



Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding

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Connecticut Supreme Court Faces Historic Question in Tuesday's Oral Arguments

Do Children Have the Right to an Adequate Education?

Hartford, CT – Tomorrow, two law students from the Yale Law Adequacy Project are set to argue before the Connecticut Supreme Court the most important, far-reaching education case in this state in thirty years — an appeal that will determine whether Connecticut schoolchildren have the right to an adequate education. The State is set to argue that schoolchildren do not.

Nearly two and a half years ago, in *CCJEF v. Rell*, fifteen students and their families from across the state brought an action in the Hartford Superior Court challenging the constitutionality of Connecticut's broken education system. Joined by the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF), a broad-based coalition of parents, schoolchildren, municipalities, local boards of education, statewide education associations, advocacy organizations, and others, these plaintiffs argue that Connecticut's failure to suitably fund its public schools has irreparably harmed thousands of its schoolchildren.

From the beginning of this lawsuit, the plaintiffs have been represented by a dedicated group of Yale Law School students, organized as the Education Adequacy Clinic under the supervision of Prof. Robert Solomon and other Yale Law School faculty. Two of these students — third-year law student Neil Weare and second-year law student David Noah — will be facing the Associate Attorney General in tomorrow's oral arguments. This marks an historic first: Never before have law students been lead counsel in a suit challenging a state's entire education system, taking on highly complex adequacy and equity litigation on behalf of schoolchildren who are being denied a decent education.

Law student David Noah explained why the Court's decision will be its most important in thirty years: "For many children, Connecticut's promise of education amounts to little. In rural and urban districts across Connecticut, the State has failed its students. By recognizing that each child in this State has the right to an adequate education, the Supreme Court can empower the Legislature to provide our children with the kind of education they deserve."

According to law student Neil Weare, the Court’s decision is essential in holding the State accountable: “These students and their parents, as well as many teachers and other educational professionals and community and business leaders, want their day in court. They want to be able to talk about the failures of education they see in their every day lives that could be remedied or altogether obviated if the necessary resources were in place. Perhaps the State is trying so hard to have our claims to an adequate education dismissed before a single day of discovery or trial in the hopes of avoiding this sort of scrutiny.”

Dr. Dianne Kaplan deVries, CCJEF Project Director, notes: “We have asked the State to stand with us in working to provide all Connecticut schoolchildren with the educational opportunities they deserve. Instead, the State has taken the unconscionable position that our children should not even be guaranteed an adequate education, let alone the high-quality education necessary to ensure the economic competitiveness of our future workforce or to sustain our democratic institutions and contribute to a more civil society.”

A decision in this case is expected sometime in the summer. In the meantime, CCJEF proudly points to the progress that this case has already produced. CCJEF’s filing of the lawsuit and ongoing advocacy efforts directly led to the formation of the Governor’s Commission on Education Finance in 2006 and to the Governor’s proposal for increases in education funding that were passed by the 2007 Legislature. Although these are certainly steps in the right direction, CCJEF remains committed to a comprehensive reform of the Connecticut education system that will finally give all Connecticut children the educational opportunities they deserve.

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Legal documents and related background information are available at www.ccjef.org.