

The Advocate

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK

SUCCESS *Stories*



Recent Case Histories from AFC's Files¹

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AFC is launching an electronic newsletter in November 2006!

To subscribe, please email info@advocatesforchildren.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line or visit www.advocatesforchildren.org

Mandy is an eight-year old student with dyslexia and short-term memory disorder. She and her family first came to AFC in May of 2005 because they felt she was not learning and progressing in school. Mandy's mother noted that she was only performing at a kindergarten level in both reading and math, but was scheduled to enter the third grade in the fall. At her Committee on Special Education review, the team recommended a small class size and testing accommodations. Her present public school, however, did not implement these recommendations. AFC filed an impartial hearing request to obtain services for her. In discussions prior to the hearing, AFC and the New York City Department of Education (DOE) agreed that Mandy was not receiving the services she needed in order to succeed. The DOE then au-

thorized placement in a private school for Mandy. Mandy will now benefit from a smaller student-to-teacher ratio and a variety of new reading programs that were not available at her former school.

Fernando is a 15-year-old ninth grader from the Bronx. He moved to the U.S. from the Dominican Republic almost four years ago, and had great difficulty articulating himself in English. Despite lack of progress in all academic subjects, Fernando had never been evaluated for special education. The day after meeting AFC, AFC staff requested bilingual special education evaluations and filed an Impartial Hearing to expedite an appropriate placement. In addition, AFC contacted Bronx International High School to dis-



¹ Names have been changed

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AFC's Education Helpline

(for Advice & Referral):

212-947-9779

Tues. & Thurs. 10:30 – 1:00*

Good News!

*Thanks to funding from the NYC Council, AFC will **expand** Helpline hours beginning in late November. Please check our website for details.

AFC's Discharge Hotline

212-947-9779 ext. 550

Mon - Fri. 9 – 5

To Schedule a Workshop or Obtain a Publication:

212-947-9779, Ext. 505

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JILL CHAIFETZ EDUCATION FUND


The Jill Chaifetz Education Fund was established in February 2006 in memory of AFC's former Executive Director. AFC is very grateful to each of the 350 donors to the Fund.

Your generosity enables us to continue our important work.

Success Stories

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

cuss a placement for Fernando at their school. AFC staff accompanied Fernando and his mother to Bronx International, where he was accepted into the ninth grade.

AFC also accompanied Fernando's parent to a Committee on Special Education review to discuss the results of Fernando's evaluations, and the evaluations showed that Fernando had a language-based learning disability that hindered his ability to learn and to speak English. At the review, the principal of Bronx International explained to the review team why her school would meet his special education needs. As a result of the review, Fernando was given a placement at Bronx International. Fernando attended a summer orientation program at the school and started classes with his peers in fall 2005. He is now doing well in school! 

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As many of you know, the past year has been marked by tremendous sadness following the February 2006 death of Jill Chaifetz, AFC's beloved Executive Director since 1998. As the next Executive Director of AFC, I am proud to be able to help support the legacy of Jill's tireless efforts on behalf of children.

As AFC's Deputy Director since 1998, I had the pleasure of working with and learning from Jill, one of the City's most respected and talented children's rights activists. Jill was not only our leader and inspiration, but also a close friend. Through this difficult period of transition, we are continually guided by Jill's vision of and dedication to securing a quality public education for all New York City students.

AFC is very grateful to the individuals and organizations that have supported us during the past months. We also greatly appreciate all of the donations we have received in Jill's honor, which enable us to continue our important work.

AFC has dedicated our most recent annual report to her memory, which is available on AFC's website. In it, there are many wonderful remembrances from colleagues, friends and loved ones. However, the Annual Report does not even come close to summarizing her vast achievements.

This newsletter shares some of AFC's recent accomplishments, describes our current programs, and gives some updates for parents as their children return to school. Thank you again for your support of public school children in the City.

Elisa Hyman
Executive Director

AFC Releases Policy Report on Free Tutoring Services under The No Child Left Behind Act

Advocates for Children's report, *An In-Depth Look at Free Tutoring Services Under The No Child Left Behind Act in New York City: A Focus on English Language Learners*, released in June of 2006, provides an analysis of NYC Department of Education (DOE) statistics regarding student eligibility and enrollment in Supplemental Education Services (SES) and outlines the results of a survey of all 2004-2005 DOE approved SES Providers. Supplemental Educational Services are extra academic services, such as tutoring, offered during off-school hours to students who meet a certain income criteria and are attending schools that have failed to make progress in the per-

formance of their students under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

The report documents some improvements in the SES program since 2002-2003, the first year in which the New York City Department of Education was required to offer SES, including a significant increase in the enrollment rates of eligible students, a nearly three-fold citywide increase in total SES enrollment, and an increase in the number of ELL students eligible for and enrolled in SES.

