

Court: Calif. students have no 'right' to quality education

By Bob Egelko, San Francisco Chronicle

A divided state appeals court ruled Wednesday that California's anemic level of school funding does not violate students' constitutional right to an education of "some quality" because no such right exists.

The 2-1 decision by the First District Court of Appeal in San Francisco upheld a judge's dismissal of a suit filed by some of the state's major participants in public education – school boards and administrators, the California Teachers Association and State PTA, and nine school districts, including San Francisco and Alameda. The plaintiffs argued that a state that trails nearly every other state in per-pupil spending, staffing and student achievement violates California's 1879 constitutional guarantee of a school system that encourages "the promotion of intellectual ... improvement."

Similar suits have been filed in other states, and a majority have been successful, with courts in at least six states finding that their school finance systems violated students' rights. The San Francisco court said the right to a public education, guaranteed by the California Constitution, does not include a right to any particular level of educational quality or funding.

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