

## SPEDWatch meets with Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria

On November 21<sup>st</sup> SPEDWatch Executive Director Ellen Chambers met with the Governor's Special Advisor on Education, Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria. Also attending were Carla Jentz, Executive Director of the professional organization Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education, and Sydney Asbury, Executive Director of the Governor's Readiness Project<sup>1</sup>.

"Although these people do not work for the Massachusetts Department of Education (MASSDE) and thus cannot directly order MASSDE to take any specific action, they do hold positions which exert considerable influence over the direction educational policy takes in the Commonwealth," said Chambers.



**Dr. Dana Mohler-Faria, Governor Deval Patrick's Special Advisor for Education with SPEDWatch Executive Director Ellen Chambers.**

"They listened attentively while I explained that Massachusetts students with special needs, 16% of our student population, are failing in numbers far out of proportion to their abilities because their educational rights are routinely violated by our public schools," Chambers continued. "I stressed that the Governor's vision for education will never be realized if it embraces only 84% of our students, and that it will not include all children until Massachusetts makes a serious commitment to its students with special needs."

Mohler-Faria, a member of the Readiness Project Leadership Council, assured Chambers that the issue of noncompliance would be addressed in the final Readiness Project report, and referred the matter to the Project's Whole Child subcommittee, which was co-chaired by Jentz.

[Editorial Update (June 2008): The issue of noncompliance was not addressed in the final Readiness Project report. A member of the Whole Child Subcommittee commented: "The specific concern about non-compliance seems to be beyond the scope of our Whole Child subcommittee work." SPEDWatch received no explanation beyond this.]

<sup>1</sup> The Readiness Project was a statewide initiative involving over 200 educators, business leaders, and community leaders who led the development of a 10-year strategic plan for the future of education in the Commonwealth.