However, the report revealed a poor non-completion rate for those stu-

dents who did enroll in SES programs as well as an extremely disturbing trend regarding ELLs: in many Regions and Districts, ELLs are primarily being educated in failing schools. The results of a telephone survey of all of the 2004-2005 approved SES providers demonstrated that SES providers need significantly greater capacity to provide services to ELL students. Most providers only offered SES in English, even where they claimed to offer services to ELLs. Providers had very little language capacity other than Spanish, and at least one third of providers claiming to serve ELLs did not have translated materials for parents or students. ^A

AFC Launches New Out of School Youth Project

AFC's new *Out of School Youth Project* takes aim at the systemic problem of illegal exclusionary practices directed towards at-risk students in New York City. An estimated 150,000-200,000 school-age eligible youth in New York City are out of school and another 60,000-80,000 are at risk of exclusion. Building on the foundation of AFC's previous work on school push-outs – including five class action suits, three policy reports, and scores of individual cases – the *Out of School Youth Project* will target communities most affected by exclusionary practices,

reaching out to the parents and students of those areas as well as the organizations and institutions that serve them. At the same time, this Project will promote cooperative and cohesive advocacy by coordinating the work of professionals from the policy, academic and advocacy communities.

The result of these efforts will be a broad coalition which fuses strategies of community mobilization and “grass roots” information dissemination with advocacy, policy work, and media exposure around the goal of ending illegal school exclusions.



Winning Strategies

On July 14th, 2006, Goldman Sachs & Co., Sullivan & Cromwell LLP and the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School co-hosted the forum entitled “The Pipeline Crisis: Winning Strategies for Young Black Men” at Chelsea Piers in New York City. Over 1,000 professionals, academics and students attended. AFC's Executive Director, Elisa Hyman was a featured panelist.

Led by Harvard Law Professor Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., other panelists included: William C. Bell, President and Chief Executive Officer, Casey Family Programs, Former Commissioner for NYC Administration for Children's Services;

Stephanie Bell-Rose, Managing Director, Goldman, Sachs & Co., Founding President of The Goldman Sachs Foundation; Robert Carmona, Co-Founder, President and CEO, STRIVE National; Dr. Floyd H. Flake, Former U.S. Congressman and senior pastor, Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, Jamaica, New York and Theodore V. Wells, Jr., Partner and Co-Chair, Litigation Department, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP.

The forum discussed the social, moral and economic implications of the widening achievement gap between young black men versus other population groups. Elisa Hyman discussed AFC's work on out-of-

school youth in New York City schools. She noted that there are approximately 150,000-200,000 school-age eligible youth out of school, and another 60,000-80,000 each year who are at risk of leaving school in NYC. For the past three and a half years, AFC has been able to do significant work to combat exclusionary practices which account for significant numbers of the out-of-school and at-risk youth, like school push-outs and discharges, improper transfers to GED programs, illegal exclusion of children with disabilities and warehousing of students in alternative or segregated programs that do not offer appropriate instruction and result in students dropping out. ^A

AFC's Cocktails, Cupcakes, and a Cause Summer Benefit

AFC held its second annual young professionals summer benefit on July 26, 2006 at Marquee. Over 800 young professionals attended, and we raised over \$80,000 – more than double the amount raised last year – that will continue to support AFC's programs and clients.



Chadbourne & Parke LLP, including AFC Board Member Marjorie Glover (right)

“Lawyers throughout New York put on their dancing shoes July 26 at nightclub hotspot Marquee. Actress Sarah Michelle Gellar served as honorary host of “Cocktails, Cupcakes, and a Cause” ... As waiters and waitresses pushed their way through a packed house to deliver brightly colored confections, attendees took turns competing against each other in a silent auction... Chadbourne & Parke partner Marjorie Glover, a board member with AFC... said that as a parent of a child with Down Syndrome, she was especially pleased with the high turnout. ‘So many people here supporting a worthy cause, and the cupcakes are great! Only downside is so many lawyers,’ she joked.”
– *The Hollywood Reporter*

Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy LLP



A CLOSER LOOK AT

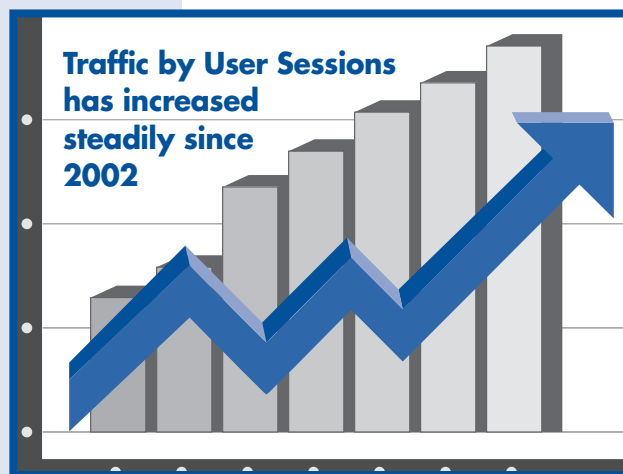
Insideschools.org

The *independent* guide to New York City public schools

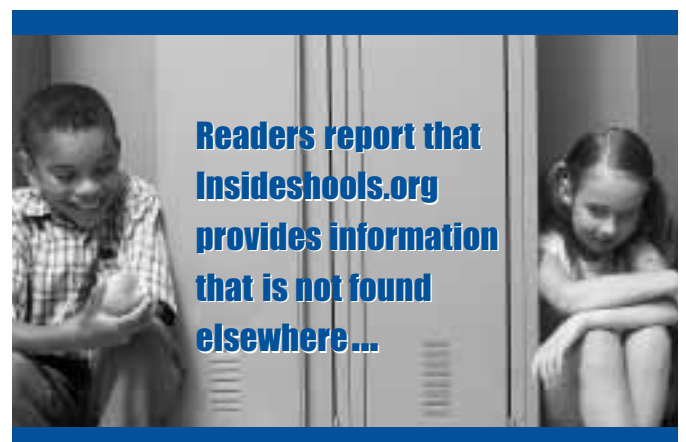
Visitors to Insideschools.org have access to the following features:

