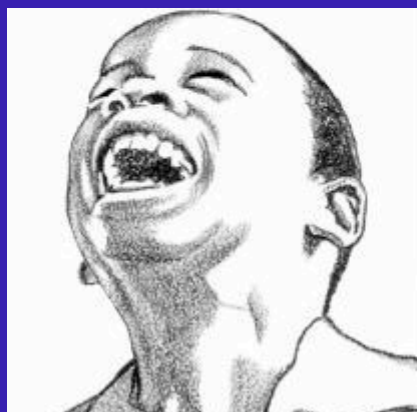


**The Campaign  
for the  
Education  
of the  
Whole Child**



**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  
18 Tremont St., Suite 320, Boston, MA 02108, (617) 227-3000, ext. 16.



***JANUARY 2006***

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i> .....	1
<i>Executive Summary</i> .....	3
<i>Introduction</i> .....	9
<i>Recommendations</i> .....	17
<i>School Improvement</i> .....	17
<i>Student Assessment</i> .....	20
<i>Resources</i> .....	23
<i>Board of Education</i> .....	25
<i>English Language Learners</i> .....	27
<i>Vocational Students</i> .....	31
<i>Students with Disabilities</i> .....	32
<i>Social Services Safety Net</i> .....	34
<i>Work Against Re-segregation</i> .....	36
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	37
<i>Appendix</i> .....	39
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	41



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.<sup>1</sup>

***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.*”

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**NOTES:**

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix for summary of recommended legislation.

The Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child is an initiative of the Alliance for the Education of the Whole Child, 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 an increasing cost to our economy and the fabric of our communities. 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.

*After 12 years, Massachusetts Education Reform has reached a crossroads. The Education Reform law brought some clear benefits. An influx of school funding from the state, which helped schools recover from previous funding cuts, helped by allowing smaller class sizes and more professional development.*

What do we mean by supporting the development of the “whole child”? We mean that every child must have access to a rich array of subjects, including social studies, science, art, music and physical education, as well as reading and math. We mean that children’s basic emotional and physical needs (including their need for time to play at recess) must be addressed so they are able to succeed.<sup>1</sup> The eminent educator John Goodlad, in his epic study, *A Place Called School*, found that parents and citizens want schools to provide opportunities for academic development, social development, personal development, and vocational development *in equal measure*.<sup>2</sup>

Educating the whole child will require the state to provide adequate resources to ensure all students have access to programs and supports that studies have shown improve educational outcomes: small class size; quality early childhood education and early intervention; suitable facilities; teachers with professional mentoring, training and development; up-to-date libraries; and desegregated schools.

Evidence presented in the Hancock school finance case demonstrated vividly that we have far to go before we can claim to have reached this goal.

After 12 years, Massachusetts Education Reform has reached a

crossroads. The 1993 Education Reform law has brought some clear benefits. An influx of state education funding, which helped schools recover from previous funding cuts, has allowed smaller class sizes and more professional development (though school budgets are now increasingly squeezed, with hard-pressed localities bearing an increasing share of the burden). An effort to establish clear standards helped some districts develop and focus their curricula. Teachers started talking to one another more about strategies for improving instruction. There was an increased focus on underserved students and districts.

But there have also been troubling consequences of Education Reform's implementation. These negative consequences include a narrowed curricular and instructional focus<sup>3</sup> brought on by teaching to the MCAS test; de-motivated, disengaged and demoralized students;<sup>4</sup> teachers fleeing urban schools;<sup>5</sup> a rise in reported incidences of cheating;<sup>6</sup> and reports that some schools are pushing out low-scoring students.<sup>7</sup>

*But there have also been troubling consequences of Education Reform's implementation. These negative consequences include a narrowed curricular and instructional focus brought on by teaching to the MCAS test; de-motivated, disengaged and demoralized students; teachers fleeing urban schools; a rise in reported incidences of cheating; and reports that some schools are pushing out low-scoring students.*

We are particularly concerned about the many children *still* being left behind in Massachusetts: those who stay in school through graduation and those who leave without diplomas. Current estimates show that between 20 and 25 percent of all students do not graduate in four or five years after entering high school, and dropout rates are the highest they have been since Education Reform began. Most disheartening is the realization that graduation rates continue to be markedly worse for minority students than for whites.<sup>8</sup>

Holding students accountable for passing exit exams before an equitable system is in place to teach them the content of those exams violates fundamental standards of social justice.

Jonathan Kozol said it well in a recent article highlighting inequities in public schooling: "There is something deeply hypocritical about a society that holds an eight-year-old inner-city child 'accountable' for her performance on a high-stakes standardized exam but does not hold the high officials of our government accountable for robbing her of what they gave their own kids six or seven years earlier."<sup>9</sup>

But we are not only concerned about students who leave school without diplomas. Other students, although they graduate, struggle to succeed in higher education,<sup>10</sup> work, or adult roles. After years of hype about rising MCAS scores, test



scores have reached a plateau or declined in some cases. Meanwhile, the current education reform law has not addressed educational disparities among students of various racial groups, and a significant race-based achievement gap persists on MCAS and other measures. Massachusetts SAT results for 2005 show the black-white score gap has actually increased in the last five years. Though proponents claim exit exams reduce such gaps, a just-released national study of exit exams from the Center on Education Policy finds race-based gaps remain largely unchanged in states with exit exams.<sup>11</sup> Overall, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) long-term study shows flat test scores at age 17 for all racial groups in both reading and math.<sup>12</sup>

*Recent national opinion surveys show strong public support for a multifaceted approach to assessing school quality and indicate U.S. citizens expect schools to do much more than provide reading and math instruction.*

Furthermore, the accountability scheme's narrow focus on MCAS results (modeled on the business world's emphasis on the bottom line) is flawed for several reasons. First, as in the corporate world, creative accounting is used to manufacture inaccurate and misleading results. The Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) engages in this practice when it inflates MCAS pass rates by failing to count students who have left school. Second, though results matter, test scores should not be the only results considered. There are other indicators of student learning, including classroom work, graduation rates, dropout rates, attendance rates, suspension rates, college-going rates and more. Further, resources in the form of money, facilities, up-to-date textbooks and lab equipment matter too. That's why the Alliance supports an alternative accountability plan developed by the Massachusetts Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education (MassCARE) and the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), filed as Senate Bill 315, which would consider multiple forms of evidence of student learning and school effectiveness (such as classroom work, performances, projects, experiments and portfolios). Such a system would provide a much fuller picture of school practices, successes and problems, and a better road map to school improvement.<sup>13</sup>

Recent national opinion surveys show strong public support for a multifaceted approach to assessing school quality and indicate U.S. citizens expect schools to do much more than provide reading and math instruction.<sup>14</sup> In a recent Phi Delta Kappan survey, 80 percent of respondents indicated that reading and math scores alone do not provide a fair picture of school quality. Similarly, respondents by a nearly 5:1 ratio

Demanding that schools eliminate gaps on their own sets up students, teachers and administrators for failure. This is not to suggest that these gaps cannot or should not be addressed, or that schools should be left off the hook for the things they *can* do. Rather, we argue that we must marshal the societal resources and tools that will be required to address a range of inequities.

expressed concern that the focus on reading and math tests "will mean less emphasis on art, music, history, and other subjects."<sup>15</sup> Despite millions of dollars spent by MCAS proponents arguing that exit exams are the best way to improve schools, the public remains unconvinced.

