

## Commonwealth Children's Center achieves highest level of Massachusetts accreditation

By Dan Murphy

The Commonwealth Children's Center recently granted the highest level of the Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), making it the first early care and education or after-school program in metro Boston to achieve this designation to date.

"It's an enormous achievement," said Beth Sagan, executive director of the 32-year-old early childhood education program for infants to 5-year-olds, based at One Ashburton Place. "We have an amazing staff and a very supportive parent community."

Piloted in 2011, QRIS is "system for supporting increased quality in early education and care and out-of-school time settings across Massachusetts...[that] provides supports to educators and programs for achieving higher expectations, including financial incentives and technical assistance," according to Kathleen Hart, director of communications and internal affairs for the state's Department of Early Education and Care.

The system defines standards of quality for programs at four levels, with Level One being the lowest and Level Four the highest. It is based on five categories, including Curriculum and Learning; Safe, Healthy Indoor and Outdoor Environments; Workforce Development and Professional Qualifications; Family and Community Engagement; and Leadership, Administration and Management.

All schools licensed by the Center for Department of Education are automatically assessed at Level 1, but further criteria must be fulfilled to reach subsequent levels, and each rating is valid for two years from the issuance date.

To apply, programs must submit a self-assessment of their quality level with supporting documentation before completing a verification of this information through one of the department's Program Quality Specialists. The program must then complete an on-site environment review by a certified evaluator ("reliable rater") and receive a successful

rating. The department partners with the Wellesley Centers for Women (WCW) in using reliable raters certified by the Environment Rating Scales Institute.

"High quality early education and care opportunities provide children with a strong foundation for learning and academic achievement," stated Tom Weber, the state's commissioner of early education and care. "By supporting our programs in attaining high levels of quality, the Quality Rating and Improvement System is a key tool in preparing our young learners for a lifetime of success."

Meanwhile, Sagan said the Commonwealth Children's Center has every intention of applying for the QRIS's planned Level 5 once it's online.

"We want parents to understand what quality looks like," Sagan said.

To learn more about the Commonwealth Children's Center, call 617-727-4802 or visit [www.commchildcenter.com](http://www.commchildcenter.com).



Beth Sagan, executive director of the Commonwealth Children's Center.

## Livingstone launches newsletter and constituent Web site

State Rep. Jay Livingstone, who represents Back Bay, Beacon Hill, and the West End in Boston and Cambridgeport and parts of Kendall Square/MIT in Cambridge, launched his own constituent newsletter and Web site last Monday.

The newsletter and Web site, both titled the "Livingstone Dispatch," are intended to connect people in the 8th Suffolk District community with what the representative is doing in the State House and what is happening in the State House and in the district.

Livingstone plans to release the Newsletter on a regular basis, as well as provide more regular updates on specific issues for constituents who request it in an effort to personalize the interaction. The inaugural edition of the Dispatch includes what Livingstone accomplished last session, what legislation he has filed for this current session, committee assignments, an announcement regarding his summer internship program and his upcoming office hours in the neighborhoods of the district. Anyone can sign up for the newsletter through the new Web site.

The site ([www.livingstonedispatch.com](http://www.livingstonedispatch.com)) will host the most

immediate updates regarding legislation and other relevant information. A notable feature of the website includes a public calendar where constituents can get a sense of what public meetings Livingstone plans to attend and when they can arrange to meet with him during his monthly office hours in each unique neighborhood in the district.

"I want to keep people better informed about what is happening in the district, as well as what I am doing in the State House to advocate for constituents' needs," Livingstone said. "Additionally, I

want to provide a better platform for my constituents to voice their concerns and give feedback. The website and newsletter creates this opportunity for dialogue and I am looking forward to seeing how it can further enrich my relationship with the 8th Suffolk District."

Any questions regarding the Livingstone Dispatch can be answered by Caitlin Duffy, the representative's legislative aide, via e-mail ([Caitlin.Duffy@MAHouse.gov](mailto:Caitlin.Duffy@MAHouse.gov)) or by telephone (617-722-2011).

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