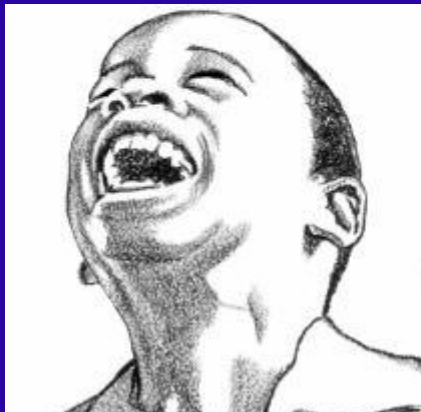


Executive Summary

**The Campaign
for the
Education
of the
Whole Child**



**A Report from the
Alliance for the
Education of
the Whole Child**

JANUARY 2006

This report has been endorsed by the following members of the Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child and other organizations:

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Massachusetts
- American Jewish Committee
- Black Educators' Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM)
- Boston Teachers Union (BTU)
- Brookline Educators Union
- Brookline School Committee
- MassCARE (Massachusetts Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education)
- Center for Collaborative Education
- Chicopee Education Association
- Citizens for Public Schools (CPS)
- Council for Fair School Finance
- Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR)
- FairTest (National Center for Fair & Open Testing)
- Global Institute for Student Aspirations at Endicott College
- Greater Boston Civil Rights Coalition (GBCRC)
- Harvard Progressive Advocacy Group (HPAG)
- Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA)
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law of the Boston Bar Association
- Lexington Education Association
- Mass Association for Bilingual Education
- Mass Association of School Superintendents (MASS)
- Mass Jobs with Justice
- Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education (ASE)
- Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC)
- Massachusetts Association of Special Education Parent Advisory Councils (MASSPAC)
- Massachusetts Association of Teachers of Speakers of Other Languages (MATSOL)
- Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA)
- Massachusetts Coalition for Equitable Education (MCEE)
- Mass English Plus Coalition
- Massachusetts Federation of Teachers (MFT)
- Mass Parents for Education not MCAS
- Massachusetts Teachers Association
- Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)
- Multicultural Education, Training, and Advocacy (META)
- NAACP, Boston Chapter
- NAACP, New Bedford Branch
- NAACP, South Middlesex Branch
- National Catholic Center for Student Aspirations at Assumption College
- New England Association of College Admission Counseling
- Quincy Education Association
- Springfield Education Association
- Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts
- Work-4-Quality/Fight-4-Equity
- Yesodot

The Alliance would like to thank The Schott Foundation for Public Education, the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest) and the Boston Teachers Union (BTU) for their financial support of this project.

The Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child

by Lisa Guisbond, with Paul Dunphy, Julia Johnson, Ruth Kaplan, Monty Neill, Marilyn Segal, Norma Shapiro and Lee Valentine

A report from The Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child (*formerly the Alliance for High Standards Not High Stakes*).

The Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child is a broad-based coalition hosted by JALSA – The Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action
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The educational needs of the “whole child” have been tragically neglected as a result of our state and federal governments’ push toward standardized education. This report is a call to action to reverse this dangerous trend of relentless testing and standardization by supporting our public schools’ work to maximize the educational opportunities provided to all of our children so that all may flourish and reach their true potential.

The Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child (formerly the Alliance for High Standards Not High Stakes) is a coalition of more than 45 education and civil rights organizations. We organized ourselves in 2000 as a reaction to the over-reliance on standardized testing in the public schools, with particular emphasis on promoting alternatives to the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, or MCAS. Prior to 2003, member organizations sought to abolish the use of MCAS as a condition of high school graduation. We continue to hold that it is unfair to judge the performance of students, teachers and schools primarily through MCAS results. Though MCAS tests could be helpful if used appropriately, as one part of a multifaceted system, their continued and expanded use as a high school graduation requirement (e.g., by adding science to the graduation requirement) disproportionately harms our most vulnerable students, namely special education, minority, English language learner and economically disadvantaged students.

The Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child has been developed over several months with extensive input from Alliance members. The Alliance extends special thanks to Lisa Guisbond, a K-12 Assessment Reform Analyst with the National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest), for her work in writing and editing this report, and to The Schott Foundation for Public Education, FairTest and the Boston Teachers Union for their financial commitment to this project. In addition, the Alliance expresses its appreciation to the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action for its ongoing provision of office space and support for our work, and to Marilyn Segal, Director of Citizens for Public Schools, who has provided staff support for this project. Special thanks go, as well, to Kathleen Rhoades, for her careful and thoughtful editing and to Jackie Dee King for proofing this document. And we are grateful to the Mass English Plus Coalition and Lee Valentine for writing the ELL section of this report and laying out the entire report. Lastly, we would like to thank Jenifer Handy for her design concept for the cover of this report.

Ruth Kaplan, Chair
Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child
Ms. Kaplan is a member of the Brookline School Committee.

Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child

Statement of Purpose

1. Abolish the high-stakes use of MCAS, including its use as a graduation requirement and potential use for admission to public higher education. Determinations for graduation must be based on multiple measures.
2. Establish a strong system of authentic school accountability that rests on a balance of local and state measures and uses multiple forms of assessment.
3. Provide adequate and sufficient state funding for high-quality public education that enables all students to meet reasonable graduation requirements. Ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach high standards, and receive timely and effective interventions as needed.

*“It’s time to do whatever it takes to make our nation treat our children right and to live up to its promise of fair opportunity. We must meet the needs of **the whole child** (emphasis added) in the richest, most powerful nation on Earth now. Children do not come in pieces. They live in families and communities. We have the money. We have the know-how. And we have the responsibility to ensure all children what we now provide for some children.”*

--Marian Wright Edelman, Children’s Defense Fund

The Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child

The Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child is an initiative of the Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child (formerly the Alliance for High Standards Not High Stakes), a coalition of Massachusetts organizations representing parents, educators, civil rights and social justice advocates and others. Alliance members initiated this campaign because we believe school reform must change course or we will continue to leave too many children behind, at increasing cost to our economy and society. To correct our course, we are calling for an education reform plan that combines additional resources with a broader focus on the wide range of knowledge, skills and capacities our children need to succeed. The Commonwealth must rededicate itself to delivering a high-quality education of the *whole child* for every child.

By supporting the development of the “whole child,” we mean that schools must ensure every child has access to a rich array of subjects, including social studies, world languages, science, art, music, physical education, and recess, as well as reading and math. We mean that children’s basic emotional and physical needs must be addressed so they are able to succeed in school and beyond.

To accomplish this, we believe the state must provide adequate resources to ensure that every child has access to the fundamentals that have consistently been shown to improve educational outcomes: small class size; quality early childhood education and early intervention programs; suitable facilities; teacher mentoring and development programs; up-to-date libraries; and desegregated schools. As the evidence presented in the Hancock school finance case vividly demonstrated, we still have far to go.

After 12 years, Massachusetts Education Reform has reached a crossroads. Despite some improvements, test scores have plateaued and the law’s implementation has brought negative consequences such as teaching to the test and a narrowed curriculum. We are particularly concerned about the many children *still* being left behind. Between 20 and 25 percent of

Massachusetts students do not graduate within four or five years of entering high school, and dropout rates are the highest they have been since Education Reform began. Dropout rates for minority students continue to be markedly worse than for whites. Others who do graduate continue to struggle to succeed in higher education, work, or adult roles. A large race-based achievement gap persists. It is time to rethink and revise key elements of Education Reform.

Below is a summary of our vision for a new direction in school reform, entitled the “Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child.” Our full report provides more detailed recommendations. The campaign is not intended to be a policy blueprint, ready for implementation, but the beginning of a needed dialogue on where to go from here to get the job of quality, equitable education done.

1. School improvement must be based on examining a range of measures of school quality, and interventions should be tailored to the needs of individual schools.

- The Legislature needs to redress the state’s system of identifying “underperforming” schools and districts (Section 1J of Chapter 69 of the MGL) as well as its system of helping schools and districts improve student learning. To improve the efficacy of the state’s intervention efforts, multiple measures of student and school performance should be used to identify areas of need and guide school improvement efforts.
- Parents, teachers and local officials must be integral to any reform solution and should not be treated as “part of the problem.” The Legislature needs to support policies and programs that strengthen school capacity to improve teaching and learning for all.
- Accountability indicators should include measures of school climate and community, student support and well-being, parent involvement, and community support and involvement.
- First steps: Pass Senate Bill 315 and House Bill 1110.

2. Student assessment should employ multiple measures to capture the educational development and well being of the whole child and should provide information useful for improving classroom instruction.

- The Legislature should approve an assessment system based on multiple forms of measurement, one that looks at the whole child and is more educationally sound than the narrow set of measurements now in place. Senate Bill 315 would replace the MCAS graduation requirement with a more inclusive and comprehensive evaluation system that includes broader state standards, more diagnostically useful assessments, and a rigorous but fair school accreditation requirement that would assess the effectiveness of school practices.

- The Legislature should fund an independent study of the impact of state policies on dropout rates and fund dropout prevention programs.
 - For English language learners and students with disabilities, modify the MCAS tests and the MCAS appeals process so students are more fairly, accurately and efficiently assessed by simplifying the language demands of MCAS, providing proper and complete testing accommodations, and streamlining the portfolio process.
 - *First step: Pass Senate Bill 315.*
- 3. *More money alone is not a panacea, but money, when adequate for the task and used well, is a necessary provision for higher achievement—especially for children who have barriers to learning and are underachieving.***
- An accurate determination must be made of what resources will be needed to provide a high-quality education to all students, sufficient to educate the whole child.
 - The Legislature needs to provide significant increases in resources to underperforming school districts as soon as possible, and needs to determine an equitable way to distribute adequate funds to all districts that will now be below the *new* foundation budget.
 - *First step: Pass Senate Bill 299.*
- 4. *We need a state Board of Education that, first of all, is committed to fostering inclusive, diverse public schools, with a board membership that represents a broad geographical and educational cross-section of the Commonwealth, that respects educators and is responsive to the needs of children and the public.***
- The Board of Education should be restructured through legislation to create a board with diverse membership, a demonstrated expertise in public education and a commitment to fostering a vibrant public education system.
 - *First step: Pass House Bill 1028.*
- 5. *English language learner (ELL) education is in crisis, with the state falling far below federal Title III objectives in 2004. ELLs need access to adequate educational resources and appropriate English-language acquisition methods. ELLs and their schools need to be fairly and appropriately assessed to guarantee "that the language barriers confronting the students are actually being overcome."***