Finally, the intractable test score gaps indicate that, while good schools have a significant positive impact on the lives of students, schools alone cannot erase gaps in social opportunity. Simply demanding that schools eliminate gaps on their own sets up the students, teachers and administrators in those schools for failure. This is not to suggest that these gaps cannot or should not be addressed, or that schools should be left off the hook for the things they *can* do. Rather, we argue that we must marshal the societal resources and tools that will be required to address the range of inequities responsible for performance gaps. As Richard Rothstein, author of *Class and Schools*, wrote,

“Closing the gaps between lower-class and middle-class children doesn’t just require better schools. It requires social and economic reforms that would give children more equal chances to succeed in schools. Unfortunately, the trend is to shift most of the burden to schools, as if they alone can eradicate poverty and inequality.”<sup>16</sup>

Alliance members recognize that even with adequate funding and other supports, some schools or districts may fail to educate their students well. The state has an obligation to intervene in such situations. The Alliance recommends that the state revise its policies for interventions by taking into account the following:

- First, we need to determine in a comprehensive way what our schools need to educate the whole child, not just boost scores on tests.
- Second, the evidence shows that many so-called “underperforming schools” are actually under-resourced schools. Many of these schools serve children with an enormous array of differences and challenges, from English language learners to students with inadequate health care, housing and nutrition.

*The mission of public schools is not merely to realize short-term gains in the bottom line, as measured by high-stakes test scores, but to educate all children to their full potential by effectively serving students with a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds, individual needs, talents, and interests.*

- Third, we need assessment and accountability systems that use far more comprehensive information than just standardized test scores. A collaborative process that examines a range of school quality measures is needed to identify which schools need additional support and resources, and which need intervention to help them improve. Test results alone do not provide an adequate picture of school quality; they overlook other factors integral to school success.
- Fourth, there is no standard, one-size-fits-all template for school improvement. Students and schools face a myriad of challenges, so solutions to these will necessarily differ from school to school and district to district.
- Finally, if a comprehensive school evaluation signals the need for intervention, an intervention plan must be based on input from local educators, engaged parents and community members; and it must have buy-in from the local educators who will be charged with implementing the plan for improvement. Interventions designed in collaboration with local educators must be tailored to the needs of individual schools and based on evidence of successful interventions conducted under similar circumstances.

There is widespread agreement that the DOE needs to increase its capacity and expertise to help schools improve.<sup>17</sup> The Alliance believes resources should be devoted to boosting the DOE's capacity to assist schools.

The mission of public schools is not merely to realize short-term gains in the bottom line, as measured by high-stakes test scores, but to educate all children to their full potential by effectively serving students with a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds, individual needs, talents, and interests. Any good faith effort to address the needs of the whole child, for every child, must acknowledge the complex social and educational realities faced by schools today. Whole child advocates need to build the political will necessary to address inequities that influence students' readiness to learn. We must muster the determination to face what Marian Wright Edelman calls our "responsibility to ensure all children what we now provide for some children."

What follows is a series of concrete recommendations and first steps for education reform that makes up the Alliance’s “Campaign for the Education of the Whole Child.” This is not meant to be a policy blueprint, ready for implementation. These recommendations constitute the beginning of a needed dialogue on where to go from here to get the job of quality, equitable education done so that no child is left behind.

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**NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):**

- <sup>1</sup> The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) position statement on the Whole Child says, "ASCD believes a comprehensive approach to learning recognizes that successful young people are knowledgeable, emotionally and physically healthy, motivated, civically inspired, engaged in the arts, prepared for work and economic self-sufficiency, and ready for the world beyond their own borders," then lists what is required to achieve this goal. ASCD (2005).
- <sup>2</sup> Goodlad defines academic, vocational, social/civic, and personal goals of schooling, breaking down each into specific objectives. Goodlad (1984). See also Chapter 3, "Beyond Academics," pp. 61-96.
- <sup>3</sup> Vaishnav (July 24, 2005). See also, Ballou (2004).
- <sup>4</sup> British researchers Harlen *et al.* and Americans Ryan *et al.* found that, contrary to the argument that students are motivated to higher achievement by the pressure of high-stakes testing, such testing creates a downward spiral of lowered motivation and lowered results. This effect is more pronounced for low achievers, with a consequence of a wider achievement gap between lower and higher achieving students. Harlen and Deakin-Crick (2002). See also, Ryan and La Guardia (1999). See also, Paris, Roth, and Turner (2000), pp 17-45.
- <sup>5</sup> Atkins (2005).
- <sup>6</sup> Jan (2005).
- <sup>7</sup> WBUR reporter Monica Brady-Myerov interviewed Hispanic students at Chelsea High School who said they had been encouraged to leave school by administrators because of their poor MCAS performance. Brady-Myerov (2005).
- <sup>8</sup> A Harvard Civil Rights Project/Urban Institute report on national high school graduation rates placed Massachusetts among the ten worst states in the United States for the graduation rate gap between whites and minorities. Orfield, *et al.* (2004). Anne Wheelock, of Boston College's Progress through the Education Pipeline, tracks enrollment and MCAS pass rate statistics and puts the Hispanic on-time graduation rate for the Class of 2005 at 51 percent. For African-American students, the rate is 61.6 percent, compared with 82.5 percent for white students. Wheelock (July 6, 2005). See also Wheelock (November 2005).
- <sup>9</sup> Kozol (September, 2005).
- <sup>10</sup> College placement tests in Massachusetts have indicated that students who passed the MCAS are no better prepared for college than their predecessors who were not required to take an exit exam. Trenchil (2005).
- <sup>11</sup> Sullivan, *et al.* (2005).
- <sup>12</sup> Perie and Moran (July 2005). Chapters 2 and 3.
- <sup>13</sup> For a full description of the CARE/MTA alternative accountability plan and a summary of Senate Bill 315, see [http://www.parentscare.org/AuthenticAccount/Authentic\\_Home.htm](http://www.parentscare.org/AuthenticAccount/Authentic_Home.htm) For the full text of the bill, see Appendix.
- <sup>14</sup> When asked in a 2000 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, "In your opinion, which is the primary purpose of the schools -- to teach the basic subjects, such as English, math, and science, or to provide a balanced education in which the basics are only one factor?" 69 percent said the latter. When asked to prioritize a list of seven purposes for public education, top priority was placed on preparing students to become responsible citizens and helping people become economically self-sufficient. Rose and Gallup (2000).
- <sup>15</sup> Rose and Gallup (2005).

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<sup>16</sup> Rothstein (2004). See also Berliner (2005). Also, Jonathan Kozol decries the return to separate and unequal public schools in his new book and an article based on the book in Harper's Magazine. He writes, "Higher standards, higher expectations, are repeatedly demanded of these urban principals, and of the teachers and students in their schools, but far lower standards—certainly in ethical respects—appear to be expected of the dominant society that isolates these children in unequal institutions." Kozol (September 1, 2005).

<sup>17</sup> Rennie Center (2005).

## 1. Create an Effective and Collaborative School Improvement Model

### *OUR VISION:*

School improvement plans should use a broad range of school quality measures. Interventions should be tailored to the needs of individual schools and based on the philosophy of developing the whole child. Interventions should also be based on successful reforms done in similar circumstances.

