



Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice

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www.chicagoappleseed.org

Improving Parental Involvement in Illinois Under the No Child Left Behind Act: An Illinois Action Plan

Few people would argue with the notion that parental involvement improves student success in school. Until now, however, little effort has been made to come up with systematic solutions for increasing the role parents play in their children's education. In a new report, *Improving Parental Involvement in Illinois Under the No Child Left Behind Act*, Chicago Appleseed offers a model for creating organizational structures that foster parental involvement even in the most disadvantaged school districts.

Based on examination of three Illinois school districts (Bloomington, Evanston/Skokie and Waukegan), as well as interviews with parents, educators and community groups, Chicago Appleseed has developed the “**Top-Down/Bottom-Up**” model for parental involvement that works to address the weaknesses and challenges of Section 1118 in the No Child Left Behind Act. This model of parental involvement is based on: 1) the terms of NCLB, 2) the essential elements of successful parental involvement programs as detailed by leading policy and education experts, and 3) the priority of increasing student achievement on the part of districts, schools, and parents.

Schools and districts must work from the top to initiate parental involvement and create organizational structures to make parental involvement possible in schools and a priority with educators and parents. Parents must be responsive to the efforts of schools. In addition, there must be action and outreach to build the capacity of parents to participate in meaningful ways. Community groups can help make this relationship work. They can facilitate interactions and act as a bridge between parents and schools.

“...two members of Chicago Appleseed came to our meeting...They got the teachers involved in the discussion and offered viable and easy to do suggestions (to increase parental involvement). Already we're planning on using a few of them.”

Michael Brownstein, Chicago Public Schools



The Chicago Appleseed report, *Improving Parental Involvement in Illinois Under the No Child Left Behind Act*, contains specific and achievable recommendations for improvement in Illinois school districts based on impact research and expert testimony. This is the follow-up report to the Appleseed publication *It Takes a Parent: Transforming Education in the Wake of the No Child Left Behind Act*. The work involved 18 school districts in eight states and was done as a collaborative effort by Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice and Appleseed public interest centers in Connecticut, Georgia, Texas, and Washington. A full copy of both reports and executive summaries can be found at our website: www.chicagoappleseed.org.

Chicago Appleseed is facilitating a number of forums for parents, schools and community groups in order to encourage these partnerships and increase meaningful parental involvement under the No Child Left Behind Act in Illinois. Staff members have already made presentations to schools in Olympia Fields, Proviso District 209, and Chicago. For more information, call the Chicago Appleseed office at 312-988-6565.

“Sowing the Seeds of Justice”