



# Education Advocate Newsletter

May 2008

## In This Issue:

- Pre-Kindergarten: A State Mandate and ACLU Action
- Safe and Supportive Schools: Family and Community Conversations
- Grant Available Soon for Community-Based Organizations
- Support Student Jobs in the Knowledge-Based Economy
- A Discussion on Drug Policy and Education

## Pre-Kindergarten: A State Mandate and ACLU Action

The ACLU has been actively working with the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS), the Maryland State Department of Education and other local school systems statewide to advocate the importance of meeting the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act mandate for pre-Kindergarten. The law states that all public school systems must provide at least a half-day of pre-kindergarten to low-income and homeless four year-olds (must be 4 years old by Sept. 1st). The ACLU is working to ensure that all eligible children are provided seats and the systems are in compliance with the law.

If there are any questions or concerns about enrolling an eligible child, contact BCPSS at 410.396.6602 or your county's Office of Early Learning. If there are problems accessing this service for an eligible child, contact the ACLU at 410.889.8555 for assistance.

## Safe and Supportive Schools: Family and Community Conversations

The Baltimore City Public School System is holding 3 meetings to get community input and discuss ideas to address their revised policy on student discipline. The topics that will be covered are as follows:

1. Code of Conduct: clear, consistent expectations
2. Early intervention for students
3. New school options for students

Tuesday, June 3, 2008  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
Digital Harbor High School  
1100 Covington St.; 21230

Thursday, June 5, 2008  
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.  
Mergenthaler High School  
3500 Hillen Road; 21218

Saturday, June 7, 2008

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.

Frederick Douglass High School  
2301 Gwynns Falls Parkway; 21217

All members of the public are welcome. Schools are encouraged to send a team of parent/community representatives to attend a session. For more information call or email: BCPSS, 410.396.8672 or 410.545.1870

## Grant Available Soon for Community-Based Organizations

Currently, Baltimore City's school system is limited in its ability to leverage existing relationships and organizing capacities among the city's rich network of community-based organizations. The network of relationships that these groups can mobilize is a powerful resource for our schools and can complement school activities in new and effective ways. The Baltimore City Public School System is going to provide a grant to community organizations to increase parent and community participation to address these issues:

- Improve student academic success
- Increase parent participation and form new PTA groups
- Increase enrollment of Free and Reduced Meal students
- Ensure students and parents understand school choice and college access
- Increase student attendance by direct outreach to families
- Establish/reinforce school safety strategies
- Support school strategy to develop external partnerships

Applicants may apply for a partnership with one school or a cluster of schools. Grant requests must not exceed an estimated average of \$12,000 per school served. Funding is contingent upon availability and qualifications.

Call BCPSS at 410.545.1870 for more information. By mid-June, the Request for Proposal will be formally released and online at <http://www.bcps.k12.md.us/>

## Support Student Jobs in the Knowledge-Based Economy

Peer-to-Peer Enterprises has asked the Mayor for \$3 million in the city budget for their programs. These programs would create 700-1,000 youth jobs in the knowledge-based economy and the goal is both to create youth employment and to develop the city's human capital. Some of these well-established groups include the Algebra Project, the Baltimore Urban Debate League, and Kids on the Hill, which provide a range of services to teens such as Algebra tutoring, training in film/media work, and developing skills in debating. Please phone Mayor Dixon at 410-396-3835 to ask her to support this needed program.

Mayor's Night-In, Monday, June 2, 6pm at the War Memorial Plaza (500E. Fayette St.) \* There will be a panel discussion on youth issues and initiatives. Come out to advocate with students for their program.

For more info contact Chris Goodman, 443.957.5346 or [chris\\_byc@yahoo.com](mailto:chris_byc@yahoo.com)

## A Discussion on Drug Policy and Education

Breaking the Chains by Making Connections  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Conference: War on Drugs  
June 5-6, 2008  
The Baltimore Convention Center

Local and national advocacy groups and activists will convene in Baltimore to talk about how we can “BREAK THE CHAINS” of thinking about substance abuse, crime, punishment, treatment and alternatives to current drug policy. There will be a panel discussion on how the education system interrelates with these issues on Friday, June 6, noon-2pm. The panel includes:

Judith Brown-Dianmis, the Advancement Project  
Adrian Codette, School Success Teacher  
Vivian Nixon, College and Community Fellowship  
Jonathan Brice, Baltimore City Public School System  
Fanon Hill, Safe and Sound Campaign  
Rebecca Atafou, Afterschool Institute

For more information on the other conference sessions, visit [www.breakchains.org](http://www.breakchains.org), email [conference@breakchains.org](mailto:conference@breakchains.org), or call 410.837.3885

### Education Reform Project Staff

Bebe Verdery, Education Reform Director  
410.889.8550 x 106  
[verdery@aclu-md.org](mailto:verdery@aclu-md.org)

JaCina Stanton, Education Reform Advocate  
410.889.8550 x 134  
[stanton@aclu-md.org](mailto:stanton@aclu-md.org)

Frank Patinella, Education Reform Advocate  
410.889.8550 x 123  
[patinella@aclu-md.org](mailto:patinella@aclu-md.org)

American Civil Liberties Union of Maryland | 3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 350 | Baltimore, MD 21211  
410.889.8555 (o) | 410.366.7838 (f) | [patinella@aclu-md.org](mailto:patinella@aclu-md.org) | [www.aclu-md.org](http://www.aclu-md.org)