- **“Find A School”** provides detailed profiles of all NYC public schools. The profiles also contain information like test scores, safety records, and number of pupils.
- **“Online Forums”** allow readers to connect to the online community and to talk to one another, offer advice, or solve problems.
- **“Survival Tips”** includes helpful information that parents need to know, including How to Enroll Your Child in School, Gifted and Talented Education, School Transfers, High School Applications, and Special Education.
- **“Alert”** is a bi-monthly newsletter currently sent to over 20,000 subscribers regarding important education-related issues such as school closings and test dates.
- **“News & Views”** includes articles that provide news and analysis on topics of interest to parents and teachers.
- **“Ask Judy”** is an advice column written by Judy Baum, experienced parent information specialist.
- **“Speak Out”** allows parents and others to send compliments and complaints directly to schools. In 2006, more than 5,000 comments were sent to principals and education administrators in NYC.
- **“Classifieds”** posts education and teaching-related job descriptions for positions throughout NYC.

ESTABLISHED IN 2002, INSIDESCHOOLS.ORG HAS QUICKLY BECOME THE ONE CLEAR AND INDEPENDENT SOURCE for information about the NYC DOE and the NYC school system, enabling AFC to reach hundreds of thousands of people. The demand for Insideschools.org has increased exponentially each year since its launch. Today, the website has more than 400,000 user sessions and over one million hits per month.



Feedback from our users – primarily public school parents, but also teachers, administrators, advocates and other concerned citizens – underscores not only the demand but also the need for such a service.



(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)


A CLOSER LOOK AT INSIDESCHOOLS.ORG
(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

"The school reviews on our website gave me insights I could never have acquired on my own. Please continue to strive for objectivity and fairness, as your site has reached a critical mass of influence and attention."

— A New York City Teacher

Readers report that Insideschools.org provides information that is not found elsewhere: assessments of individual schools that are independent, objective and incorporate both quantitative and qualitative information, including strengths and weaknesses; a venue for voicing citizens' concerns and compliments about schools; and a place to come together with others to work collaboratively for improvements.

As we look forward to our fifth year, we anticipate further enhancing our site with such online tools as:

- **Community Forums** in which users from across the city can exchange ideas around broad-based school issues.
- **Mapping & Pictures** to provide a more comprehensive and visual profile of each school.
- **Free Text Comments** that provides an anecdotal account of a school to complement the data-driven profiles.
- **Education News Alerts** that offer in one place a comprehensive review of local and national education policy issues. 

"Your experience and knowledge is clearly evident. I've dialed 311, called my Community District Office, and searched endlessly online for the past two months, without getting a straight answer for even one of my questions. You are the first to actually thoroughly give me answers to all of my questions. Thanks again!"

— A Staten Island Parent

"Your site is wonderful and so helpful to first-time moms like myself. Keep up the good work!"

— A Parent

"I love your website and use it religiously. I forward information regularly to the parents I serve, and I certainly use it as a resource for my personal/family use. Keep up the good work. I think you're doing a marvelous job. Thanks."

— A Middle School Parent Coordinator



INSIDESCHOOLS.ORG HAS REACHED ITS GOAL OF REVIEWING NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS!

As of July 2006, Insideschools.org has completed reviews of all 1,438 schools, which marked the watershed first phase of the project. AFC is now launching into the next phase of the Insideschools.org project, which will focus on both continuing and enhancing our core service and information, while creating higher quality resources and a web-based forum for parent engagement.



Congratulations!...Congratulations!...Congratulations!...

In May of 2006, Insideschools.org's Project Director was selected as one of

New York Magazine's Influentials

in the field of education for her work with the project.

"InsideSchools.org, offers an educational mix of information about New York's 1,500 public schools. The Website's school profiles detail test scores, of course, but they also describe the culture of each school, giving prospective families insights on teaching styles, homework, and discipline. There are also policy papers, parent alerts, and nuts-and-bolts guides to school admissions, testing, and other education essentials."

AFC Launches the NYS Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS)

Students in temporary housing situations face significant educational obstacles including accessing school records, obtaining transportation and meeting residency requirements for enrollment in local schools. In 2005, more than 35,000 children sought shelter with their families in New York City and 20,000 of these were school age youth. Recognizing that many difficulties place homeless students at great risk of educational failure, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has partnered with AFC to create NYS-TEACHS to provide technical assistance to school districts throughout New York State in establishing equitable education services for students affected by homelessness. This new initiative builds upon AFC's long history of providing statewide technical assistance to school districts, professionals and parents on behalf of homeless children and youth.

