

Exploring New Horizons for Equal Educational Opportunity

8th Annual Quality Education Conference

Co-convened by Education Justice at Education Law Center, Education Voters Institute, and National Access Network at Teachers College

Also supporting the conference: Public Advocates, Public Education Network, and Rural School and Community Trust

June 11-12, 2008

SEIU Building, at Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C.

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11TH

7:30 – 9:00 AM **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

8:00 – 9:15 AM **REGISTRATION**

9:15 – 9:30 AM **WELCOME**

9:30 – 10:15 AM **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

Dr. John Jackson, President, Schott Foundation in Public Education

10:15 – 11:00 AM **PLENARY SESSION**

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES: REPORTS FROM THE STATES

**Facilitator: Molly A. Hunter, Director, Education Justice,
EDUCATION LAW CENTER**

Begin your conference networking by listening to the exciting and varied experiences reported by advocates from the 30 states that will be represented at the conference.

11:00 – 11:15 AM **BREAK**

11:30 – 12:30 PM **PLENARY SESSION (continued)**

Progress and Challenges: Reports from the States

12:30 – 2:00 PM **LUNCH**

LUNCHEON ADDRESS AND QUESTIONS (1:15 – 2:00 PM)

A VIEW FROM THE BENCH

**Associate Justice John M. Greaney, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court
INTRODUCED BY MICHAEL WEISMAN, WEISMAN & MCINTYRE**

2:15 – 3:45 PM

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

1. Empowering Advocates to Transform Education Policy

Workshop Leaders: Valerie Berlin, BerlinRosen
Jeff Rusnak, M + R Strategies
Introduction: Beth Sullivan, President, Education Voters

This session will provide an overview of best practices for movement building and civic engagement strategies. The presentation will provide tips and tools for planning, targeting, organizing and lobbying. In addition to hands-on practice in building a base among the public, this session will also focus on how to work with the press and how to engage advocacy organizations in building public demand for excellent public education.

2. Ensuring Equal Opportunity in a Standards and Testing World

Workshop Leaders: Michelle Fine, Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)
Stan Karp, Director of Secondary Initiatives, Education Law Center

What are the pros and cons of high-stakes high school graduation exams? How can we ensure high quality in alternative assessments for high school diplomas? This session will discuss the state of the states and trends in standards and testing, especially those required for high school diplomas.

2. Litigators' Workshop I – For Plaintiff Litigators Only

Workshop Experts: Alex Bartlett, Husch & Eppenberger (Missouri)
Michael Rebell, National Access Network, Teachers College, Columbia Univ.
David Long, Attorney
Workshop Leader: Jay Worona, General Counsel, New York State School Boards Association

These experts and workshop participants will discuss litigation-related challenges from the Right, new equity strategies, and justiciability strategies.

3:45 – 4:00 PM

BREAK

4:15 – 5:15 PM

PLENARY SESSION

Framing the Debate: How to Promote Equity and Adequacy
Cornell Belcher, President, Brilliant Strategies
INTRODUCED BY BETH SULLIVAN, PRESIDENT, EDUCATION VOTERS

This session will discuss the keys to executing a successful communication strategy and provide participants with an overview of poll results and message advice for how best to discuss equity and adequacy in terms of advocating for excellent public education. The presentation will highlight the importance of disciplined messaging to the public at all levels of advocacy (including legal, legislative and administrative).

5:15 – 6:30 PM

RECEPTION

This hands-on session will provide an overview of the cycle of accountability and walk participants through the process of building power to change public policy. This session will provide participants with the tools they need to begin an assessment of the lay of the land in their state and a review of the baseline needs for starting an activist organization. Participants are encouraged to bring others from their state to get a broader picture as they begin such an assessment.

2. Fighting Threats to School Funding that Supports Teaching Quality and other School Basics

Workshop Leaders: Robin Lambert, Policy Information Manager, Rural School and Community Trust
Michael Petko, Senior Policy Analyst, National Education Association
Amanda Adler, Director, Rural Education Finance Center, Rural Trust

Teaching quality is crucial to improved results for children in low-wealth urban and rural communities. This workshop will explore key strategies being used to build teaching and learning capacity in schools through better recruiting, retention, and professional development. Budget cuts, school funding decisions, and tax policies threaten these efforts and public education, generally. Understanding and fighting these threats will also be discussed.

3. Litigators' Workshop II - For Plaintiff Litigators Only

Workshop Experts: Scott Abdallah, Johnson, Heidepriem (South Dakota)
Laura Callaway Hart, Nelson Mullins (South Carolina)
Tim Bush, Hickey & Evans (Wyoming)
David Sciarra, Education Law Center (New Jersey)
Andru Volinsky, Bernstein, Shur (New Hampshire)

Workshop Leader: David Long

These experienced litigators and all workshop participants will discuss trial preparation, trial practice, appeals, and remedies & compliance.

1:00 PM ADJOURN AND LUNCH