Lawsuit challenging the State's education funding system.

During the trial, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit presented information about the schools in the five school districts and about state education funding. The study released today by the New Hampshire Citizens' Voice Project (NHCVP) examines this same information 10 years later to see how the Claremont Lawsuit school districts are doing.

### **Findings**

We believe the study shows a number of things:

- The amount of State funding to the five Claremont Lawsuit school districts has increased over the past 10 years, but state funding is still less than half of most of the school districts' cost per pupil.
- The Claremont Lawsuit school districts have used their increased state funds wisely over the 10 year period and have been able to improve a number of important attributes of their schools. They have decreased their student to teacher ratios and increased teacher salaries. They have for the most part improved on their statewide assessment scores and decreased the number of students who drop out of school. Several districts have also been able to increase the percentage of students that go to post-secondary schools.
- Despite the improvements, the Claremont Lawsuit school districts are still left behind when compared to their "property-wealthy" counterparts. The property-wealthy school districts are able to spend \$3,249 more per pupil on average than the Claremont Lawsuit school districts with much lower property tax rates. The percentage difference between the amounts that property wealthy school districts spend and the amounts the Claremont Lawsuit school districts spend is about the same today as it was 10 years ago.

- Property-wealthy school districts still do much better than the Claremont Lawsuit school districts in the criteria we examined. They still have lower student to teacher ratios and higher teacher salaries. The property wealthy districts pay teachers over \$8,000 more per year on average. The property wealthy school districts state assessment scores are still much better. Their drop out rates are still much lower and the percentage of students who attend post-secondary schools is still much higher.

### **What it Means**

Despite some increased state funding over the last 10 years, the funding amounts have not been sufficient to allow property poor school districts to gain much ground when compared to property wealthy school districts of similar size and demographics.

We believe that the State's failure to determine the specific components of an adequate education and to provide local school districts with the funds and other resources necessary to meet those components is the primary reason for the continued disparities between the Claremont Lawsuit school districts and their property-wealthy counterparts.

Despite all of the talk of targeting aid to help property poor school districts like the Claremont Lawsuit districts, state funding to these districts has not increased much over the past few school years. The State funding amounts are still based on arbitrary figures that have no connection to what school districts actually spend. For example, the State determined that the cost of providing an adequate education decreased in Claremont and Franklin between 2001 and 2005 even though the actual educational costs and expenditures increased in these school districts every year during this time.

The current funding plan (HB616) does provide some additional funding to the Claremont Lawsuit school districts, but not very much and it does not cure the problems. The plan still leaves most of the districts with over half of their costs per pupil unfunded by the State and it does not make any effort to determine the components of an adequate education or to fund the costs of providing those components at the local level.

Until the State is willing to provide property poor school districts with the state funds and resources that they need to provide the types of educational services and opportunities that their property wealthy counterparts are able to provide, property poor school districts and the students that attend school in these districts will continue to be left behind.

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