In collaboration with school staff, agencies providing services to homeless children and NYSED's Local Education Agency (LEA) Liaisons assigned to assist homeless families, NYS-TEACHS engages in several activities designed to edu-

cate schools about the rights of homeless students and to assist schools in establishing equitable education services for students affected by homelessness including:

- Disseminating information on the effects of homelessness and the responsibilities of the LEA liaisons and school districts concerning homeless children;
- Providing statewide professional development and statewide technical assistance;
- Facilitating coordination of LEA liaisons and agencies providing academic and other services to homeless children and families, such as shelters;
- Working to improve compliance of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) - which states that homeless children have the right to go to school, regardless of their housing status - as well as other laws.

For more information or assistance, please contact the NYS-TEACHS toll free number at 1-800-388-2014, Monday – Friday, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, or, visit NYS-TEACHS's web site at

www.nysteachs.org. You may also read "Advocates for Children's Short Guide to the Educational Rights of Children and Youth in Temporary Housing in New York City," available at: www.advocatesforchildren.org.

RIGHTS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS UNDER THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

- **CHOOSE** between the local school where they are currently living, the school they attended before they lost their housing, or the school where they were last enrolled;
- **ENROLL** and **PARTICIPATE** in school without providing proof of residency, immunizations, school records, or other documents normally needed for enrollment;
- Receive **TRANSPORTATION** to and from school and school programs;
- Receive the same **SPECIAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES** as those offered to other students who are eligible to receive them;
- **ENROLL** and **ATTEND** class in the school of their choice even while disagreements about enrollment are resolved.

AFC Releases Policy Report on Homeless Students' Legal Rights to Education in NYC

A policy report released by AFC in August 2006, "Up Against the Odds," found that the New York City Department of Education must increase its efforts to ensure the protection of homeless students' legal rights to education. According to the report, many of these children and youth

are not given the services they should have under the law. Additionally, most students who are homeless do much worse in school than students who have permanent housing. For more information on the report, please visit Advocates for Children's website at www.advocatesforchildren.org.

IDEA 2004 — What Should YOU Know?

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law which governs how children with disabilities who are living in the United States are educated. As many parents may be aware, IDEA was amended in December of 2004. (The New York State regulations have been adjusted to some degree in response to the federal changes, but not every modification to the federal law will affect New York State residents). The majority of the changes to the law took effect on July 1, 2005, and the new law, which we call IDEA 2004, is in effect now. AFC is writing a series of articles on the changes to the IDEA that created IDEA 2004. Our goal is to inform you of the new provisions *before* you get the next notice that it's time to meet with the Committee on Special Education (CSE) or the first time your child is referred for evaluation.

KEY POINTS

Due Process – is your right to mediation or a hearing to review the CPSE/CSE's actions to see if they acted according to state and federal laws

Procedural Safeguards Notice – explains your rights in the special education system. It is an important document - **READ IT CAREFULLY.**

Complaint Notice – clearly state the problem and write what you want to see as the solution. Be sure to send it to your regional office AND the NYS Education Dept. in Albany.

Resolution Session – is a meeting with the DOE where you have an opportunity to settle the problem before a hearing. If you reach an agreement, **be sure to read it carefully before signing** because it is legally binding.

New Time Limit – you must file a request for an impartial hearing within **two years** of the time the problem (violation) took place or risk losing the right to appeal.

A "Short Guide to Impartial Hearings" is available at www.advocatesforchildren.org

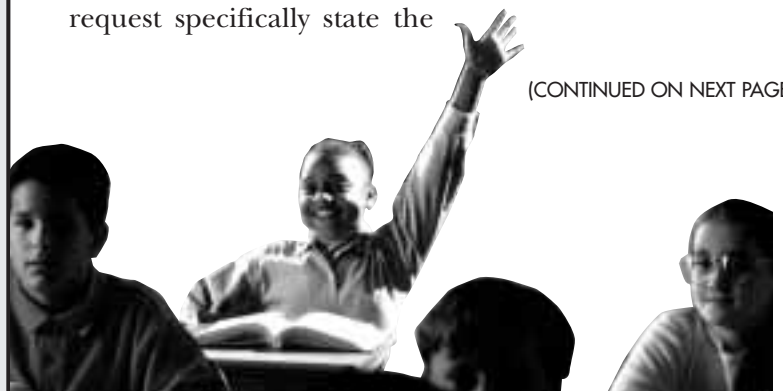
The first article in this series discusses the changes to the IDEA's Due Process procedures, including a parent's right to request a hearing if he or she disagrees with the CSE's recommendation.

The term *due process* refers to a parent's right to have the New York City Department of Education (DOE) take certain actions that protect the parent's rights throughout the course of the child's involvement with special education. When a parent believes his or her child's rights have been violated, he or she may request that a review process is begun to determine whether the CSE's acted properly according to the state and federal law. IDEA 2004 represents some significant changes in the procedures of the review process.

The first time your child is referred for an evaluation to determine whether he or she should receive special education services, you should receive a document called *Procedural Safeguards Notice* from the DOE. That document discusses your rights at every stage of your child's journey through the special education system. The *Procedural Safeguards Notice* is an important source of information that every parent should read carefully. The new law reduces the number of times a parent must receive this notice. According to IDEA 2004, the DOE must give the parent of a special education student a copy of the *Procedural Safeguards Notice* document at the following times: at the time of initial referral, when the parent requests new evaluations, once each year, at the time of the parent's hearing request, and whenever else the parent may request a copy.

