



MAC Highlights 2013

MAC's systemic advocacy is conducted by our Autism Center, Boston School Reform project, Children's Law Support Project, Disability Education Justice Initiative, and Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative in coalition or partnership with parents, advocates, legislators, educators, health professionals, youth and many others.

- ✓ Passage of new school discipline law Chapter 222 and subsequent administrative advocacy to implement law, followed by School Committee approval of new Boston Public Schools (BPS) Code of Conduct so it is aligned with the Chapter 222 state law.
- ✓ Passage of a new law requiring school districts to continue the current practice of including short-term objectives and benchmarks in the IEPs of all students with disabilities so as to assist in measuring the impact of special education services and in enabling educators to adjust services and strategies in a timely fashion.
- ✓ Conversion of the Mario Umana Academy (BPS public school) in East Boston to a dual-language school.
- ✓ Launch of the new website and next publication for the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative- *Helping Traumatized Children Learn 2: Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools--safe, supportive school environments that benefit all children.*
- ✓ Initiation of the Young Adult Leaders Fellowship to provide advocacy training to young adults with autism or intellectual disabilities, whose participation with MAC enhances our advocacy capacity.
- ✓ A new, funded line item in the state budget for a Safe and Supportive Schools grant program and strong coalition building in support of the Safe and Supportive Schools bill.
- ✓ Increased funding in the state budget for three MAC priorities: the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver (to serve 60 additional low-income children); the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment (ICE) initiative; and the special education circuit breaker.
- ✓ Leadership role in assuring that equitable access to school quality carried equal weight to "close to home" in Boston's school assignment/choice public process.
- ✓ Expansion of the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment project for young adults with disabilities to UMass Boston, UMass Amherst and Westfield State, and increase in number of BPS students participating.
- ✓ Leadership role in the state's Autism Commission and the writing of its first report.
- ✓ Creation of new Boston Special Education Transition (B-SET) project to advocate for improvements in BPS and to bring together the education, disability and workforce development sectors to create more employment and training opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities.
- ✓ Grassroots advocacy parent and youth organizing and technical assistance in three immigrant communities: Latino parents in East Boston, Somali teens in Roxbury and Latino parents in Lawrence.
- ✓ Training on the special education process for 90 Children's Behavioral Health Initiative's mental health staff serving families in 16 cities and towns, and securing new funds to expand the training initiative statewide.
- ✓ Special education improvements for Lawrence students with autism, including the hiring of additional speech and language therapists and the development of a new paraprofessional job classification for staff working with children on the autism spectrum.
- ✓ Comprehensive DESE regulations and *guidelines for the new Transition Specialist Endorsement* which define how educators will be trained to help youth with disabilities, age 14-22, transition from high school to post school activities such as higher education, employment and independent living.
- ✓ Development of a plan with the Boston Public Health Commission to: a) train all BPS principals in

understanding the impact of trauma and creating a trauma-sensitive school; and b) provide a BPS “train the trainer” program on awareness of the impact of trauma on learning.

- ✓ A memorandum issued by DESE stating that public schools that place students in special education private schools are required to assure that these students are provided school lunch and, if they would been provided school breakfast in their public school, then school breakfast as well.