### *PROBLEMS:*

- The current state processes for identifying schools and districts that need assistance and holding them accountable for school improvement are seriously flawed and counterproductive. Implementation of the current school accountability law uses an excessively bureaucratic, top-down control structure. This process is not collaborative: it does not effectively engage the help of school staffs, the people charged with raising achievement in schools. Exacerbating problems with the law is the current district review process, which includes six standards and 64 indicators and can produce a district report of more than 100 pages. Typical school improvement plans burden schools with too many tasks to focus on and little direction on what is most important to accomplish.
- The Commonwealth lacks a truly comprehensive accountability system that accurately assesses school quality and provides useful, specific information for improving struggling schools. (Senate bill 315 does this.)
- The Commonwealth also lacks an effective system to help all schools evaluate themselves and plan ways to improve.
- The DOE is widely seen as lacking capacity and expertise to provide meaningful support to schools trying to make improvements.<sup>1</sup>

### *SOLUTIONS:*

- The Legislature should overhaul the state's system of identifying "underperforming" schools and districts (Section 1J of Chapter 69 of the MGL) and its system of helping schools and districts improve student learning. In order to do this appropriately and effectively, the Legislature must ensure that multiple measures of student and school performance are used to identify and guide improvement goals and standards (see Recommendation 2, below).

- The DOE should work with local school districts to ensure that solutions are tailored to the needs of particular schools. Solutions should have demonstrated effectiveness in comparable situations. A growing body of literature on effective school improvement looks well beyond boosting scores in a few subjects and comes closer to our call to educate the whole child. Some studies include practices shown to reduce the achievement gap.<sup>2</sup>
- Parents, teachers and local officials are an integral part of school improvement and should not be treated as “part of the problem.” Hence, proposals that work to discourage local school involvement, such as those that would suspend collective bargaining contracts and educators’ due process rights, or reduce the role and involvement of elected local school committees, should be rejected. Local control and involvement must be the cornerstone of education reform solutions, as local efforts work in tandem with targeted and appropriate state intervention. State take-over should be used solely as a last resort.<sup>3</sup>
- The Legislature needs to support policies associated with high-quality schools, such as: strong, collaborative leadership; extensive, continuing and relevant professional development; instruction tailored to meet the needs of individual children; and sufficiently small class sizes to enable teachers to work effectively with all children. Increasing teachers’ efficacious use of in-class assessments — particularly those designed to produce feedback for students — has been proven to help students learn more effectively and to close the achievement gap.<sup>4</sup> Schools must also improve their capacity to deliver appropriate social services to ameliorate the impact of family crises brought on by poverty, violence, drugs, and incarceration (also see Recommendation 7).
- Because parents and communities seek more from their schools than just academics, accountability indicators must be employed to assess school climate, sense of community, student support and well-being, parent involvement, and community support and involvement.<sup>5</sup>

### ***FIRST STEPS FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- Amend the current law so that the first step in any school improvement process begins with a needs assessment that incorporates input from the local educators, administrators, parents, officials and community members. This will ensure that those most familiar with the school’s or district’s needs, problems, and successes are involved in the reform efforts, thereby increasing the chances of a successful intervention.
- Amend the current law to require that school improvement plans target the most important problems or issues facing the school (i.e., “if you didn’t do this, nothing else would matter”). House Bill 1110 contains proposals for streamlining the required plans.
- Amend the law relating to the Education Management Audit Council (EMAC) and the Office of Educational Quality and Accountability, as recommended by, for example, House Bill 1110. This would expand the Council’s membership to include public



educators and administrators, increasing the participation of those who have needed expertise in running schools.

- Develop and fund research-based pilot projects designed to improve school functioning in four key areas: school organization; curriculum, instruction and assessment; staff development; and family, school and community engagement.<sup>6</sup> Such programs should be conducted in partnership with local school districts and should not be under the exclusive control of the current Board of Education or the EMAC. Evaluation of the programs should be done independently and should be reported to the Legislature.
- Senate Bill 315 provides for the necessary changes to the state's assessment system.

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***NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):***

<sup>1</sup> A 2005 report by the Rennie Center for Education Research, found widespread skepticism, given current capacity, about the state DOE's ability to provide technical assistance to schools.

<sup>2</sup> National High School Alliance (2005). See also Darling-Hammond (2001); Elmore (2005); Marzano (2003). Literature on school improvement also includes work by James Comer, Michael Fullan, Deborah Meier, Howard Gardner, Coalition of Essential Schools, Boston's Pilot Schools and the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

<sup>3</sup> There is no evidence that the forms of takeover favored by some state officials and mandated in the "No Child Left Behind" law have been successful in bringing about sustained improvement. See Neill (2004). Also see Brady (2003).

<sup>4</sup> Black and William (1998). Black and William provide strong evidence from an extensive literature review to show that classroom "formative" assessment, properly implemented, is a powerful means to improve student learning -- but summative assessments such as standardized exams can have a harmful effect. See also Stiggins (2002).

<sup>5</sup> Senate Bill 315 would revamp accountability structures to assess these other indicators that are important to parents and the community.

<sup>6</sup> National Education Association (2002); NEA (2005).

## 2. **Improve our State’s Student Assessment Systems and Cease Use of MCAS Tests as a Graduation Requirement**

### ***OUR VISION:***

Student assessment should employ multiple measures that fully reflect the educational development and well being of the whole child and provide information that can be used in the classroom by teachers to improve instruction.<sup>1</sup>

### ***PROBLEMS:***

- The current one-size-fits-all, high-stakes MCAS system is too narrow in scope to assess students well, and it fails to provide feedback useful for improving instruction and learning. The joint standards of the measurement profession and the conclusions of the National Academy of Sciences both state that standardized tests should not be used as the sole determinants for graduation.<sup>2</sup> Studies show that the use of high-stakes testing undermines high-quality curriculum and instruction,<sup>3</sup> in part by de-emphasizing the importance of in-class assessments, an assessment strategy shown to be very effective in improving learning in the classroom.<sup>4</sup> Though it is widely believed that federal law requires the use of standardized tests or even exit exams, the federal No Child Left Behind law is neutral on the use of exit exams and permits the use of assessments other than standardized tests, such as portfolios of classroom work, to fulfill its mandates.<sup>5</sup>
- The state’s dismal graduation rates for low-income and minority students have not improved since the high-stakes MCAS was imposed. In fact, the graduation gap — and hence the opportunity gap — between white and minority students is becoming wider statewide, and the state’s high school dropout rate is the highest since Education Reform began.<sup>6</sup> Independent analyses of enrollment data in Massachusetts and nationwide suggest a link between the imposition of high-stakes testing and an increase in student attrition: in Massachusetts there has been a decrease in on-time graduation rates among low-income and minority students. (Attrition refers to the reduction in the number of students moving from one grade to the next, either because they were retained in grade or left the school system altogether.) For example, DOE enrollment data shows that attrition among Black and Hispanic students increased sharply between grades 9 and 10 since the imposition of MCAS.<sup>7</sup> Some of that attrition is the result of increased retention in grade. Decades of research shows that retention does not enhance students’ academic achievement and that grade retention is a strong predictor of dropping out of school.<sup>8</sup>
- Massachusetts citizens, including public school parents, are not getting accurate and comprehensive data on student retention, dropout, and graduation rates from the state DOE and therefore are uninformed about the effects of MCAS on “at-risk” students (e.g., low-income, minority, ELL and special education students). In one example of this problem, the DOE misrepresented its own data in an April 2005 report to argue, erroneously, that grade retention benefits students by increasing achievement.<sup>9</sup> In

another, the DOE has inflated MCAS pass rates by excluding students no longer in school from its formulas computing pass rates.<sup>10</sup>

### ***SOLUTIONS:***

- The Legislature should approve a system that uses multiple measures to assess the whole child in a more educationally appropriate manner. Senate Bill 315 would replace the use of MCAS tests as a graduation requirement with a more inclusive and fair approach, and it would institute a comprehensive assessment system that includes state standards, assessment for diagnostic purposes, and a rigorous school accreditation requirement.
- The Legislature should fund a study on the impact of state policies on dropout rates. Additionally, the Legislature should fund successful dropout prevention programs.
- School districts should act to limit grade retention practices.