If you are considering whether to file a hearing, IDEA 2004 requires that your hearing request specifically state the

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)



IDEA 2004 – WHAT SHOULD YOU KNOW?

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)

issues you want to raise at the hearing, as well as the resolution you hope to get at the hearing. As the DOE states in the *Procedural Safeguards Notice*.

the written due process complaint notice *must* describe the facts relating to your concerns and a proposed solution (a suggestion you might have to solve the problem if you know of one) and include your child's name, address (or available contact information in the case of a homeless child) and the name of the school your child attends. . . . A *Due Process Complaint Notice* form can be obtained from your local school district to request an impartial hearing. A model form can be found at:

<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/dueprocess7105.htm>.

Neither state nor federal law requires you to use the actual *Complaint Notice* form to file a hearing request, but the form is a good guideline for you to follow in constructing your complaint.

If you aren't specific in stating either your concerns or the type of solution you propose, the DOE may argue that you haven't properly notified them of the problems, and if the impartial hearing officer assigned to hear your case agrees with the DOE, you may have to start the process all over again.

As the *Complaint Notice* form instructs, you must send a copy of your hearing request to the Department of Education in your district (in this

case, that place is your DOE regional office and the Impartial Hearing Office at 131 Livingston St., Room 201, Brooklyn, NY 11201), and you *must also* send a copy to the New York State Education Department (NYSED) in Albany, at the address listed on the form.



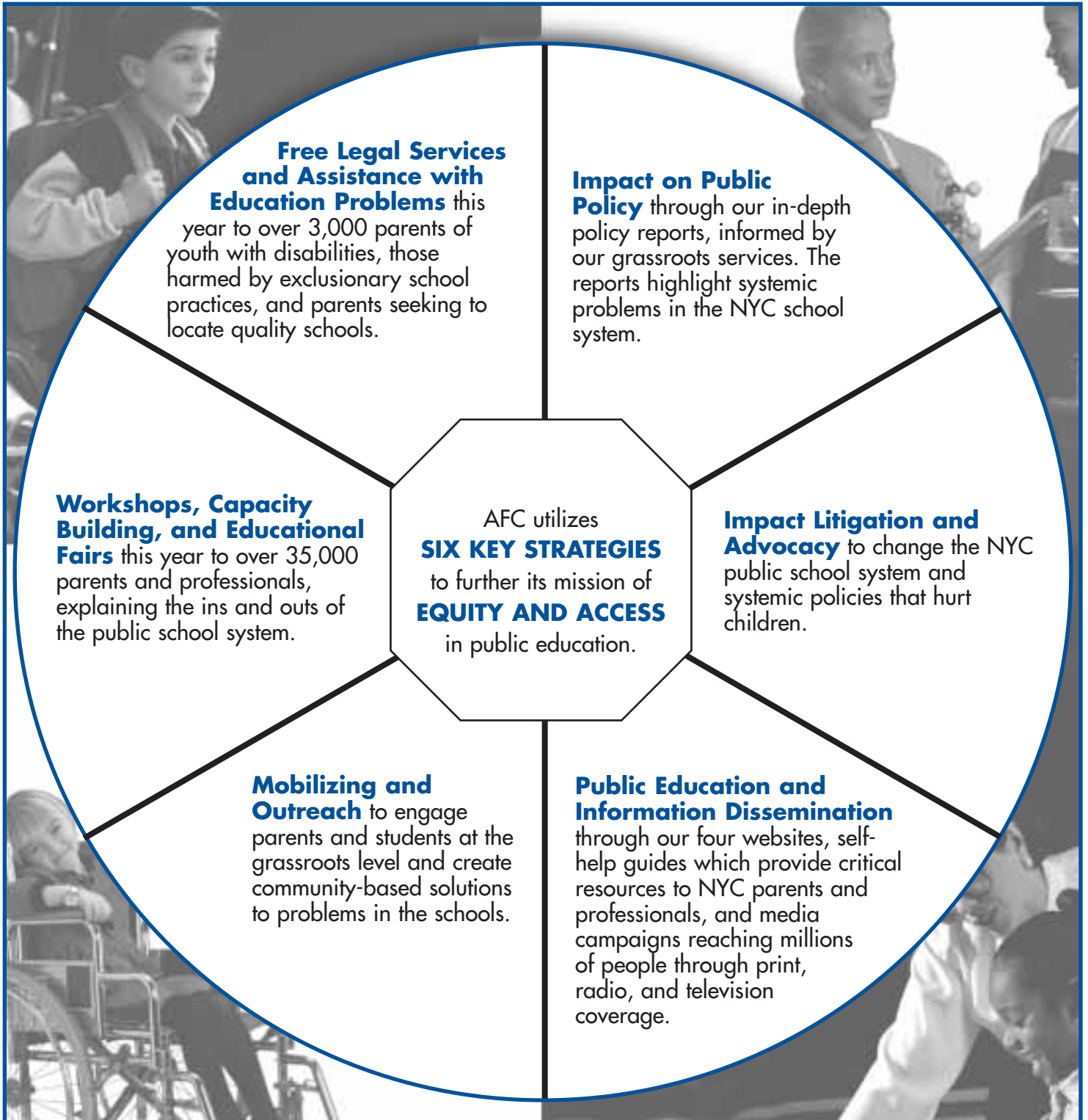
Parents who file a hearing are now required to participate in a "resolution session" with a representative (or several representatives) from the CSE office in order to try to solve the problem and settle the case before a hearing. This resolution session is a very significant change to the impartial hearing process. At least one person representing the region must have the authority to make decisions for the DOE. The CSE must schedule the meeting and inform you of its time, place and date, and they have 15 calendar days to do so. You may attend the resolution conference by telephone if you cannot go to the CSE office. If they do not schedule the conference, you are not obligated to try to make any other settlement. In fact, the law does not require you to agree to any offer the CSE proposes at the resolution conference; the law only requires that you cooperate with the process. If you do agree with the offer the DOE representative makes, the representative will ask you to sign a form which states the agreement. *Read this form carefully before you sign it.* You will be held to the terms of the agreement – it is *legally binding*. You do have three business days to change your mind and withdraw your agreement to settle, in case you decide you made a mistake in settling. After the three business days, the settlement terms become finalized and your hearing request will be automatically withdrawn.

