

Child Poverty Action Group
PO Box 56 150
Dominion Rd
Auckland
www.cpag.org.nz



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Decisive action needed to address educational inequalities, say child advocates

CPAG joins community organisations calling for decisive action to address long-standing inequalities in the way schools are resourced, following the release of two government reports this week.

“Education can contribute greatly to alleviating poverty over time,” says CPAG Director Janfrie Wakim. “Yet these reports show that educational inequalities are actually increasing because under-funding by government over the past decade has left schools more dependent on local fundraising.

“It is critical to the future vitality of the nation that we invest in quality education for all students. The capacity of low-decile schools to raise funds by way of parental donations is extremely limited,” she says, “especially in the face of worsening hardship in our poorest communities.

“This hardship has consequences for children. Unmet needs which show up at school along with the children - for example hunger and certain health or social problems - must be attended to before effective learning can take place. The resulting demands on schools are enormous.

“With reliance on external funding continuing to escalate, how committed is the government to meeting these children’s basic educational needs?” Ms Wakim asks. “The Ministry should be consistent and back up its evidence-based approaches to learning and teaching with evidence-based funding.”

CPAG concurs with the Quality Public Education Coalition (QPEC) that the current schools funding model is seriously flawed because it is based too heavily on student numbers rather than educational need. QPEC says there is evidence to suggest that, despite the additional funding received by schools in low income communities from the government, such schools are still well behind schools in high income communities in available per-student funding.

For further information, see: <http://www.qpec.org.nz/>

Summary of School Resourcing from QPEC Summit on Resourcing for Quality Public Education (22 November 2006)

- “Local fundraising” (School fees/“voluntary donations”, fundraising and foreign fee-payers) has increased significantly under the Labour government

	1999	2005
<i>Primary (per child)</i>	\$301	\$474
<i>Secondary (per child)</i>	\$750	\$987