### ***FIRST STEPS FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- Pass Senate Bill 315 and House Bill 1117.
- Impose moratoria on additional graduation exams and on any increase in the cut-off scores in math or language arts tests for graduation.
- Commission an independent study of drop-out and on-time graduation rates across the state and by district. This study should research and recommend more accurate measures for tracking student graduation rates, and should examine the relationship between student dropouts and the implementation of MCAS by studying a random and representative sample of those who leave school. Such a study will allow us to determine the impact of the high-stakes use of the MCAS and to learn more about the experiences of the children who have dropped out of school or failed to graduate in 2003 and 2004.
- Commission an independent study of fair and effective assessment and accountability systems used by other states, including our neighboring states of Rhode Island and Connecticut. Rhode Island uses multiple measures in determining school quality and student graduation, including: course completion data, senior projects, and student portfolios. Rhode Island limits the influence of state test scores on graduation to no more than 10 percent of a composite score.<sup>11</sup> Although Connecticut has no exit exam requirement, its student achievement is comparable to Massachusetts, based on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results.<sup>12</sup>
- Until such time as the MCAS is no longer used as a graduation requirement, fix and expand the MCAS appeals process so the increased flexibility available to students with disabilities is made available to all students.

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**NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):**

<sup>1</sup> Darling-Hammond, *et al.*, (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Heubert and Hauser (1999).

<sup>3</sup> A study of exit exams released in August 2005 by the Center on Education Policy supports previous research finding that many teachers and students believe exit exams do not enhance the kind of learning students need to succeed: "On the positive side, educators are better focusing their instruction and aligning it more with curriculum, but on the negative side, some teachers and students feel that there is too much review of facts and less emphasis on discussion, in-depth learning, and higher-level skills. Others worry that content and subjects not on the exam are being shortchanged. There is also some concern that as teachers push to cover all tested material, struggling students may be left behind." Sullivan, *et al.* (2005). Darling-Hammond *et al.* also describe how high-stakes testing damages students, curriculum and instruction in a number of ways, including reduced graduation rates for minority students, reduced incentives for struggling students to stay in school, neglect of higher-order performance skills and invalid judgments about student learning. Darling-Hammond, *et al.*, op. cit. Also see Pedulla, *et al.* (2003). Also, Clarke, *et al.* (2002). Also, Nichols, *et al.* (2005).

<sup>4</sup> Black and William (1998).

<sup>5</sup> The text of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001 (NCLB) calls for *assessments* in mathematics, reading or language arts and science, not standardized tests, per se. In fact, the law specifies that assessments involve "multiple up-to-date measures of student academic achievement, including measures that assess higher-order thinking skills and understanding," areas that most standardized tests fail to measure. No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110, Section 1111(b)(3).

<sup>6</sup> Between 2002-03 and 2003-04, the number of high school dropouts rose from 9,389 to 10,633 students, an increase of 13.6 percent. This increase does not include students dropping out of school from the middle grades. The annual dropout rate (of 3.7 percent), and the estimated 4-year cohort rate (of 14.3 percent) are the highest they have been since the Massachusetts Education Reform Law was enacted in 1994. Wheelock (November 2005).

<sup>7</sup> "The attrition rates for Black students between grades 9 and 10 increased sharply beginning in 1998, rising all the way to -23.6% in 2001. The attrition rate for Hispanic students has historically been higher than for other ethnic groups, but note that by 2001, the grade 9 to 10 attrition rate for Hispanic students had risen all the way to -28.6%." Haney (2005). The state's claim of a 94 percent MCAS pass rate for the Class of 2005 fails to account for the 38 percent of Black and 49 percent of Hispanic students who do not pass MCAS and graduate on time. See Wheelock (July 6, 2005) and Wheelock (November 2005).

<sup>8</sup> Heubert and Hauser (1999). See also Allensworth (2004).

<sup>9</sup> "In April, the MA DOE released a report titled 'Grade Retention in Massachusetts Public Schools: 2003-04.' A press release accompanying release of the report, dated April 5, 2005, was headlined 'Report Shows Retained Students Performed Better on MCAS the Second Time.' This headline is a gross misrepresentation of what the data in the report actually show. Details in the report indicate that at most grade levels, the majority of retained students actually performed the same or worse the second time they took the MCAS." Haney (2005).

<sup>10</sup> Wheelock (March 2003).

<sup>11</sup> An Education Week article described why Rhode Island chose to use multiple measures rather relying heavily on standardized test scores: "In taking a broader view of assessment, Rhode Island policymakers hope to avoid narrowing the curriculum at the secondary level. The goal is to prompt schools to stress skills that aren't easily gauged with one-shot tests, such as time management, working with others, and organization." Archer (2005).

<sup>12</sup> State-by-state results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) can be retrieved from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>

### 3. Increase Resources for Schools

#### *OUR VISION:*

More money alone is not a panacea, but money, when adequate for the task and used well, is clearly necessary and linked to higher achievement, especially for children who have barriers to learning and are underachieving.

#### *PROBLEMS:*

- Although the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC), when deciding *Hancock v. Driscoll*<sup>1</sup>, declined to order the state to provide resources to meet the constitutional standard for educating children, the SJC stood by the general constitutional law standard articulated by the Court in the earlier decision, *McDuffy v. Robertson*: that the Commonwealth has "...a duty to provide an education for all its children, rich and poor, in every city and town of the Commonwealth...."<sup>2</sup>
- In a 366-page report, Superior Court Judge Margot Botsford concluded that schools do not have the resources necessary to teach the state standards to all students, especially those serving clusters of students in poverty, or those schools who have large populations of special needs students or English language learners.<sup>3</sup> The SJC in *Hancock* accepted those findings.<sup>4</sup> The state DOE is well aware of the strong relationship between resources and student performance. According to *Hancock* plaintiffs' attorney Michael Weisman, when invited by the plaintiffs to present evidence in court of a single low-spending, high-performing district, the defendants declined to do so, which suggests that there is no evidence that such a district exists.<sup>5</sup>
- Judge Margot Botsford in the *Hancock* case concluded that "the foundation budget does not presently provide sufficient funds to the focus districts to permit them to implement the curriculum frameworks or equip their students with the capabilities outlined in *McDuffy*. Nor is there any other source of State funding that fills the gap..."<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Botsford report notes that additional funding will not be effective without improvements in program administration, student data use, and in teaching, managerial competency and leadership. Provisions for these necessities should also be included in a new foundation budget.