If you and the DOE cannot reach an agreement or if the agreement is only a partial settlement, then the DOE's impartial hearing office will schedule a hearing after the resolution conference. The IDEA requires a hearing to be scheduled within 30 days of the hearing request. After the hearing is scheduled, the case should proceed in a similar manner to hearings prior to the enactment of IDEA 2004.

One final, notable change under IDEA 2004 could seriously affect a parent's due process rights - the new statute of limitations. A parent *must* file a request for an impartial due process hearing *within two years* of the time the violation by the DOE occurred. If more than two years pass from the time of the offense, under most circumstances the parent loses his right to appeal that particular violation by the DOE.

Please look for more IDEA 2004 updates in the coming months. 📧

AFC OVERVIEW: What We Do



AFC's Strategies At Work

Parents of Children with Disabilities

There are nearly 200,000 children and youth with disabilities in need of advocacy and case management services in NYC. Children with disabilities have dismal academic outcomes: out of 50,000 high school age students, only 1600 graduate with a regular high school diploma.

To respond to this significant need, AFC operates a Parent Center for parents of children with disabilities, funded, in part, through the U.S. and New York State Education Department. Staff provides workshops for parents and professionals,; case assistance and direct representation, and assists thousands through our hotline. Staff attends school meetings and IEP reviews, helps children obtain evaluations by learning disability specialists, distributes information, and builds parents' capacity to understand their children's disability-related needs. A new statewide website, www.nysparentnetwork.org, will collect and centralize resources for parents of children with disabilities across the state and represent our collaborative partnership with the other state and federally funded parent centers in NYS.

AFC also collaborates with Resources for Children with Special Needs to help hard-to-reach parents (*Center Without Walls*) and the Hunter School of Social Work and CUNY law school to help parents of children with disorders on the autism spectrum (*Project Equity*).

Children Involved in the Foster Care System

AFC's *Project Achieve*, developed through satellite offices at two foster care agencies, Graham Windham and Forestdale, provides individual assistance and training to caseworkers, birth parents, and foster parents. AFC also works with the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) to train educational case managers and direct service providers for foster care agencies and to provide information on educational issues commonly experienced by students in or at-risk of placement in foster care.

Homeless Children and Youth

In December 2005, AFC was awarded a grant from the New York State Education Department to establish the statewide *New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS)*, to build the capacity of school districts throughout the state to improve education of homeless youth and children. Through this project, we will conduct regional and statewide conferences and local workshops, train hundreds of professionals statewide, operate a statewide hotline, manage a website, support use of best practices in the education of homeless youth, and operate regional advisory networks to help shelters and service providers collaborate with school districts.

Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Court-Involved Youth

AFC's Juvenile Justice Project provides suspended youth, court-involved youth and their families with advocacy, information, and referrals to help resolve their school difficulties and secure the educational resources to which they are entitled. Staff receives referrals from the courts, including probation officers, judges, or other juvenile justice service providers who identify an education issue that needs a specialist. Working in tandem with parents, guardians and the court, AFC aims to build literacy skills, obtain alternative instruction, work on school discipline problems, obtain funding for vocational support and help to transfer students out of large, dangerous and failing high schools. Staff participation in many policy task forces, conferences and panels enable us to address systemic issues beyond the scope of our direct services work.

Immigrants and English Language Learners

A community-empowerment project, Equity Monitoring Project for Immigrant and Refugee Education (EMPIRE) builds the engagement of immigrant parents in their children's education and of immigrants and refugees more broadly in education-reform issues. In collaboration with the

AFC disseminates important school-related information through our four websites:

AFC's recently redesigned primary website is an extensive and widely used resource on educational issues for advocates, parents and students.

