

# Exploring New Horizons for Equal Educational Opportunity

## 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Quality Education Conference

Co-convened by Education Justice at Education Law Center, National Access Network at Teachers College, and Education Voters Institute  
Also supporting the conference: Public Advocates, Public Education Network, and Rural School and Community Trust

**June 11-12, 2008**  
SEIU Building, at Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C.

### AGENDA

#### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11<sup>TH</sup>

- 7:30 – 9:00 AM**            **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**
- 8:00 – 9:15 AM**            **REGISTRATION**
- 9:15 – 9:30 AM**            **WELCOME**
- RACHEL TOMPKINS, PRESIDENT, RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY TRUST**
- 9:30 – 10:15 AM**            **KEYNOTE ADDRESS**
- Dr. John Jackson, President, Schott Foundation in Public Education**
- 10:15 – 11:00 AM**            **PLENARY SESSION**
- PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES: REPORTS FROM THE STATES**  
   **Facilitator: Molly A. Hunter, Director, Education Justice,**  
   **EDUCATION LAW CENTER**

Begin your conference networking by hearing exciting first-hand accounts of victories and challenges from advocates directly involved in the 30 states that will be represented at the conference.

- 11:00 – 11:15 AM**            **BREAK**
- 11:30 – 12:30 PM**            **PLENARY SESSION (continued)**
- Progress and Challenges: Reports from the States (con't)**
- 12:30 – 2:00 PM LUNCH**
- LUNCHEON ADDRESS AND QUESTIONS (1:15 – 2:00 PM)**
- A VIEW FROM THE BENCH**  
   **Associate Justice John M. Greaney, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court**  
   **INTRODUCED BY MICHAEL WEISMAN, WEISMAN & MCINTYRE**

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11<sup>TH</sup> (CONTINUED)

**2:15 – 3:45 PM**                      **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

### **1. Empowering Advocates to Transform Education Policy**

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

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

### **2. Ensuring Equal Opportunity in a Standards and Testing World**

Workshop Leaders:            Michelle Fine, Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY)  
   Stan Karp, Director of Secondary Initiatives, Education Law Center  
   Matt Gandal, Executive Vice President, Achieve, Inc.

Do high-stakes high school graduation exams ensure a successful transition from school to the “real world”? How can we ensure high quality in alternative assessments for high school diplomas? This session will discuss the state of the states and trends in high school graduation requirements and high school testing.

### **2. Litigators’ Workshop I – For Plaintiff Litigators Only**

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

Winning in litigation involves developing strategies that are more than being right on the law. Come and work with experts who will share their litigation experiences in which obstacles that were not necessarily envisioned were encountered and were dealt with successfully. This session will place participants in a position to consider challenges you might not have expected and strategies you might not otherwise have thought to use.

**3:45 – 4:00 PM**                      **BREAK**

**4:15 – 5:15 PM**                      **PLENARY SESSION**  
**Framing the Debate: How to Promote Equity and Adequacy**  
**Cornell Belcher, President, Brilliant Strategies**  
**INTRODUCED BY BETH SULLIVAN, PRESIDENT, EDUCATION VOTERS**

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

**5:15 – 6:30 PM**                      **RECEPTION**



**11:15 – 12:45 PM**

**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

**1. Building Power**

Workshop Leader: Beth Sullivan, President, Education Voters

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

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

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

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

**3. Litigators' Workshop II - For Plaintiff Litigators Only**

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

Workshop Leader: David Long

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

**1:00 PM**

**ADJOURN AND BOX LUNCH**