

*The Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia's 3rd Annual Symposium on Equality*

**A Quality Public Education for All—the Uses of Law to Translate Theory into Practice**

**Thursday, September 30, 2010**

**The Arch Street Meeting House**

4th and Arch Streets, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Register online at <http://pilcopsymposium2010.eventbrite.com/>

**Registration and Continental Breakfast** (8:30 – 9:00 am)

**Welcome and introductions** (9:00 – 9:10 am) Donald K. Joseph, *Symposium Chair and Visiting Associate Professor, Rutgers School of Law, Camden*

**SESSION I: The legal framework for understanding public education issues.** (9:10 – 9:45 am)

Much of what happens in classrooms—and who is there—is shaped by federal and state law and cases. This session will provide a broad overview of the relevant laws and how they influence schools and children: No Child Left Behind, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title I, Keystone exams, laws permitting fines and prison for truancy, safety/zero tolerance policies.

- Len Rieser, *Executive Director, Education Law Center*
- Michael Churchill, *Of Counsel, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia*

**SESSION II: What can we learn from the Chicago School Research about what it takes to produce a quality public education that leads to high performance among students in racially isolated high poverty schools? If we know how, why is it so hard to accomplish?** (9:45 – 11:15 am)

In an era of renewed focus on teaching quality, laws imposing tests and test scores, Penny Bender-Sebring, Co-founder of the Consortium on Chicago School Research and co-author of *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago* describes this important research. Then we invite two prominent educators and scholars to bring their experience to bear to answer the hard questions of why, if we know what to do, so many districts fail to create quality education; and what has worked to achieve successes?

**Introduction:** Michael Churchill, *Of Counsel, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia*

**Speaker:** Penny Bender-Sebring, *co-Founder of Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago and co-author **Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago***

**Commentators:**

- James H. (Torch) Lytle. *Former Superintendent of Trenton Public Schools and Practice Professor at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education*
- Deborah Meier, *senior scholar and adjunct professor, New York University's [Steinhardt School of Education](#), Board member and director of New Ventures at [Mission Hill](#), director and advisor to [Forum for Democracy](#) and Education, and on the Board of [The Coalition of Essential Schools](#)*

**Break** (11:15 - 11:30 am)

**SESSION III: Has “special education” lost its way? Can it be solved and how?** (11:30 am - 12:45 pm)

The vision of children with disabilities studying side by side with other children, with all children accessing learning is still far from being a reality. Instead, we are faced with the misuse of disability labels and over-diagnosis of African American children; we are faced with children with disabilities being

dumped into regular classrooms without support or teacher training and large percentages of children still sitting in separate classrooms or special schools.

**Moderator: Sonja Kerr, Director, Disabilities Rights Project, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia**

- Martin Elks, *Chair, Bureau Director's Advisory Panel on Least Restrictive Environment*
- Umar Abdullah-Johnson, *Nationally Certified School Psychologist, specializing in educational and school psychology, diagnosing and treating educational disabilities in African-American children*
- Dr. Theresa Perry, *professor of Africana Studies and Education, Simmons College in Boston; Co-Author/Editor of 'Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students,' 'The Real Ebonics Debate' and other publications*

**Lunch** (12:45 – 1:15 pm)

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS: What is Washington doing and does it help or hurt?** (1:15 -2:00 pm)

Warren Simmons, *Director, Annenberg Institute for School Reform, Brown University*

**Introduction: Adam H. Cutler, Director, Public Health and Environmental Justice Clinic, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia**

**SESSION IV: How do our educational institutions lose children? Can this be stopped, how, and what are the roles of lawyers in doing so?** (2:00 – 3:15 pm)

Laws that address school safety, racial tension, discipline, truancy and high stakes testing don't necessarily help children learn and instead can become vehicles for institutions to eliminate children who are difficult or different. It is important to understand how this dynamic works and then explore what we can do to eliminate it.

**Moderator: Jennifer Clarke, Executive Director, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia**

- Kay Kyungsun Yu, *Chair, Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations*
- David Lapp, *Staff Attorney, Education Law Center*
- Courtney Collins Shapiro, *Deputy Chief Innovation Officer, Mastery Charter Schools; Formerly Director, Office of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, School District of Philadelphia*
- Branden Williams, *Student Leader, Youth United for Change—Push Out program*

**Break** (3:15 - 3:30 pm)

**SESSION V: What are the priorities for the solutions discussed? Is there anything The Law Center or attendees can do to move these forward, and if so, what?** (3:30 - 4:15 pm)

Many problems have been explored and solutions proposed. But the Law Center is more than just a think tank – it is an organization devoted to systemic change. Can the solutions be prioritized into ones that the Law Center or others its orbit can do and if so, what and how?

**Discussion Leaders**

- Brian Armstead, *Director, Civic Engagement, Philadelphia Education Fund*
- Amanda Broun, *Senior Vice-President, Public Education Network*
- Jennifer R. Clarke, *Executive Director, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia*

**Closing Remarks** (4:15 – 4:30 pm) Donald K. Joseph, *Symposium Chair and Visiting Associate Professor, Rutgers School of Law, Camden*

*CLE Credit /6.0*

*(Transition to Down Town Club for Thaddeus Stevens Award Dinner)*