New features include:

- Access to all AFC publications and policy reports
- Department of Education contact information
- AFC Referral directory
- AFC Success Stories



www.advocatesforchildren.org

In September 2002, AFC launched Insideschools.org which provides parents with easy-to-understand, accurate information on NYC's public schools and acts as a tool for school-system accountability. During the past year, www.insideschools.org hosted over 3 million user sessions, and to date, over 20,000 users have signed up to receive the site's informative bi-weekly email alerts.



www.insideschools.org

New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC) and eight competitively selected immigrant-oriented community-based organizations (CBOs), we help members of immigrant families and communities better understand how the school system works and actively engage in efforts to improve it. Project activities include advocacy and assistance to individual parents, monitoring of conditions in Regions and schools, issuing policy reports, training sessions for staff of the participating CBOs (who in turn train immigrant parents and community members), and organizing around immigrant education issues. With the coalition we were successful in advocating for the NYC DOE to issue a new regulation on translation and interpretation, which is effective on September 2006. We also issued a report in May 2006 report entitled, *“An In-depth Look at Free Tutoring Services Under the No Child Left Behind Act in New York City: A Focus on English Language Learners,”* documented immigrant and ELL students’ use and access to supplementary educational services under the No Child Left Behind Act.

Out of School and Pushed Out Youth

In a city of 1.1 million students, where it is estimated that there are 150,000-200,000 school-age eligible youth not in school, and another 60,000-80,000 who are at-risk. AFC has worked for the past four years to address the fact that many of these youth are not out of school voluntarily, but have been illegally pushed out, counseled out, suspended or warehoused in programs that don’t have books, curriculum or offer high school credits.

This year, AFC has launched a new initiative, the Out of School Youth Project, which combines community mobilizing, direct services, outreach, media work, policy and, if necessary, legal interventions. We will be focusing our work in the neighborhoods with the largest numbers of out of school youth, such as East New York and Harlem, to ensure that parents, students and professionals have the information they need about high school choice and their rights to stay in school and work towards a high school diploma.

We are also working on two actions we filed on behalf of students who were excluded. DS v. NYC DOE was filed against Boys & Girls High School on behalf of the more than 500 students being warehoused in an auditorium without access to high school credit courses or instruction and thousands more that were discharged and transferred. The firm of Morrison & Foerster is a partner in representing the students in this case.

We also represent tens of thousands of students with disabilities who have been subject to illegal exclusions from school for months or years, in a case called EB v. Board of Education. The law firm of Davis, Polk & Wardwell is co-counsel.

Inside Schools.org for Parent Information and Mobilization

Insideschools.org contains much needed comprehensive information about NYC public schools, for parents, students, teachers and professionals. Insideschools.org contains quantitative reviews on all 1,400 schools in NYC, based on DOE data, and qualitative descriptions of approximately 1,300 schools, based on visits to the schools by AFC staff. In the three-and-a-half years since it was launched, Insideschools.org has become an invaluable, widely respected source of information for tens of thousands of NYC parents, students, teachers. Traffic to the site has grown ten-fold since the launch. Traffic currently averages 300,000 user sessions and one million page views per month. Nearly 20,000 users have registered to receive the site’s informative bi-weekly email alerts. In addition to the website, Insideschools.org’s staff provides hotline and email assistance to hundreds of parents.

Training and Technical Assistance to Robin Hood Grantees

In addition to our efforts that target specific populations, AFC also equips local agencies with the resources they need to help far more individuals and families than any one organization could on its own. By providing support and information to community-based organizations throughout NYC, we can ensure that they provide high-quality service to their constituencies.

In October 2004, AFC received a grant from the Robin Hood Foundation directed toward strengthening the capacity of CBOs funded by the Robin Hood Foundation to help them meet the educational needs of the NYC public school students they serve. AFC currently serves 30 Robin Hood funded grantees through targeted training and technical assistance. AFC also offers a full range of educational case advocacy services to the families that the Robin Hood grantees serve. We work to ensure that these families receive equal and quality public education.

The website of the NYS-TEACHS, a project administered by and housed at AFC, directs visitors from across the state to vital information on the educational rights of children who are homeless.



www.nysteachs.org

A new resource for parents of children with disabilities across New York State, this is the website of the federally and state funded New York State Parent Centers (of which AFC is one). It is designed to serve as a central place for parents of children with disabilities to get information on educational issues.



www.nysparentnetwork.org

Pro Bono Attorney Spotlight

LISA CACCAVO OF CHADBOURNE & PARKE LLP

AFC's Pro Bono Project work with private law firms to provide legal representation and advice to hundreds of at-risk students who would not otherwise be able to afford the representation and assistance necessary to help them obtain educational services to which they are entitled. To date, AFC has trained over 350 lawyers at more than 22 private law firms. In this issue, AFC has selected **Lisa Caccavo of Chadbourne & Parke LLP** as our featured attorney for her excellent pro bono work.



When M.G. was a student in 1st grade, her mother came to Advocates for Children seeking help to obtain appropriate special education services for her child. The case was referred to Ms. Caccavo through AFC's Pro Bono Project. After a two-day impartial hearing and a post-hearing brief on the question of whether M.G.'s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was valid, the impartial hearing officer awarded M.G. 10 weeks of summer tutoring at a private tutoring center in order to prepare her for the 2nd grade and mandated that M.G.'s school implement her IEP.

