



**November 19, 2007**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **The Campaign for Fiscal Equity and the Alliance for Quality Education Respond to Approval of Contracts for Excellence by the State Education Department**

**Statement of Geri D. Palast, Executive Director, Campaign for Fiscal Equity:**

"Today's approval of the first Contracts for Excellence marks the beginning of a new era for school finance, accountability and transparency in the State of New York," said Geri D. Palast, Executive Director of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. "After 13 years of CFE litigation, Governor Spitzer broke the Albany gridlock on school finance reform with the Contract for Excellence (also CFE) initiative that drives school aid to districts based on need not politics, and makes clear that new money must be spent on high needs students in low performing schools and on strategies proven to boost student achievement. These first year contracts set priorities and provide a roadmap for the four year process of investment in improving learning that will, if done right, result in success. CFE, together with the parents and the public who forged reform, will evaluate these plans, and work with the Governor, the legislature, the State Education Commissioner and the school districts to shape and implement the contracts to ensure that all of our students graduate high school, compete in the global economy, become active civic participants, and make the constitutional right to a sound basic education a reality."

**Statement of Billy Easton, Executive Director, Alliance for Quality Education:**

"Today education reform moves out of Albany and into our classrooms as the State Education Department signs the Contracts for Excellence tying new classroom funding to best educational practices, accountability and educational outcomes. Governor Spitzer is the architect of this reform, he promised to change Albany and in less than one year he has transformed our system of funding education in a dramatic and sensible fashion. New York voters can applaud the dramatic reform of Albany's arcane school aid formula as school funding flows today based on student need, not political greed. Today after fourteen years of dysfunction and broken promises, our school children can celebrate the approval of classroom reforms to raise educational outcomes. Thanks to the Contracts for Excellence, taxpayers will be able to see what we are getting for our increased investment. Now we must closely monitor the State Education Department and local school districts to ensure every child receives a quality education."