



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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27 ENTIRE SCHOOL DISTRICTS DECLARED “FAILING”

ALL “BIG 5” DISTRICTS IDENTIFIED

Dramatically poor student performance throughout certain New York public school districts has caused 27 entire districts to be labeled as “failing.” The Foundation for Education Reform & Accountability, a nonprofit Albany-area research group, found that whole districts identified by the State Education Department as “in need of improvement” include the state’s large urban districts known as the “Big 5” – Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers, and New York City – as well three districts on Long Island and eight update districts (see attached list).

In September 2002, the New York State Education Department identified nearly 500 individual public schools as failing, making students at these schools eligible to transfer to nonfailing public schools or for tutoring and other extra educational assistance. The federal *No Child Left Behind* Act, which required the assessments of schools, also required states to identify entire school districts that need improvement based on two consecutive years of low test results.

“Nearly 500 schools in New York have not met even the most basic academic performance goals,” said Jason Brooks, Senior Research Associate of the Foundation for Education Reform & Accountability. “Thankfully, the *No Child Left Behind* Act holds accountable not just individual schools but entire districts where poor performance is rampant. Parents deserve the right to know if the school districts their children attend are failing. Students currently forced to attend schools in these chronically low-performing school districts deserve more choices for a better education.”

Parents of each student enrolled in an identified failing district are required to be notified of the district’s status. The district then must develop an improvement plan defining specific strategies and actions it will take in order to improve student achievement, and must report the progress of this plan to parents. Districts designated as failing that do not meet performance goals for two additional years also face a variety of state sanctions, including funding cuts, abolition of the school board, replacement of the superintendent and individual faculty members, and the transfer of students to higher-performing public schools in nonfailing districts.

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Accountability · Innovation · Choice

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At least one district on the state's list of failing districts is disputing its classification. South Seneca Central School District, located in the Finger Lakes region of New York, claims that the state education department first informed the district that it was not failing, but then later told it the opposite (see attached letter).

“With the end of the school year fast approaching and parents and students desperate to know the quality – or lack thereof – of their school districts, discrepancies such as this should be resolved immediately,” said Brooks. “This isn’t rocket science we’re talking about. This is a simple determination based on hard numbers from the past two school years.”

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Attachments:

- Failing School Districts in New York State
- Letter from South Seneca Central School District

The Foundation for Education Reform & Accountability is an independent education reform organization based near Albany and led by a coalition of business leaders, education reformers, and civic and cultural leaders. The Foundation's efforts are focused on three broad education areas: accountability, innovation, and choice.

Failing School Districts in New York State

(As of September 2002)

Upstate School Districts

Bolivar-Richburg CSD
Buffalo CSD
Copenhagen CSD
Friendship CSD
Mount Vernon CSD
Norwich City SD
Pulaski CSD
Rochester City CSD
South Seneca SCD
Syracuse City SD
Troy City SD
Yonkers City SD

New York City School Districts

New York City CSD 3
New York City CSD 4
New York City CSD 5
New York City CSD 6
New York City CSD 7
New York City CSD 8
New York City CSD 9
New York City CSD 12
New York City CSD 19
New York City CSD 24
New York City CSD 31
New York City Brooklyn High Schools

Long Island School Districts

Amityville UFSD
Hempstead UFSD
Wyandanch UFSD

Source: State Education Department, <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/nyc/DINI2003List.htm>