"Handling this case for Advocates for Children gave me a sense of professional achievement. Working with a parent on behalf of her child's educational rights was an intensely personal and professional growth experience that proved the power of community action. This accomplishment, shared with our client, magnified the significance of success and brought new perspective both to me as an attorney and to the firm."

PRO BONO PARTNERS

Bingham McCutchen LLP
 Chadbourne & Parke LLP
 City Bar Justice Center
 Davis Polk & Wardwell
 Debevoise & Plimpton LLP
 Dewey Ballantine LLP
 DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary US LLP
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 Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP
 Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP
 Winston & Strawn LLP

DLA Piper



AFC is proud to report that AFC and Legal Services of New York received grants from the law firm of DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary (DLA Piper) to work with the firm on their Signature Pro Bono

Project for New York City. This project will address school safety issues such as school discipline and out-of-school youth with a focus on the strategies of direct service and policy change.

AFC has maintained its steady voice in the media by constantly reaching out on issues of urgent educational importance. As a result, in the past year, AFC reached millions of people in New York City, New York State, and nationally, appearing more than 125 times in a variety of print and electronic outlets, including: The New York Times, the New York Daily News, the New York Post, Newsday, The New York Sun, WABC, WNBC, WCBS, NY1, Spanish-language stations, and the online Gotham Gazette.

September 14, 2006. WNYC.
Advocates Say City Undercounts Homeless Kids. Executive Director Elisa Hyman interviewed about a recent report issued by AFC.

September 5, 2006.
The New York Times.
Back to School in a System Being Remade. Executive Director Elisa Hyman said that the Department of Education is doing some good things, but that parents still feel neglected.

August 31, 2006.
New York Daily News.
Klein: We gotta keep the rejects. Executive Director Elisa Hyman said it would be unfortunate if money that could be used for teachers was wasted on something else.

August 24, 2006.
New York Daily News.
Principals' New Power Launches. Inside Schools Deputy Director Pamela Wheaton said there is too much demand for a few popular schools and a big gap between the good and not-so-good schools.



AFC

in the Media

August 11, 2006.
The New York Sun.
City's Night School Program Permanent Snooze. Executive Director Elisa Hyman said she was happy that the city was tackling its night school program but suggested more oversight.

August 2, 2006.
New York Daily News.
Cutback on counselors. Executive Director Elisa Hyman said that the Education Department's reorganization of counselors could foster neglect.

August 1, 2006.
The Hollywood Reporter Esquire.
NY Attorneys Rally For Children (And Cupcakes). The Hollywood Reporter reported on the success of Advocates for Children's Summer Benefit.

July 26, 2006.
The New York Times.
In Kindergarten Playtime, A New Meaning for 'Play.' Inside Schools Director Clara Hemphill's article regarding the changing trends in the kindergarten curriculum.

June 30, 2006.
WNYC.
New Small Schools Still Have Few Special Ed Students. Executive Director Elisa Hyman said few students with disabilities are graduating.

June 22, 2006.
The New York Times.
School's Waning Days: A Focus on the Focus. Inside Schools Deputy Director Pamela Wheaton and Inside Schools are referenced in this article regarding the end of school.

June 18, 2006.
New York Daily News.
Schools take 16M hit. Executive Director Elisa Hyman said the denied funds could have been used to buy textbooks for 137,000 students or pay for after-school activities for more than 80,000 children.

June 5, 2005.
WNYC.
Disabling Diplomas: How NYC is Failing Its Special Education Students. Executive Director Elisa Hyman discusses low graduation rates for special education students in NYC and the limitations of alternative graduation certificates.

OVER ONE HALF OF THE SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NYC COME FROM HOMES WHERE ENGLISH IS NOT THE FIRST LANGUAGE.

AFC helped to establish a NYC DOE regulation requiring translation and interpretation of school-related documents for parents with limited English proficiency.

Did you know?



NEARLY 3 OUT OF 4 CHILDREN IN NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS QUALIFY FOR A FREE LUNCH.

AFC is currently working to ensure that students with disabilities who are placed in non-public schools have access to free meals.

STUDENTS IN NYC COME FROM HOMES WHERE OVER 150 LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN.

AFC distributed approximately 177,000 publications about school-related matters in languages tailored to the diverse student population in NYC.



IN 2004, 18% OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOSTER CARE MISSED AT LEAST ONE MONTH OF SCHOOL DUE TO CHANGES IN THEIR FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS.

NEW: AFC's Project Achieve works with child welfare agencies, foster parents, and parents to find the best educational solutions for students in foster care.

THERE ARE MORE THAN 1,400 PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN NYC SERVING ALMOST 1.1 MILLION STUDENTS.

Through our website, www.insideschools.org, AFC provides up-to-date, comprehensive information on all public schools in NYC. The website was featured in New York Magazine's Most Influential issue.



IN 2005, THERE WERE APPROXIMATELY 13,534 HOMELESS CHILDREN IN THE NYC SHELTER SYSTEM.

AFC operates a statewide technical assistance center funded by the NYS Education Department to train professionals about the educational rights of homeless students.

IN 2005, APPROXIMATELY 15% OF ALL NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS RECEIVED SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES.

Through our Parent Center, we have assisted more than 3,000 families with children with disabilities.



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