- Before labeling schools serving large ELL populations “underperforming,” the state needs to conduct a detailed and comprehensive investigation based on multiple measures. The investigation should focus on the quality and sufficiency of the educational programs serving ELL students.
- The Legislature should commission an independent study on the effectiveness of the new English Immersion courses to see if ELL students are adequately learning English. This study should compare the effectiveness of various English acquisition programs using a longitudinal design, and it should consider ELL performance in all content areas.
- Competency determination for graduation should not include MCAS for ELLs until state ELL Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBOs) are fully implemented statewide.
- *First step: Pass House Bill 1117.*

6. *Vocational students deserve assessments that are appropriate and measure the skills and knowledge relevant to their educational and career goals.*

- Relying solely on a paper-and-pencil test, such as the MCAS, puts most vocational students at a serious disadvantage because the test’s content poorly represents the vocational curricula. Appropriate assessments would include a performance-based component that measures key competencies in the vocational-technical arts.
- *First step: Pass Senate Bill 315.*

7. *Disabled students deserve assessments that are appropriate, fair, and valid measures of their knowledge and skills, not only their disabilities. This campaign strongly endorses assessment programs that promote learning for all children, and we strongly discourage programs that set up roadblocks for students.*

- The Commonwealth needs to ensure that the specialized needs of children with learning challenges are being addressed both in the classroom and with respect to MCAS testing.
- The Legislature should adopt measures to ensure that the assessment systems in place “recognize sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning,” as set forth in MGL, c. 69, s. 1I.
- *First steps: Pass House Bills 1115 and 1117.*

8. *An intact and robust child social services safety net would go a long way toward ensuring that children arrive in school in a condition to learn and thrive.*

- A coordinated social services system is necessary to identify and serve students at risk. The state’s investment in such a system could provide a model for other states and municipalities to follow.
- The Legislature should prioritize public housing, access to health care, public safety, and access to social services along with education. By providing students with necessary social services, the state will foster greater educational gains than by improving education alone.

9. *Desegregated schools are vital in the effort to achieve educational equity and quality.*

- Legislators must push to reverse the trend toward increased segregation. It should be the responsibility of state policymakers and officials to make efforts to reverse this trend. The state undercuts its own efforts to improve educational programming by ignoring or dismissing the trend toward greater separation and inequality in its schools and districts.

Conclusion

This report is a step toward reopening a needed dialogue on the priorities and direction for the next chapter of Education Reform. It is not a final blueprint for reform, but a call to action. Alliance members believe that now is the time for policymakers to acknowledge that the current system is failing to meet the needs of all students and to realize that the educational goals set forth by the current reform legislation will not be met without fundamental changes to the law. We are concerned that some “solutions” that have been proposed are likely to make the situation worse. We believe some core elements of Education Reform must be retooled, and we will continue to work on that effort. In the meantime, the challenges ahead remain great—addressing the urban and minority dropout crisis, ameliorating the race-based achievement gaps, and providing adequate resources to ensure equity and quality among urban and suburban schools. Meeting these challenges will require a process that includes rather than excludes educators and other professionals with the expertise to make a difference.

It is time to determine the actions that will achieve our goal of educating the whole child and every child. We urge concerned citizens to recognize the truth and respond to the challenge of Marian Wright Edelman’s words: “*We have the money. We have the know-how. And we have the responsibility to ensure all children what we now provide for some children.*”

The Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child deserves the attention of every person who cares about the future of public education. If you believe poor and minority kids deserve far better than repetitive and punitive schooling driven by a demand for ever higher standardized test scores, I urge you to support this campaign.

Jonathan Kozol

Author of *Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*

Implementing the recommendations in this report would go a long way toward meeting the educational needs of our most vulnerable children while retaining local, democratic involvement in shaping our schools.

Deborah Meier

Senior Scholar, New York University's Steinhardt School

Author of *In Schools We Trust*

The Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child has provided us with a timely, well-written and useful report. Endorsed by critical stakeholders throughout our state, this report represents an essential "first step" in addressing the fundamental changes needed for Education Reform to reach its intended goal... the provision of equity and excellence in public education for every child.

Dr. Edmund Nazzaro

President, Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education

We have children in Massachusetts who are denied recess and given little access to the arts so their schools can focus more attention on preparing for the MCAS tests. Yet these same children are adding to the statistics on childhood obesity and asthma. If these children don't get recess, physical education or the arts in school, they often don't get access to these essentials at all. This report is a clarion call for all children to get what only some are getting now.

Jean McGuire

Executive Director, Metropolitan Council for Educational Opportunity (METCO)