#### *SOLUTIONS:*

- An accurate determination must be made of the resources needed to educate the whole child. This determination should consider the body of evidence-based research on successful strategies for improving school outcomes among those who face barriers to learning. Such strategies include improving early education and care; reducing class sizes through grade three; providing full-day kindergarten; funding after school, remedial and

other compensatory learning programs; and funding capital upgrades such as up-to-date libraries and science laboratories, and upgrading school technologies. A whole child education also considers the well-being of students and demands the availability of comprehensive health and physical education classes, counseling and social services, and a wide range of curricular offerings — including the arts.

- The Legislature needs to significantly and immediately increase resources to underperforming school districts, and it needs to determine an equitable way to distribute adequate funds to all districts with funding levels below the new foundation budget.

### ***FIRST STEPS FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- The Legislature should commission an independent cost study to determine the resources required to meet the state’s constitutional obligations, as has been done in other states that have faced similar situations, as set out in Senate Bill 299.

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### ***NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):***

<sup>1</sup> *Hancock v. Commissioner of Education Driscoll*, 443 Mass. 428, 432-433 (2005).

<sup>2</sup> *McDuffy v. Secretary of Education Robertson*, 415 Mass. 545, 548 (1993).

<sup>3</sup> See Botsford (2004), generally.

<sup>4</sup> The Supreme Judicial Court’s opinion in *Hancock v. Commissioner Driscoll* agreed with Judge Botsford that significant disparities continue to exist: “I accord great deference to the Superior Court judge’s thoughtful and detailed findings of fact. I accept those findings, and share the judge’s concern that sharp disparities in the educational opportunities, and the performance, of some Massachusetts public school students persist.” Though it went on to say that current shortcomings no longer constitute the “egregious, Statewide abandonment of the constitutional duty identified” in *McDuffy*, it concurred with Botsford that shortcomings continue to be “significant in the focus districts.” *Hancock v. Commissioner of Education*, 443 Mass. 428, 433 (2005) (Marshall, J., concurring).

<sup>5</sup> Weisman (2005).

<sup>6</sup> Botsford (2004), p. 307.

#### **4. Reform the State Board of Education to Focus on Supporting and Strengthening Public Schools and Educating the Whole Child**

##### ***OUR VISION:***

We seek a state Board of Education that is committed to fostering inclusive, diverse public schools; a board that represents a broad geographical and educational cross-section of the Commonwealth, and one that is responsive and respectful to public school students, educators, and the public.

##### ***PROBLEMS:***

- Since the 1996 replacement of the 17-member Board of Education with a nine-member board closely aligned with critics of public schools, the board has alienated public schools by dismissing the input of experienced teachers, administrators, and school committee members, and oftentimes by rejecting credible research and other ideas that run counter to its collective philosophy.
- The board's inordinate reliance on standardized test scores to evaluate schools has narrowed its vision and compromised its efforts to address the real challenges facing many districts.

##### ***SOLUTIONS:***

- The Legislature should act to restructure the Board of Education to include members with demonstrated expertise in and commitment to a vital public education system. The newly structured Board should be more representative of the diverse population of students in the Commonwealth's public schools than the existing one.
- Board membership should represent a wide range of experiences that include: students, teachers, parents, and administrators as well as business leaders, community leaders, higher education and other education policy experts. The new board should be racially, economically, geographically and politically diverse. Membership should be prohibited to those who benefit financially from the privatization of public schools.
- Term limits on the new Board should be set at three years, with no member serving more than two terms.

***FIRST STEP FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- The legislature should pass House Bill 1028, which would dissolve the current board and replace it with a 15-member board whose membership must reflect the population of students to be served by the Commonwealth's public school systems.



## 5. Address Inequities for English Language Learners (ELLs)

### *OUR VISION:*

English language learners (ELLs) need access to adequate educational resources and appropriate English-language acquisition programs. ELLs need to be fairly and appropriately assessed to guarantee "that the language barriers confronting the students are actually being overcome."<sup>1</sup>

### *PROBLEMS:*

- Massachusetts ELL programs are in a clear crisis. In 2004, the state fell well below its required federal Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) for English Language Learner Programs.<sup>2</sup>
- There is a pressing need for additional training of mainstream teachers and immersion program teachers in Sheltered English Immersion techniques, and we are concerned that there may be a lack of fully qualified teachers teaching ELL students.
- The state should also conduct a full audit of school districts to make certain that there are sufficient basic ESL programs for those students who need them.
- Many schools labeled as "underperforming" serve high proportions of ELL students. Because little useful data about ELLs beyond MCAS scores has been published by the DOE, the "underperforming" label may be inaccurate. The danger is that inappropriate or harmful action is being taken based on inadequate information.<sup>3</sup>
- Since the passage of Ballot Question 2 in 2002, the Unz Initiative<sup>4</sup>, there has not been enough information about ELLs to assess the initiative's impact. The DOE has even stopped tracking such basic data as the per-pupil expenditures for ELL programs.<sup>5</sup> A recent study concluded the Unz Initiative in California<sup>6</sup> had not benefited ELL students there, which underscores the need to analyze the impact of the Unz Initiative here.
- ELL Proficiency Benchmarks and Outcomes (ELPBO) have only been available for a few years, and there is no data on how well districts have adopted these benchmarks.<sup>7</sup>
- Native language MCAS testing is required under state law<sup>8</sup> for some ELL students, but the DOE has failed to provide such tests to many eligible students.<sup>9</sup> Despite this situation, ELLs must still pass the MCAS to graduate.<sup>10</sup>
- ELLs are among the lowest scoring groups on the MCAS.<sup>11</sup> As a result, they face greater risk of being held back and dropping out of school than other groups.

## ***SOLUTIONS:***

- Before schools serving large ELLs populations are labeled “underperforming,” an investigation using multiple measures of school quality and student progress should be done to assess the effectiveness of programs serving those students.
- The Legislature should commission an independent study on the effectiveness of the new English Immersion courses. Such studies should use a longitudinal design and should consider ELL program type and ELL performance in all content areas.
- If research suggests that the Unz Initiative is adversely affecting ELLs, the Legislature should roll back Chapter 71A to its pre-Unz language.<sup>12</sup>
- ELL students who are not given proper testing accommodations (as provided for under state laws and recommended by federal law<sup>13</sup>) should not have their MCAS scores in subjects other than English considered for competency determination, so long as MCAS is a graduation requirement.<sup>14</sup>
- The state should consider use of an alternate English proficiency exam to the English Language Arts MCAS for ELL assessment until students are judged fluent in English, since it appears that some content on the ELA MCAS exam cannot be taught until students are fluent in English, making that test unfair to them.<sup>15</sup>
- Where possible, the language complexity of MCAS questions should be reduced.<sup>16</sup>
- ELL students should be granted more access to the MCAS appeals process, where they can be assessed using multiple measures, including, but not limited to, analysis of their classroom work.<sup>17</sup>
- Competency determination for graduation should not include MCAS for ELLs until ELPBOs are fully implemented statewide.<sup>18</sup>

## ***FIRST STEPS FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- The Legislature should pass House Bill 1117. It enforces testing accommodations for ELLs, and provides for reporting on ELL program effectiveness and ELL educational outcomes.<sup>19</sup>
- Pass Senate Bill 315.

