



**Project Appleseed™**  
the national campaign for  
public school improvement

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**Project Appleseed**  
St. Louis, Missouri

January 7, 2009

Mr. Rahm Emanuel  
Chief of Staff Designate

Mr. Arne Duncan  
Secretary of Education Designate

Mr. John Podesta  
Co-Chairman of the Transition Team  
Office of President-Elect Barack Obama  
Washington D.C. 20270

**RE: Organized Parental Involvement In Public Schools**

Gentlemen:

Now, perhaps more than at any time since the American Revolution, America can see the power that is wielded when people organize and work together for change. It is a power whose time has come for America's schools.

Recent education reform efforts have overwhelmingly focused on schools and educators, neglecting one of the most significant resources in the entire process: parents. Tragically, parent involvement is often an afterthought in the school reform debate in this nation, or worse. During the Bush administration, significant gains made in parental involvement have been eviscerated, as parents are now encouraged to make their primary "involvement" simply the rejection or abandonment of so-called failing schools. Meanwhile a fundamental truth is being neglected: Parents represent a key to making schools better in the first place.

How much better? Consider this: Parental involvement in America could almost double the resources available to our schools. What's more, we know parental involvement works.

**The Challenge:**

Project Appleseed seeks to increase the nation's family involvement capacity - a multi-billion dollar resource. If 100 million parents, grandparents, and caring adults volunteered 10 hours in America's public schools each year, they would contribute one billion man hours - critical to increasing student achievement for the nation's 50 million K-12 students.

**The Potential:**

Financially, if teachers dedicated similar time one-on-one with their students, the minimum dollar benefit to children and schools would be \$34 billion. That almost matches the \$37 billion spent by the federal government on all public schools - including ESEA Title I, IDEA, Improving Teacher Quality, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, English Language Learners and Impact Aid.

**Legislative Background:**

This grassroots concept for enhancing schools has important legislative history. In 1994, Project Appleseed helped to make parental involvement a part of education policy. That year, Congress passed the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Title I of the ESEA includes an emphasis on parental involvement. Also that year, Congress passed the Goals 2000: Education America Act, establishing parental participation as the eighth goal of the national education goals. Additionally, the Department of Education established the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education to encourage businesses, community and religious organizations, families, and schools to support parent and employee involvement in education.

During this process, I and my Project Appleseed co-founder, Michael Donovan, advised Dr. William Galston, Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy, during the first Clinton Administration, on the original parental involvement provisions of Section 1118 of the reauthorization of Title I. We helped the administration pioneer the development and use of pledges or learning compacts and the parental involvement rights and responsibilities under the Act.

#### **Key to Success:**

Pledges and compacts are the key to parental involvement success. Pledges and compacts mean the difference between a goal and real change. It is time to take the parental involvement goals in our federal legislation and give them the support they need to transform our schools.

I respectfully offer the following recommendations to the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Project on Organized Parental Involvement In Public Schools:

- President-Elect Obama must now quantify his campaign call for parental responsibility by leading and funding a nationwide campaign to **recruit and organize 10 million new parent and family volunteers** - by use of pledges and compacts - each year for the next five years. This is quantifiable and measurable involvement.
- Support grants and **incentives to states and local districts that use pledges** or learning compacts to enlist parent volunteers as mandated in NCLB, Title I, Section 1118.
- **Fund 47,000 parent liaison positions in local schools through the use of increased Title I funds.** Professionally trained parent liaisons recruit and organize volunteers, help implement parent pledges and compacts throughout the year, organize activities that increase engagement between the school and community and promote activities that promote family literacy. The local school district would hire the liaisons and their training can be facilitated quickly through state PIRC's (Parent Information Resource Centers).
- Project Appleseed endorses the recommendation of the bipartisan independent effort to improve NCLB, the Commission on No Child Left Behind, **to empower parents and concerned citizens with the ability to enforce the law.** Unfortunately, many of NCLB's key provisions, especially those directly affecting parents and students, are not strongly implemented. States and the United States Department of Education should set a administrative complaint process for parents and concerned citizens to seek better and more full implementation of NCLB, Title I, Section 1118. Individuals would have the ability to take their case to state court. The only available remedy would be requiring implementation of the provision in question, not financial damages.
- Provide **a \$100 tax credit to employers** for each employee that volunteers a minimum of 10 hours of company time in local schools.
- Support **additional funding for federally funded PIRC's** - Parent Information Resource Centers - for parent organizing, education and training.

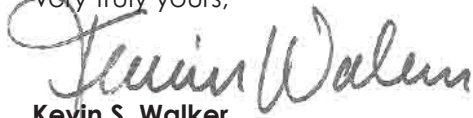
#### **Economic Stimulus / NCLB Renewal Funding Request \$1.8 billion**

- **Relaunch the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education with \$100 million in new funding and focus.** The Partnership was created by Secretary Richard Riley in 1994 to provide national leadership in parental involvement and was deactivated by the Bush Administration. The Partnership can coordinate a pledge driven, national, state and local school-to-home and door-to-door family capacity building efforts, provide grant funding and engage a variety of organizations in the Department's parental involvement campaign. These organizations include national, state and local grassroots groups. Partnership operational efforts should resemble the GOTV or Get Out the Vote efforts seen in statewide political campaigns. Average costs per state is projected at \$2 million or \$100 million in national funding.
- **Create 47,000 parent liaison positions in all Title I eligible schools at an average yearly salary of \$35,000 per year at a cost of \$1.645 billion.** A Local Education Agency (LEA) or school district reserves one percent of its Title I allocation for parental involvement activities. Project Appleseed proposes dramatically increased funding for parental involvement under the LEA Grant program. This effort would create high impact jobs in half of America's schools and communities.
- **Project Appleseed supports the 2008 PTA National Legislative Conference PIRC funding proposal of \$86 million.** The Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) program provides grants to non-profit organizations to establish school-linked and school-based information and resource centers supporting more effective parental involvement in their children's education. Thirty percent of PIRC funding is reserved to help implement the Parents as Teachers Program (PAT), which focuses on pre- and post-natal training for parents. PIRCs are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The PIRC program has recently undergone a substantial reorganization at the Department of Education, expanding the role of PIRCs to act as state-wide centers for leadership, technical support, and financial support for parent involvement. A substantial increase from \$38 million in FY 2008 in funding to \$86 million for FY 2009 is needed to effectively implement the expanded and critical role PIRCs play.

- **Establish a \$100.00 per employee federal tax credit for employers of public school volunteers.** To enable the tax credit to function effectively and to insure the continuous improvement of public schools, a \$100 per active public school volunteer federal tax credit to employers, who permit their active school volunteers to leave work for a minimum of 10 hours and continue to pay their wage or salary, without any deductions for time spent away from work.

This is a challenging time for our nation's schools. But if we apply the same grassroots spirit we saw door to door and person to person during this presidential campaign, there is no doubt our schools will be transformed. Parental involvement works. Now is the time to leave no parent behind. Please contact me directly should you have questions about organizing parental involvement in America's public schools.

Very truly yours,



**Kevin S. Walker**  
President & National Director

This recommendation has been provided to:

Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Project  
White House Domestic Policy Council, Melody C. Barnes - Chairwoman  
Education Agency Review Team, Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond, Chairwoman  
Education Policy Working Group members  
United States House Committee on Education and Labor, Rep. George Miller, Chairman  
United States Senate Education and Labor Committee, Senator Edward Kennedy, Chairman

cc: Michael Donovan, Deputy National Director  
Remle Beard Johnson, National Field Director