

SPEDWatch eliminates membership fees

AUGUST 6, 2009 – SPEDWatch, the non-profit organization that is fighting for the educational rights of schoolchildren with disabilities, today announced that it has eliminated its membership fees.



When SPEDWatch formed in January 2006 it charged its members a \$45 annual fee. In 2008 it introduced memberships at \$10, \$25, and \$50

levels.

Today's switch to free memberships is a straightforward strategic decision according to SPEDWatch founder and Executive Director, Ellen Chambers.

"SPEDWatch is an activist social change movement built around the techniques of nonviolent direct action used by the civil rights leaders of America's last century," Chambers says. "Our goal is to end widespread noncompliance with special education laws so that every child with a disability can receive the education to which they are legally and morally entitled.

"We are realists," Chambers continues. "We do not wield political or economic power. Our power comes from our numbers. There are at least 400,000 people in Massachusetts who are parenting a school age child with special needs. These children also have extended family members, teachers, and doctors who care deeply about their well-being. We will be successful to the degree that we can weave together all these people into one cohesive voice for change. Eliminating membership fees will greatly increase our membership numbers."

The group's most recent use of its power-in-numbers strategy resulted in a private meeting with Governor Deval Patrick.

"Last summer, and again this summer, the Governor has held town hall style meetings around the state to dialogue informally with citizens about their concerns. SPEDWatch members have been very vocal at these meetings. There was simply no way the Governor could ignore us because we were so present and persistent. Finally, he offered to meet with us privately in his State House office."

SPEDWatch members receive the quarterly SPEDWatch newsletter and access to a content rich members only discussion forum. Call 978-433-5983 or go to www.spedwatch.org for more information.