

What Money Buys Andrew Giuliani

Alan Singer

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani thinks too much money is spent on public education. Since he was elected mayor, Giuliani has repeatedly cut the school budget, and he has threatened even larger cuts for next fall. The mayor has couched his campaign against school spending as an attack on the Board of Education's "bloated bureaucracy." He maintains this position despite protests by teachers, parents, members of the City Council and Schools Chancellor Ramon Cortines.

As the battle over the school budget reaches a crescendo next month, New Yorkers need to ask two major questions: What kind of programs should be offered in our public schools so that all children have the opportunity to learn and become active, educated? And what does this kind of education cost?

We get a partial answer on what education costs by comparing New York City with neighboring suburban school districts. According to the most recent figures available from the New York State Department of Education, during the 1992-93 school year, the city spent \$7,921 per student, while the average downstate suburban school district spent \$11,470. More affluent districts, such as Manhasset, Jericho and Great Neck in Nassau County and White Plains and Elmsford in Westchester all spent more than \$15,000.

Surprising as it may seem, the discrepancy is even larger than the figures suggest. The suburbs have far fewer special-needs children, far fewer children who don't speak English and far fewer children who are homeless, in foster care or in special education programs. Since these children are much more expensive to educate, to provide a comparable educational experience, New York City would need to spend even more money than the suburban districts in order to provide a comparable education.

Another place New Yorkers can look to learn what an acceptable education costs is to look at the elementary school attended by Mayor Giuliani's nine-year-old son, Andrew. Andrew attends the Saint David's School, a private, all-boys parochial school on Manhattan's Upper East Side.

According to its recruitment brochure, the school takes a "child-centered" approach to learning. Its philosophy is that "children learn best when their natural enthusiasm is sparked, not suppressed," and its curriculum encourages each child "to branch out in whatever directions he may choose."

To help make this kind of education possible, Saint David's is small. Its 345 students are divided up into twenty classes, an average of about 17 children per class. In addition, the school has 2 libraries, 2 science and 2 computer laboratories.

Since the mid-1970's, New York City's public school children have concentrated on the "basics" in schools stripped of "unnecessary frills," including art, music and drama and after-school and extra-curricular activities. But at Saint David's, "individual talents" are nurtured and "drama, art, music and play" are integrated into the curriculum. There's a philharmonic ensemble, a glee club and dramatic presentations. And if that's not enough to stimulate young minds, the school has two literary magazines, regular classes in art, pottery and woodworking, frequent trips to the "Metropolitan museum just around the corner" overnight stays at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut and in Cape Cod, Mass.

St. David's is also committed to preparing well-rounded young people. It recognizes the need for a physical "outlet for the pent-up energies of city boys," and provides extensive athletic programs that including soccer, basketball, wrestling, gymnastics, baseball, softball and track and field.

Readers with children in New York City public schools know that this type of education is not provided for our children. The cost would be too high. The tuition at Saint David's is \$12,300 per year for boys in grades 3, 4 and 5 and \$13,100 for grades 6, 7 and 8. Lunch, books, athletic clothing and accident insurance cost an additional \$1,530 per child. Add Mayor Giuliani's generous tax-deductible donation of \$1,000 to the school, and the total annual cost for Andrew Giuliani's education is \$14,830.

That's not what gets spent on everyone's kid. That's just the amount that's needed to provide the kind of quality education that Rudolph Giuliani wants for his son. Meanwhile, New York City's public school children brace for another round of budget cuts.

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May 9, 1995

New York Times Op-Ed Page
229 W. 43rd St.
New York, New York 10036

Dear Editors,

I am submitting this essay for consideration for the op-ed page of the New York Times. I am sending it express mail because of the urgency of the topic. Please give it immediate consideration and contact me at one of the above locations.

If you believe it is necessary, I would be willing to edit out the name of the school attended by Andrew Giuliani.

Sincerely,

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May 24, 1995

Ken Emerson
New York Newsday Viewpoints
2 Park Ave.
New York, New York 10016
Fax 212/447-0361

Dear Mr. Emerson,

I am submitting this essay for consideration for the viewpoints column of New York Newsday. I am sending it via fax because of the urgency of the topic. Please give it immediate consideration and contact me at one of the above locations.

If you believe it is necessary, I would be willing to edit out the name of the school attended by Andrew Giuliani.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alan Singer
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