

Facing the Challenge

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

Sammy

Sammy arrived at the Latham Centers in the fall of 2003. She was a 13-year-old girl, weighing only 80 lbs., who came to Latham with a history of acting out and a troubled and unfortunate young life. She appeared fragile and lost.

During her first weeks, Sammy would sit rocking and screaming on the floor after a violent episode. She was inconsolable. I noticed that she sat on her haunches, with her legs tightly pulled into her chest. As her teacher, I would find out later in the classroom that

“...working with her was like watching a beautiful butterfly emerging from her cocoon.”

she often preferred to sit like that. Her class was working on a nature unit some months after she arrived. Sammy took on the responsibility of feeding the birds which came to the bird feeders at the windows. She let herself nurture the birds and also be nurtured by that experience. A curious student, Sammy loved weather but was terrified of thunderstorms. After studying all aspects of weather phenomena, she gained more confidence and now can cope with the occasional severe storm.

In therapy, initially Sammy said she would stay “for just 4 minutes – with the door open”. During her early days at Latham, Sammy would yell and cry when she could not have what she wanted “right now”. As Sammy worked in therapy, starting out slowly and focusing more as she went along, she learned to take responsibility for outbursts.

Now she does not need her 4 minute limit in therapy or an open door. In vocational work, she has worked up from pre-vocational classes to



The mask that Sammy made.

volunteer positions to a paid job in the community. Since she arrived, Sammy has grown tremendously.

About Facing the Challenge

Facing the Challenge is published by the Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools (**maaps**) which represents 96 member corporations operating 180 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.

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Latham's nurses monitored her weight gain with the promise of a special class party when she reached 100 lbs. She had her class party weighing 100 lbs only 12 weeks after the weight gain program started!

Although her family was in another state, connections were re-established. Beth Conway, Sammy's therapist,

sums it up. "Sammy created a mask in Art Therapy. She titled it, "You're Beautiful, no matter what the boys say about you"! Her creative process expresses her new self esteem and pride".

Sammy no longer sits with her knees tightly pulled up to her chest. Now she stands up straight and tall!

Stop the FY '08 Tuition Rate Freeze

C766 approved private schools educate over 6,000 public students with disabilities. Our students have some of the most extensive special needs of all children in the Commonwealth. On February 7, 2007, the Operational Services Division (OSD), which sets the C766 school tuition rates, promulgated a 3.07% inflation tuition increase for FY '08. On February 28th, the FY '08 budget announced by the Patrick Administration proposed a freeze of the inflation increase in Outside Section 50. The proposed freeze would also freeze any tuition rate adjustments authorized under OSD policies for school staff salary upgrades and school program restructuring.

The Freeze Impact

The freeze will increase the disparity of educational opportunity and unequal treatment faced by our students.

The freeze will make it impossible for our schools to hire qualified staff to instruct our public students.

The freeze will cause more of our teachers to quit their jobs. Our schools already lose 37% of their teachers a year. The freeze will increase this unacceptable level of staff turnover.

The \$20,000 a year teacher salary gap between our schools and public schools will get much worse.

40% of our teachers and professional staff are not licensed or certified because our salaries are not competitive with public schools.

The freeze will deprive our public students of current textbooks, libraries and science labs. Only 25% of our schools have libraries, only 12% have science labs and 40% do not have current textbooks.

The public students in our member schools deserve to be treated fairly and given teachers, professional staff and educational resources comparable to those enjoyed by students in public schools. Please do not support the Patrick Administration's proposed tuition rate freeze.

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