

## Channel 5 gets it right!

### Parent outcry heard



BOSTON - On November 16, 2007 WCVB TV 5's Chronicle show aired a segment on special education, focusing on the *parents'* perspective and experiences in the Massachusetts special education system. The impetus for the show was an outpouring of criticism from SPEDWatch parents to an earlier Channel 5 two-part investigative report titled Rising Special Ed Costs Place Heavy Burdens.

“What spurred the idea was a reaction to a report our news department did on Special Ed a few months ago,” said Chronicle producer Debra Shapiro. “The promotion for the report caused a lot of consternation from viewers because it alluded to special education taking away from regular ed students. Our general manager wanted to present a more comprehensive picture than was possible in a short news report and asked if we'd do it for Chronicle.”

After the September 2007 broadcast of the Rising Special Ed Costs Place Heavy Burdens report SPEDWatch's parent membership

flooded Channel 5 with emails and phone calls complaining that the show perpetuated many misconceptions about special education that typify the mainstream media's treatment of the topic. SPEDWatch Executive Director Ellen Chambers spoke with Channel 5 and insisted that they tell the other side of the story: the parents' side.

“We were delighted that Channel 5 responded positively to our request for equal air time,” said Chambers. “I believe they did a very good job of presenting the issues in a much more balanced manner than we typically see in the media. Above all else, I am thrilled that SPEDWatch members spoke up, were heard, and got results. This is a perfect example of the power of non-violent direct action, a strategy SPEDWatch will employ from time to time when necessary to advance our mission to secure the educational rights of schoolchildren with disabilities.”

SPEDWatch, Inc. is a grassroots, non-profit, civil rights movement fighting to secure the educational rights of all Massachusetts schoolchildren with disabilities (ages 3-21.)