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**NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):**

<sup>1</sup> *Casteñeda v. Pickard*, 648 F.2d 989, 1010 (5th Cir. 1981).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. DOE (2004), pp. 8-10.

<sup>3</sup> NCLB requires schools to reach 100 percent proficiency for all subgroups, including ELLs, by 2014. For ELLs, this is practically unreachable because as ELLs become English fluent and score proficient or above on the MCAS, they are re-categorized as “Formerly Limited English Proficient” (FLEP), are no longer ELLs, and their scores are counted for ELL AYP goals for only two more years. At the same time, new immigrants with little or no English skills arrive each year in the U.S. and are included in the ELL subgroup (English Language Arts testing for ELLs is mandatory after their first year in the U.S.), dragging down MCAS scores for the group. The influx of new ELLs practically ensures that the ELL subgroup will not reach 100 percent proficiency, and that means that eventually even some good schools with ELL populations will probably be labeled “underperforming.” Crawford (2004), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> The “Unz Initiative” was an anti-bilingual education ballot initiative proposed by Ron K. Unz, who passed similar ballot initiatives in California in 1998 and Arizona in 2000. A similar measure was defeated in Colorado in 2002. The Unz Initiative includes provisions that create obstacles to bilingual education for older children and makes it extremely difficult and administratively burdensome to provide it for typical ELLs under 10. The Massachusetts legislature passed an exception to these rules, allowing children in two-way bilingual programs to be exempted from the Unz Initiative’s restrictions on who can enter these programs, but there are only 15 districts in the state offering two-way bilingual programs. US DOE (2004), p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> The MA DOE, prior to the 2003-2004 school year, tracked per-pupil expenditures for bilingual education programs, but has discontinued the practice. MA DOE (2005a).

<sup>6</sup> A California Department of Education researcher determined that Unz Initiative programs had no positive impact on ELL test scores or the rate at which ELLs are re-designated as “English fluent.” Grissom 2004, pp. 1-2. Another study noted that: “We find an advantage for approaches that provide instruction in the students’ first language and conclude that state and federal policies restricting or discouraging the use of the native language in programs for ELL students cannot be justified by a reasonable consideration of the evidence.” Rolstad, *et al.* (2005), p. 574.

<sup>7</sup> MA DOE (2003).

<sup>8</sup> “All potential English proficient students from language groups in which English language learners programs established under chapter 71A are offered under chapter seventy-one A shall also be allowed opportunities for assessment of their performance in the language which best allows them to demonstrate educational achievement and mastery of academic standards and curriculum frameworks established under sections 1D and 1E. For the purposes of this section, a ‘potential English proficient student’ shall be defined as a student who is not able to perform ordinary class work in English; provided, however, that no student shall be allowed to be tested in a language other than English for longer than three consecutive years.” Chapter 69, Section 1I, M.G.L.

<sup>9</sup> Fifty-five percent of ELL children speak Spanish as a first language (MA DOE (2005c), p. 10), but the DOE offers bilingual Spanish-English exams only in Mathematics and Science & Technology/Engineering. For the 45 percent of ELL children who speak a language other than Spanish, the DOE offers no native language testing. The only substantive testing accommodation provided for non-Spanish speaking ELL children is the use of word-to-word translation dictionaries (MA DOE (2005b), p. 3), despite state laws requiring native language testing in any language for which an English language learner’s program is offered.

NCLB mandates that states “shall identify the languages other than English that are present in the participating student population and indicate the languages for which yearly student academic assessments are not available and are needed.” NCLB further requires that states “make every effort to develop such assessments and may request assistance from the Secretary if linguistically accessible academic assessment measures are needed.” No Child Left Behind Act, P.L. 107-110, Section 1111(b)(6).

The MA DOE has no publicly available, comprehensive list of languages in which MCAS tests should be made available for English language learners, but this list should likely include, at a minimum, the following languages: Cape Verdean, Haitian Creole, Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese. de los Reyes (2004); Cambridge Public Schools (2005a) and (2005b).

<sup>10</sup> See notes 10-11, *infra*.

<sup>11</sup> ELLs performed worse than students with disabilities on the 2005 10<sup>th</sup> grade ELA MCAS: 34 percent scored “Needs Improvement” and 56 percent failed. ELLs also scored worse than disabled students on the 2005 10<sup>th</sup> grade math MCAS: 30 percent scored “Needs Improvement” and 46 percent failed. MA DOE (2005c), pp. 22-23.

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James Peyser, Chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education, expressed concern about lower MCAS scores of ELL students and the achievement gap between ELLs and mainstream students, in the context of his desire to raise the MCAS passing score. Vaishnav (September 9, 2005).

- <sup>12</sup> See Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 218 of the Acts of 2002 for changes to Chapter 71A of the M.G.L. made just prior to passage of the Unz Initiative in Massachusetts. This version of 71A is preferable because it does not impose the questionable pedagogical practice of Structured English Immersion (as cited in note 4), it does more to encourage parental involvement in the education of ELL children, and has greater accountability provisions. A recently published study concluded that, “bilingual education is superior to English-only approaches in increasing measures of students’ academic achievement in English and in the native language... In view of these results, current policies implemented in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, which ban or greatly discourage the use of the native language for instructional purposes, cannot be justified.” Rolstad, *et al.* (2005), p. 590.
- <sup>13</sup> NCLB requires that students “... be assessed in a valid and reliable manner and provided reasonable accommodations on assessments administered to such students under this paragraph, including, to the extent practicable, assessments *in the language and form* most likely to yield accurate data on what such students know and can do in academic content areas.” [emphasis added] 20 U.S.C. § 6311(b)(3)(C)(ix)(III).
- <sup>14</sup> When ELL children are assessed in English only, it is unclear whether poor results reflect their lack of knowledge of English or of the content. When a child has access to a question in only one language (English or his native language), one study showed that it was best that the child be given the test question in the language in which he received instruction (Abedi 2001, p. 2). That would be the native language for recent arrivals and for many children in transitional bilingual education, but would be English for children who learned the subject matter primarily or entirely in English (as with young children in Structured English Immersion programs). Another study conducted in Miami, however, suggested that immigrant students scored higher in their native language on assessments even two years after being designated “English fluent” (Silverman, 2005). Ideally, native language tests need to be re-checked for validity within their target language group as content and construct validity may be lost in attempts to simply provide a word-for-word translation of an assessment instrument from English to another language, because, “among other things, the difficulty of vocabulary tends to differ across languages.” August and Hakuta (1997), cited in Crawford (2004), p. 3.
- <sup>15</sup> While this suggestion would probably require a change in the current statutes, it is clear that the MCAS itself is inadequate for measuring the English language proficiency of ELL students: “The MCAS tests were not designed to be assessments of English language proficiency of non-native English speakers, and the results of MCAS tests are not to be used to make a determination of English language proficiency.” McQuillan (2004).
- <sup>16</sup> Simplifying the language used to formulate a question (without reducing the difficulty of the content being tested) is a strategy which has been shown to increase test performance among ELLs by as much as 10-20 percent on such questions. Abedi and Dietel (2004), p. 4. For more information on accurately constructing tests and grading tests designed to assess English language learners, see Kopriva (2005), and Kopriva and Saez (2005).
- <sup>17</sup> The MCAS performance appeals process appears to be an effort to comply with this part of the statute: “As much as is practicable, especially in the case of students whose performance is difficult to assess using conventional methods, such instruments shall include consideration of work samples, projects and portfolios, and shall facilitate authentic and direct gauges of student performance.” Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 69, Section 11.

