



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Advocates for Children of New York's Historical Timeline

1969-1979

Pioneers for Education Reform

- In 1969, a group of parents and community activists come together to form **Queens Lay Advocate Service (QLAS)**. This volunteer organization provides trainings on the legal rights of students and assists individual families with school-related problems, particularly inappropriate suspensions. QLAS partners with local anti-poverty organizations such as the **Education Action Center**.
- **Alternative Solutions for Exceptional Children (ASFEC)** is created to improve education and support services for young people with disabilities.
- ASFEC starts the **Martin de Porres Day Treatment Program and Group Home** for low-income children labeled emotionally disturbed whose parents had been unable to find appropriate education and related services to address their special needs. The school continues to serve these children today.
- A formal consortium develops among QLAS, the Education Action Center, and ASFEC. Together they publish "**Lost Children**," documenting the discriminatory education and support services provided to poor children of color with disabilities in New York City. A second study reveals that 50% of New York City students entering high school never graduate and that the drop outs are mainly poor youth of color who were either excluded from school or whose educational needs were never addressed.
- QLAS legally merges with ASFEC, and the organization adopts the name **Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)**.
- AFC launches a **Special Education Unit** and expands its advocacy staff to include counselors, attorneys, researchers, and trainers. Through this unit and its progeny, AFC has secured education and support services for over half a million students.
- AFC files as co-counsel the landmark case **Jose P. v. Ambach** to correct the process by which students awaiting special education evaluation and placement are considered. The **Jose P.** continues to have a profound impact on New York City schools.

- AFC is co-counsel in *Boe v. Board of Ed.*, documenting improper suspension of disabled and disadvantaged students and providing relief through remedial counseling and vocational programs.

1980-1990

- AFC establishes the **Parents Coalition for Education**, a citywide alliance of parents striving for school-based and systemic reforms to benefit public school children.
- AFC organizes and conducts a conference from the findings of AFC's report entitled, "**Our Children at Risk.**" The findings of the report are disseminated nationwide.
- AFC publishes "**Public High Schools: Private Admissions**" identifying rampant discrimination against Latino, African-American, and disabled youth in the high school admissions process.
- AFC conducts hearings on the status of immigrant children in the New York City schools.
- AFC wins its first in a continuing succession of federal parent center grants to train service providers and parents of children with disabilities to advocate for and protect the educational rights of these children.

1991- 2001

- In 1992, AFC publishes "**Segregated and Second Rate: Special Education in New York,**" continuing to document and verify the over-segregation of children and youth with disabilities receiving special education services.
- AFC joins co-counsel to bring *Ray M. v. NYC Board of Education and NYS Department of Education* on behalf of parents of preschool children with disabilities who have been denied their rights to an appropriate education under both federal and state law. The case settles in 1999, bringing relief to over 25,000 preschool children with disabilities.
- In 1995, AFC is chosen as the New York partner for the nationwide "**Mobilization for Equity and Excellence Project**" and promotes reform in low-performing schools through intensive bilingual training seminars to ensure parents know their rights.
- AFC partners with the New York Immigration Coalition on the "**Transforming Education for New York's Newest**" project, in order to address educational issues facing immigrant families.
- AFC helps create and house **The Least Restrictive Environment ("LRE") Coalition**, dedicated to advocating on behalf of children with disabilities and their families to enforce the integration requirements of state and federal law.
- AFC releases "**Educational Neglect: The Delivery of Education Services to Children in New York City's Foster Care System,**" which concludes that thousands (nearly 3,700 children) in NYC's foster care system are being denied basic educational services. The report, the first to document comprehensively the widespread lack of proper educational services for this population, has national implications.

- AFC starts its **Public Information Center** to help parents navigate the NYC public school system. AFC creates www.publicschoolreports.org (the predecessor of *InsideSchools.org*), which distills the Board of Ed's data on school achievement into a parent-friendly format and provides qualitative reviews on the most successful school programs.

2002- 2012

- AFC, in conjunction with the Public Advocate, releases ***"Pushing Out At-Risk Students: An Analysis of High School Discharge Figures,"*** exposing the problem of illegal discharge from NYC schools. This report and the trilogy of cases that AFC filed after it set off a firestorm around illegal school push outs and lead to important policy changes at the Department of Education.
- AFC and co-counsel file ***J.G. v. Mills***, on behalf of court-involved youth who were being denied timely re-enrollment to school upon release from a court-ordered setting.
- AFC releases a report documenting the success of **Project Achieve**, its model project to ensure that children in, or at-risk of, placement in foster care receive an appropriate education.
- AFC and co-counsel file ***L.V. v. Department of Education*** on behalf of parents of children with disabilities who had received favorable orders and settlements in impartial hearings that were not being fully and timely enforced.
- AFC makes its education advocacy skills and expertise available to select grantees of the Robin Hood Foundation in order to help them build capacity to address their clients' education-related needs.
- AFC is selected to be the **New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS)**, to provide training and support for school districts throughout the state to improve education for homeless children and youth.
- AFC starts the **ARISE Coalition**, bringing together a diverse group of parents, advocates and educators to provide a powerful and united voice on behalf of students with disabilities in New York City.
- AFC releases ***"Stuck in the Middle: The Problem of Overage Middle School Students in New York City,"*** profiling these overage students and drawing attention to the special needs of this population.
- AFC partners with Judge Judith Kaye and The NYS Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice for Children to host a ground-breaking symposium on keeping kids in schools and out of the courts. The symposium leads to the formation of a school – Justice Partnership Task Force to make recommendations for policy change in his area.
- AFC starts the **Special Education Monitoring Project**, mobilizing volunteers to track the experiences of students with special needs and their families during the initial weeks of school.
- AFC publishes an important paper on **SIFE** (Students with Interrupted Formal Education), documenting the failure of the education system to identify and ameliorate the significant literacy deficits and social/emotional needs of this immigrant student population.

- AFC's **Juvenile Justice Project** , originally begun in 2000, partners with the NYC Department of Probation to place an attorney on site in order to enhance the educational advocacy capacity for youth on probation and lower the incidence of parole violations on account of school-related issues.
- AFC helps form the Dignity in Schools Campaign New York, a coalition of students, parents, advocates, and educators. The Campaign uses diverse strategies to advocate for positive, school-wide approaches to discipline that improve school climate and increase learning.
- AFC launches a new effort to ensure that the state's emerging system for evaluating teachers and principals meets the needs of the students we serve.

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