



## Sasha Wilson '84

### Co-founder, Bronx Community Impact Charter School

In a year of many changes, Sasha Wilson and his partner, Kendra Sibley, welcomed their first baby, Delphinium, into the world last March. At the same time, Sasha and Kendra are deep in the planning of Bronx Community Impact Charter School, a new K–8 school in their Bronx neighborhood that will open in Fall 2008. As a school founded on MCS' principle that “children learn best when they are active participants in their own learning,” BCICS's mission statement declares: “All members of our school community will be committed to making thoughtful choices, advancing democratic values, and effecting change in the broader community.” Working closely with colleagues, parents, and local organizations, Sasha and Kendra have formed a board of trustees, including MCS upper school director Cynthia Rogers, and have already garnered donations to support their work.

Sasha began his career working for Senators Paul Simon and Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, but soon switched from politics to education. He served as a VISTA volunteer for the Ravenswood “I Have a Dream” project, in which he worked with eighty third-graders chosen to receive college scholarships, continuing his connection with them over ten years. He also travelled to Nicaragua, accompanied by his sister Elizabeth (MCS '87), to help former MCS Spanish teacher Alejandro Obando start the Los Chavalitos farm school, where he returned to teach for six summers.

Sasha received an M.S.Ed. from Bank Street College and went to teach at the Bronx New School/PS 51, a parent-founded public school with a commitment to racial diversity and child-centered education. Because of his innovative approach, he was chosen to participate in a think tank at the University of Iowa on elementary school-level social justice teaching. His work is highlighted in a new book, *Social Studies for Social Justice: Teaching Strategies for the Elementary Classroom*, by Rahima Wade. Sasha's second and third grade students sing songs, write plays, participate in rallies to preserve community gardens or increase educational funding, interview seniors and organize to change the recess policies of their school—the connections to MCS are clear.

Sasha's memories of MCS range from block-building with Lois Gelernt to working with 4- and 5-year-olds as a seventh grader in child development class, to reading *A People's History of the United States* alongside a traditional textbook in Chris Iijima's sixth grade class. "Even more than the individual memories, though, I carry the feeling of MCS with me. There is such a respectfulness with which adults speak to and listen to children, a sense of purpose that permeates the school, a focus on collaboration, a view of children that encompasses and engages with their social, emotional, and moral development, and not just their academic strengths and needs. MCS graduates people to be proud of, and I am always impressed with alumni, both young and old."

Sasha carries his MCS roots with him as he embarks on his next adventure: "Our school will have much of MCS in it, and I am thrilled to be a part of carrying forward the public mission which is at its core."

*We must support young people who are coming up in a day and age when there is not a groundswell behind them. They are swimming upstream, and they have important goals to achieve.*

Michèle Solá (2002)