

# Facing the Challenge

A NEWSLETTER BY **maaps** TO INFORM YOU AND TO CELEBRATE OUR STUDENTS

## Timmy

“Timmy has come so far,” says his mother, Donna Lynsky. “It was so frustrating for us when we couldn’t communicate with him. Now we cry with happiness because we can’t believe we can have a conversation with our son.”

Eight-year-old Timmy is a student in the Deafblind Program at Perkins School for the Blind. According to Timmy’s teacher, Liz Pike, he has a list of more than 50 expressive signs that he uses appropriately and consistently. Moreover, Timmy is a delight to have in the classroom he shares with two other students and staff.



*Teacher Elizabeth Pike and Aide Betsy Delorenzo of the Perkins School for the Blind providing sign language instruction for Timmy and fellow student Amrita Plante.*

**“There was a time when we didn’t know if Timmy would be able to breathe or walk, and now we’re working on his educational goals!”**

“His presence is so vibrant and he has a great smile and giggle. He’s active, curious and always ready to learn,” says Ms. Pike, citing a recent field trip to the fire station where he climbed up into the fire truck and put on his seatbelt without prompting. Timmy was born with CHARGE Syndrome. CHARGE is an acronym for a variety of physical, medical and development conditions. He is profoundly deaf with no central vision and a multitude of medical issues ranging from the inability to swallow to heart defects. Because of his medical condition, a nurse accompanies him to school. Born with a club foot and no ankle bone, his right foot was amputated

so that Timmy could be fitted with a prosthesis, enabling him to walk and run.

“We don’t focus on what Timmy doesn’t have, but on what he’s able to do with what he has,” his father,

### *About Facing the Challenge*

Facing the Challenge is published by the Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools (**maaps**) which represents 93 private day and residential schools approved by the Massachusetts Department of Education to provide highly specialized education and treatment services to over 6,000 of the state’s most disabled and disadvantaged students. For more information, contact **maaps** at 781-245-1220.

Mark Lynsky, explains. "There was a time when we didn't know if Timmy would be able to breathe or walk, and now we're working on his educational goals!"

Computer teacher Wendy Buckley is one of many professionals who work with Timmy including teachers, aides, physical, occupational, and speech and language therapists, and an orientation and mobility specialist. She's known Timmy since he first came to pre-school as a three-year-old.

"Being here at Perkins has opened up his world and helped guide him through its expansion," she says. "I think of all the obstacles this little boy has overcome and he keeps going and persevering. He's so feisty and happy. You enjoy being with him."

His mother attributes Timmy's progress to "a team effort," noting that his parents, nurses, teachers and town have all contributed to his success. "School plays such a big role. We're forever indebted to Perkins because he's so amazing."

### *Increasing Revenue, Cutting Costs and Being Fair*

In the current fiscal year 2004, tuition rates for C766 approved private special education schools have been frozen by the state. Despite the freeze, costs for schools still went up. Health insurance went up 18%. Liability insurance went up 12%. Inflation increased the costs for food, utilities, rent and other essential operating expenses. What didn't go up were salaries for child care workers and teachers, even though teachers in private special education schools make 40% less than public school teachers. Our teachers must meet the same certification requirements as public school teachers and they educate the most disabled students in the state. It is just not fair!

This year, **maaps** is sponsoring legislation to increase tuition rates by the rate of inflation and to pay for the increase by maximizing Medicaid

revenue and cutting costs in special education transportation. Massachusetts has one of the worst programs for Medicaid reimbursements in the country and our member schools and public school districts are losing money. Special education transportation is riddled with costly duplication because there is no coordination of transportation planning and contracting. **maaps** is calling for legislative study commissions to maximize Medicaid reimbursements for special education and to cut costs in special education transportation through coordinated planning and contracting.

Let's be fair to the teachers, professionals and child care staff of C766 approved private special education schools. The state asks them to educate and care for the most demanding students and yet pays these valuable staff members the least. Increase tuition rates for private special education schools so they can increase salaries. The money is there to pay for the rate increases by maximizing Medicaid revenue and cutting costly duplication in transportation.



**maaps**

**Massachusetts Association of 766  
Approved Private Schools**

Phone: 781-245-1220 ■ FAX 781-245-5294 ■ TTY: 781-245-5145  
maaps@spedschools.com

4 Lakeside Office Park ■ 591 North Avenue ■ Wakefield, MA 01880-1302