About the appeals process, the MA Department of Education says: “It is important to note that the MCAS Performance Appeals Process does not waive or exempt students from the Competency Determination requirement. Rather, it provides a relatively small number of students whose knowledge and skills are not measured well by standardized tests an additional route to meeting the standard.” MA DOE (2005d), Page 4.

- <sup>18</sup> At the Board of Education meeting held on February 25, 2003, Commissioner Driscoll noted that students must master the skills in the ELPBOs in order to fully access the English Language Arts frameworks. Students who have not mastered the ELPBO skills may have trouble with the ELA MCAS, which tests a student's knowledge of the ELA frameworks. Driscoll acknowledged at the meeting that the DOE has very limited capacity to train teachers in the use of the complex ELPBOs, saying, “I frankly still say [it] is going to take a decade or more...” Though the ELPBOs may not be fully implemented until 2013, ELL students are still required to master the ELA curriculum framework and pass the ELA MCAS to obtain a high school diploma. This will place a burden on some students to pass tests on subject matter to which they have not been properly exposed.

- <sup>19</sup> For more information on House Bill 1117 (filed in 2005 Session by Reps. Khan and Peisch), go to – <http://www.mass.gov/legis/bills/house/ht01pdf/ht01117.pdf>

## **6. Create Alternatives to MCAS Testing for Vocational Education Students**

### ***OUR VISION:***

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

### ***PROBLEM:***

- Relying solely on a paper-and-pencil test, such as the MCAS, puts many vocational education students at a serious disadvantage, due to the limitations of the test and the fact that they must learn and demonstrate mastery of both academic and vocational curricula. Vocational education students, like all other students, should not be judged by the MCAS alone.

### ***SOLUTION:***

- Create alternatives for all students, including vocational education students, that are performance- or demonstration-based, such as using portfolios or interviews. Such assessments for vocational education students could incorporate items relating to authentic vocational circumstances.

### ***FIRST STEP FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- Pass legislation such as Senate Bill 315 that would establish an authentic, comprehensive assessment system that would be appropriate for all students, including vocational education students.

## 7. Address Needs of Students with Disabilities

### *OUR VISION:*

Students with disabilities, like other students, require and deserve appropriate, fair, reliable, and valid measures of their knowledge and skills, not only of their disabilities. We believe in helping all children clear hurdles that impede learning, not in setting up roadblocks.

### *PROBLEMS:*

- Disabled students in the Class of 2006 are failing the MCAS at a rate six times greater than their non-disabled peers and thus are at much greater risk of being denied high school diplomas. Currently, there has been no independent analysis indicating that MCAS has facilitated greater access to support and instruction for disabled students.<sup>1</sup>
- Disabled students need better, more diagnostic assessments to give teachers information on how to individualize instruction. Disabled students require more flexibility to demonstrate their competency on high school graduation exams so that they are not unfairly penalized for their learning differences.<sup>2</sup>
- There are widespread anecdotal reports that teachers, parents and students find the current MCAS alternate assessment process to be cumbersome, time-consuming, not instructionally useful and frustrating because most students using it are ultimately judged to have failed.<sup>3</sup> These complaints need to be investigated, and where documented, should be addressed.

### *SOLUTIONS:*

- The Commonwealth needs to ensure that the special, individual needs of children with learning challenges are addressed through accommodations in MCAS testing and effective teaching and specialized instruction aligned with state standards.
- 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. 11.<sup>4</sup>
- Specifically, the Legislature should receive an annual report from the DOE summarizing MCAS statistics for children on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and plans under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This report should also contain accurate and complete information regarding the percentages of special education students who are failing to complete high school.

- Measures need to be taken to strengthen the safety nets for all special education students, particularly those who do not meet the competency determination. In most cases, the district remains legally responsible if the student’s IEP team has not determined that the student has met his/her IEP goals.
- The Commonwealth needs to ensure that all appropriate testing accommodations are provided to special education students and ensure that students are not penalized for taking tests with accommodations. Legislation requiring written parental notification of the testing accommodations schedule, the rules regarding the MCAS Performance Appeals process, and the MCAS Alternate Assessment needs to be enacted. Written parental notification should apply to all students, not just special education students, and in the case of ELL students, notice should be given in the native language.
- The Commonwealth needs to implement a simplified and instructionally useful portfolio system.

***FIRST STEPS FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

- Pass House Bill 1115, which would allow students who have met IEP and local graduation requirements and been accepted to a post-secondary education program to be deemed to have graduated and therefore eligible for federal financial aid.
- Pass House Bill 1117, which would ensure that students who do not get needed accommodations will not be denied diplomas based on MCAS results.
- Pass Senate Bill 315.

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***NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):***

<sup>1</sup> After two retests, 30 percent of disabled students in the Class of 2006 still have not attained a competency determination by passing MCAS, compared to 5 percent of non-disabled students. MA DOE (2005d), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Disability Rights Advocates (2001). See also O’Neill (2000). See Sullivan, *et. al.* (2005), pp. 58-66.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Massachusetts DOE, just 25 to 30 secondary students statewide pass the MCAS alternate assessment each year. MA DOE (2005e), p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/69-1i.htm> for the text of the Education Reform Act calling for “assessment instruments [that] recognize sensitivity to different learning styles and impediments to learning.”

## 8. Repair the Child Social Services Safety Net

### *OUR VISION:*

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

### *PROBLEMS:*

- While health, nutrition, economic, family, and housing status affect the ability of students to learn in school, only the public schools are held accountable and are placed at risk for the success or failure of children. In order to meet their full potential, students at risk must be adequately housed, nourished, provided with health care, and offered other appropriate social services.<sup>1</sup>
- There is evidence of widening gaps in students' access to these basic services, which affects their ability to succeed in school. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's annual Kids Count report showed an increase in the percentage of Massachusetts children living in families where no parent has full-time, year-round employment.<sup>2</sup> The 2005 federal Census found the poverty rate in Massachusetts to be rising. The same report showed about a 10 percent increase in individuals lacking health insurance.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, there is a growing shortage of school nurses, the only health service regularly available to many children.<sup>4</sup>
- Although public schools have consistently demonstrated that they can make a huge difference in students' lives, they alone cannot close achievement gaps brought on by poverty and other social problems. The current reform system demands the impossible from public schools: that they address both societal inequities and learning needs in order to ratchet up student performance. These demands made in the absence of a strong social support safety net set public schools up for failure, eroding public support. Our democracy cannot afford to let this happen.

### *SOLUTIONS:*

- We need a coordinated services system to identify and provide service for at risk students. An exemplary Massachusetts service system would act as a national model for others to follow.
- Barriers to multi-agency collaboration should be removed so students at risk can be better supported.
- The Legislature should prioritize access to and quality of public housing, health care, public safety, and social services along with education. By providing students with



necessary social services, the state will foster greater educational gains than by just attending to improving education alone.

