



## MAC 2007 Highlights

### *Changing Conditions for Many*

- During this critical year of leadership transition in the Boston Public Schools, advocacy by MAC's **Boston School Reform Project** and its allies achieved the following:
  - The Community Partners for a New Superintendent was recognized through the **superintendent search process** as a leading voice for the community, as evidenced by the appointment of three of its members by the mayor to serve on the seven-member Search Committee, including one of the co-chairs, and by subsequent meetings with the new superintendent.
  - In the midst of the search process, 300 parents, students and activists were organized to attend an **Achievement Gap Community Forum** at Freedom House to demand excellence in education and a voice for the community in the superintendent search.
  - Funding support and recognition was extended to **Freedom House** so it could play a leadership role in education advocacy within Boston's Black community.
  - 14 more school-based **Family and Community Outreach Coordinators** have been funded by BPS, bringing the total number of positions to 31 this school year.
  - BPS published a **brochure** for parents to help them understand the availability of **English Language Learner programs**, distributing 20,000 copies in seven languages.
  
- Through our **Disability Education Justice Initiative**, the umbrella for MAC's special education advocacy projects, we have achieved the following:
  - Nine state colleges and 19 school districts formed partnerships to enable over 120 high school students with severe disabilities, age 18-22, enrolled in special education to participate in college courses with their non-disabled peers as a result of the **Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment for Students with Disabilities** pilot program, enacted by the legislature last year with the advocacy of MAC and the Special Education Collaborative it convenes. The Legislature appropriated \$1.575 million to continue this grant program a second year.
  - **Haitian families** in Boston and **Latino families** in Lawrence are being provided intensive outreach and case advocacy for their children with autism.
  - Administrative and legislative advocacy with the state's Department of Mental Retardation resulted in federal approval for the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver that will enable 80 low-income **children with autism** to receive \$25,000 worth of intensive in-home behavioral and other services necessary to support them in their home and community.
  - The **Somerville** School Committee chose greater **inclusion for students** with disabilities as one of its six long-range goals, and the school department joined parents in holding an Inclusion Awareness Day on November 17 that drew over 120 people.

- The **Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI)** of the Children’s Law Support Project continues to make great strides in meeting its policy agenda in the following ways:
  - TLPI mobilized schools in 23 districts around the state that have received state DOE grants (successfully advocated for by MAC in 2004) to attend a major **legislative briefing** attended by over 300 legislators and members of the public. Legislators continued funding for this program for FY 2008. Several more schools have received grants during this coming school year.
  - **Helping Traumatized Children Learn**, TLPI’s report and policy agenda, has been recognized as a promising practice at the state and national level by government and policy research organizations. It is now in its fourth printing, with 16,000 copies distributed and 38 websites linked. Bulk orders as high as 1,400 have been delivered to school districts across Massachusetts and as far as Washington state and Utah.
  - With its partner, **Lesley University’s** Center for Special Education, TLPI convened over 100 university and public school educators and experts to develop a white paper titled, “What do educators need to know?” about trauma’s impact on learning. TLPI will vet the paper throughout next year to work toward consensus on possible regulatory proposals.
  - In a key pilot demonstration project, top administrators and educators from three **Quincy schools are receiving intensive training** from Lesley University and TLPI to create trauma-sensitive environments that will support teachers and students.
  - TLPI participated in the drafting of the proposed “**Act Relative to Children’s Mental Health**” (now Bill H 4276) to help strengthen linkages between schools and mental health.
  - An interdisciplinary group of evaluators from the fields of neuropsychology, speech and language pathology, occupational therapy, education and trauma psychology continue to work with TLPI to write the **next publication, Guidelines for Trauma-Sensitive Evaluations.**
  
- Other policy-level advocacy conducted by the **Children’s Law Support Project** includes the following:
  - MAC has been leading the collaboration with other advocates to help craft **legislation on alternative education and school expulsion, H595**, sponsored by Rep. Alice Wolf, that would strengthen the rights of students suspended or expelled and opportunities for them to stay in school and succeed.
  - MAC is participating in advocacy activities to improve alternative education settings and address the broader implications of the “**school-to-jail pipeline.**”

### *Helping One at a Time (to date in 2007)*

- MAC responded to over 750 parents and others through our **Children’s Law Support Project Helpline**, providing advice, referrals, technical assistance, and in some cases, full representation. We have increased the number of attorneys to take pro bono cases upon referral.
- MAC provided **education and training** to over 3,000 parents, educators, attorneys, advocates, health professionals and others on topics related to autism, MCAS, special education, discipline, homelessness and trauma and learning.