

Unity Rally for Children Left Behind *Speak Out for Education*

Wednesday, May 21, 3 PM
The State House, Grand Staircase

Education reform in Massachusetts has been a manifest failure for many thousands of children, particularly children in poor urban communities, special needs children, and immigrant children, as evidenced by the increasing dropout rates in recent years. The emphasis on standardized testing both in No Child Left Behind and in Massachusetts education reform has driven out other approaches to closing the educational achievement gap. As a result of the pressures on school systems to raise test scores every year, thousands of students have been marginalized or lost, and practices that could help these children to succeed have been ignored or reversed. Teen Empowerment's recent publication, *Voices of Children Left Behind in Massachusetts Public Schools*, describes the problem, and a recent article by TE's executive director published in the Boston Globe proposes some solutions. Both of these pieces are accessible from Teen Empowerment's website, <http://teenempowerment.org/>.

We believe that the current state of our schools presents students' rights issues, workers' rights issues for teachers, and quality of life issues for families and for society at large. We want to shift the focus of activity in education from how to raise test scores to:

- how to provide adequate resources for all students,
- how to create an environment of respect for teachers, students, and parents within all our schools,
- how to ensure that our schools' curricula are focused on stimulating intellectual curiosity rather than on logging higher test scores,
- how to evaluate students' achievement based on multiple forms of assessment, as called for in the Education Reform Act of 1993, and
- how to implement common-sense solutions that will meet the needs of students and help them to gain the skills they need to be successful in life.

The purpose of the Unity Rally was to bring people together to start shifting the focus. With widespread support, we can make clear to our legislators that we want an education policy in this state that cares about all our children.

Sponsors of the Unity Rally:

The Center for Teen Empowerment, Massachusetts Teachers Association, American Federation of Teachers, Boston Teachers Union, Citizens for Public Schools, Boston Student Advisory Council, American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, MIRA Coalition (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy), FairTest (National Center for Fair and Open Testing), Stand for Children, Massachusetts Afterschool Partnership, and Massachusetts PTA