***FIRST STEPS FOR POLICYMAKERS:***

We do not claim to have all the answers for how best to address these issues so that all students come to the classroom ready to learn. The answers may lie in policies that bring about universal high-quality preschool programs, health care, and affordable housing. Or it may make sense to address some of these needs within school buildings, by funding on-site family dental and vision clinics, for example.

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***NOTES (for full references, see bibliography):***

<sup>1</sup> Rothstein (2004). See also Kozol (September 2005), and Berliner (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation (2005).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2005)

<sup>4</sup> Mishra (2005).

## 9. Work to Reverse Trend toward Re-segregation

### *OUR VISION:*

Desegregated schools are vital in the push toward equity and quality in education.

### *PROBLEMS:*

- The trend in Massachusetts has been toward increasing re-segregation. Segregated schools continue to pose a great barrier to achievement and quality. Jonathan Kozol points to national data that show racial score gaps correspond to trends in segregation. Gaps decreased during the three decades that segregation decreased, and have widened or remained stagnant since the late 1980s as school segregation increased, especially for high school students.<sup>1</sup> As Gary Orfield from the Harvard Civil Rights Project has written, “research consistently shows that segregated schools are usually isolated by both race and poverty, and offer vastly unequal educational opportunities. Moreover, convincing evidence exists that desegregated schools both improve test scores and positively change the lives of students.”<sup>2</sup>
- The State Board of Education has retreated from its legal responsibilities outlined in the Racial Imbalance Act, as demonstrated by the Board’s June 13, 2005 vote to divest itself of responsibility for Springfield’s desegregation efforts, and they have worked to eliminate any supportive funding from Chapter 636 for desegregation. The Board has also repeatedly recommended cutting the successful Metco program.

### *SOLUTION:*

- Legislators must push to reverse this trend toward increased segregation in our public schools. It is the responsibility of state school policymakers and officials to make efforts to reverse this trend. State officials set a dangerous precedent and imperil the education of Massachusetts students when they ignore segregation trends or dismiss them as insignificant.<sup>3</sup>

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### *NOTES:*

<sup>1</sup> Kozol (September 2005), pp. 41-54.

<sup>2</sup> Orfield (2001).

<sup>3</sup> Recent court cases, including the Supreme Court decision on affirmative action in Michigan, *Grutter v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 306 (2003), and the First Circuit Court of Appeals’ decision on desegregation in Lynn, *Comfort v. Lynn School Committee*, No. 03-2415 (1st Cir. October 20, 2004), are encouraging in their legal reinforcement that racial consideration in school assignments can be a vehicle for learning and success by all children if they are narrowly tailored.

This report is not intended to be a final blueprint for reform, but rather a step toward reopening a dialogue on the priorities and direction for the next chapter of Education Reform. Alliance members believe that it is time for policymakers to acknowledge that the current reform system is not meeting its stated objectives and that it is unlikely to do so without fundamental change. We are concerned that some reform “solutions” that have been proposed are likely to make the situation worse. We believe some core elements of Education Reform must be revisited, and we will continue our efforts to ensure that education reform works well for all students in our state. In the meantime, great challenges loom ahead — addressing the urban minority dropout crisis, ameliorating the race-based achievement gap, and providing adequate resources to attain equity and quality among urban and suburban schools. Meeting these challenges requires a process that includes rather than excludes educators and others who possess the experience and expertise to make a difference in our public schools.

Alliance members bring a wealth of expertise and ideas and we are eager to contribute to the dialogue. We have outlined the nine issues that must be addressed so that the state’s most vulnerable students are not perpetually left behind. Now is the time to reexamine the state’s approach to school improvement, assessment, education resource allocation, governance, and instruction for all students, especially those who struggle to pass the MCAS because they are learning English, have a disability, are enrolled in vocational education, or because they are poor. We insist that a strong child social services system is a key for improving student learning, and that achievement gaps will not close if the re-segregation trend is not reversed. These challenges must be faced squarely and honestly, with a dialogue that includes a broad range of ideas and voices, if we are to make significant progress toward our goals.

Educating the whole child by providing equity and excellence in public education for every child is an objective that is absolutely fundamental to the health and survival of our democracy. It’s time to take stock of what it will take to achieve this goal and to take action. It’s time to recognize the reality of our current situation and to 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 to all children what we now provide for some children.”*



## APPENDIX: RECOMMENDED LEGISLATION

The text of the following bills can be obtained by going to [www.mass.gov/legis](http://www.mass.gov/legis), under Current Legislation, Text of House Bills or Text of Senate Bills and entering the bill's number. All of the bills are now in the Legislature's Joint Committee on Education.

**Senate Bill 299 – *Creating a Commission to Conduct a Study to Determine the Resources Necessary to Meet State Standards*** - sponsored by Sen. Jarrett Barrios (D-Cambridge) along with Rep. Steve Kulik (D-Worthington), Rep. David Linsky (D-Natick) and Rep. Steve Walsh (D-Lynn), and nearly 100 other House and Senate members. This bill sets up a commission to study what resources are necessary to provide the programs and services students and schools need to meet the Commonwealth's education standards.

**Senate Bill 315 – *Requiring a Comprehensive Assessment System for Students, Schools and Districts*** - sponsored by Senators Cynthia Creem (D-Newton), Edward Augustus (D-Worcester), Richard Moore (D-Uxbridge), and Karen Spilka (D-Ashland), along with over 10 Representatives. This bill would replace the current MCAS tests with a comprehensive, multiple assessment system that will provide a much improved and fairer system to determine the achievements and needs of students, schools and districts.

**House Bill 1028 – *Relative to Board of Education Reform*** - sponsored by Representatives Jay Kaufman (D-Lexington), James Marzilli (D-Arlington), Patricia Jehlen (D-Somerville), Frank Smizik (D-Brookline), Ellen Story (D-Amherst) and others. This bill would reform the Board of Education by increasing and diversifying its membership to ensure that the board is responsive to and supportive of public education.

**House Bill 1110 – *Improving School and District Accountability*** – sponsored by Representatives Ann Paulsen (D-Belmont) and Kay Khan (D-Newton). This bill makes changes to the state's school and district accountability process to be more responsive to the real needs of school and districts that are facing accountability sanctions.

**House Bill 1115 – *Guaranteeing a High School Diploma to Some Children Accepted into Post-Secondary Education Programs*** – sponsored by Representatives Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley), Ruth Balsler (D-Newton), Barbara L'Italien (D-Andover), Alice Wolf (D-Cambridge), Deborah Blumer (D-Framingham) and others. This bill allows children with disabilities to be granted a high school diploma if they have fulfilled all district graduation requirements, been accepted to college and have completed IEP goals, notwithstanding failure to pass MCAS.

**House Bill 1117 – *Promoting Greater Fairness, Accountability and Public Confidence in the MCAS*** – sponsored by Representatives Alice Peisch (D-Wellesley), Kay Khan (D-Newton), Matthew Patrick (D-Falmouth), Antonio Cabral (D-New Bedford), Michael Festa (D-Melrose), Douglas Petersen (D-Marblehead) and others. This bill is a comprehensive reform of MCAS that provides for student testing accommodations, improves the appeals process and requires additional reporting and accountability.



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*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)