A hundred years ago, at the turn of the last century, America’s stock of social capital was at an ebb, reduced by urbanization, industrialization, and vast immigration that uprooted Americans from their friends, social institutions, and families, a situation similar to today’s. Faced with this challenge, the country righted itself. Within a few decades, a range of organizations was created, from:

- National PTA
- Red Cross
- Boy Scouts
- YWCA
- Hadassah
- Knights of Columbus
- Urban League

With these and many more cooperative societies we rebuilt our social capital. We can learn from the experience of those decades as we work to rebuild our eroded social capital. It won’t happen without the concerted creativity and energy of Americans nationwide.

Robert D. Putnam  
*Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, 2000  
Director, The Saguaro Seminar  
The Peter and Isabel Malkin Professor of Public Policy  
Harvard University Cambridge, MA
Want to Improve Schools?
Make Parent Involvement Meaningful.

Each school year, our signature family events reach over nine million family members in America’s schools.

What if each person pledged a minimum of 10 hours?

It would produce 100 million hours of volunteer service with a $2 billion impact on local public schools.1

Celebrate!

National Parental Involvement Day™
18th annual celebration, held on the third Thursday in November

Public School Volunteer Week™
15th annual celebration, held during the third week in April

1 Independent Sector, Value of Volunteer Time 2010
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**Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Policy.** Eligibility for membership and employment in Project Appleseed shall be without regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, national origin, or physical challenge. Furthermore, this campaign and its member organizations shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, age, religious beliefs, national origin or physical challenge, in any of its employment practices, activities, functions, operations or policies.
Introduction

Nancy Yacavone Karpyk, a Weirton, West Virginia, kindergarten teacher, recognizes that the success of students is dependent upon the involvement of parents. Before the start of the school year, she visits incoming students at home and brings along a painted shoe-box. The children rock the box back and forth and try to guess what is inside. Meanwhile, Karpyk builds a rapport with their caregivers. (USA Today, 2007)

When the box is opened, the students find a shell, and Karpyk explains that their first topic of study will be the ocean. The informal meeting is an icebreaker that establishes a firm and friendly connection between home and school in the economically depressed area. Karpyk so values the input of parents that she is willing to come to them personally to encourage them to be involved in their children’s education, right from the start.

Strong schools require groups of parents who are committed to student success. For many of these parents, the transformation from parent to volunteer and advocate begins with Project Appleseed’s model learning compact – the Parental Involvement Pledge. The pledge asks parents to donate five hours to public schools each semester and 15 minutes per night to reading, homework, or enrichment activities.

Research shows that schools can improve their students’ achievement by engaging parents. Unfortunately, in many of the lowest-performing schools, parents remain an untapped and largely unengaged resource. Parents are the most invested adults in the mosaic of education simply because they are parents. They are uniquely positioned to increase the one-on-one instruction their children receive by supplementing it at home, to facilitate attendance by monitoring their children’s daily activities, to emphasize the importance of education and college attainment, and more. Therefore, parents must be an integral part of the solutions to educational challenges.

Nationwide, 58% of K-8 students in households above the poverty line had families who reported volunteering or serving on a school committee, compared with 32% of students in poor families.

In high school only 38% of nonpoor families volunteered versus 14% of poor families.

While the concept of parental involvement in and of itself is not new, schools, especially those that consistently under-perform, are often new to or inexperienced with the idea of nurturing it.

Project Appleseed seeks to spread the seeds of parental involvement through the same grass-roots efforts that have served it well across the nation. For nearly two decades we have motivated millions of parents to volunteer in thousands schools nationwide - while operating on a shoestring budget. Our signature national events - National Parental Involvement Day & Public School Volunteer Week produce billions of dollars in volunteer time each year.

To increase our impact, Project Appleseed seeks to “scale up” or “go to scale” by expanding our organizing to reach larger populations of parents and families. This scaling process most commonly involves implementing the intervention at new sites or expanding the capacity of existing sites to serve a larger number of parents.
Our Mission
Project Appleseed is a nonprofit resource, advocate, and voice for families, in the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, by means of a quality education in America’s public schools.

As a parent it can be a struggle sometimes to figure out how much and how exactly to be involved in a child’s school life and in the community. It is important to have a resource to turn to that is universal to parents across the United States.

Project Appleseed provides resources for parents who want to be involved in their children’s schools and for schools who seek their involvement. From volunteering to home life to communication, you will find valuable information in all areas here at Project Appleseed, the national campaign for public school improvement.

Project Appleseed believes that the “curriculum of the home”—the bundle of attitudes, habits, knowledge, and skills that children acquire through their relationship with their family and that facilitates their school learning—is more predictive of academic learning than the family’s socioeconomic status.

The Need for Family Involvement
Parental participation in school-related activities was higher for students from nonpoor families than poor families. At the K through 8th-grade level, for example, 58 percent of students in nonpoor families had parents who reported volunteering or serving on a school committee, compared with 32 percent of students in poor families. Similarly, at the 9th- through 12th-grade level, 73 percent of students in nonpoor families had parents who reported attending a school or class event, compared with 43 percent of students in poor families.

It may be difficult to overemphasize the importance and influence of parents. Their lack of input, when it exists, is an unmistakable and nearly insurmountable void. As Blazer (2005) points out, research shows that “meaningful family involvement is a powerful predictor of high student achievement. Students attain more educational success when schools and families work together to motivate, socialize, and educate students. Students whose families are involved in their education typically receive higher grades and test scores, complete more homework, have better attendance, and exhibit more positive attitudes and behaviors.

Children of involved families also graduate at higher rates and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education programs. Henderson (1987) found that the academic benefits gained from family involvement with elementary school students continued through the middle and senior high school levels. Furthermore, studies have observed these positive outcomes regardless of students’ ethnic or racial background or socioeconomic status, noting that students at risk of failure have the most to gain when schools involve families.

### Percentage of students in kindergarten through grade 8 whose parents reported participation in school-related activities, by poverty status: 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Related Activities</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Nonpoor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended a general school or PTO/PTA meeting</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended parent-teacher conferences</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a school or class event</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participated in school fundraising</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered or served on a school committee</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics 2011
Barriers to Family Involvement in Education
Recent research shows that numerous barriers to involvement exist for both schools and families. Some barriers are created by limited resources, while others originate from the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of families and school staff (Liontos, 1992). The most common barriers to family involvement include:

- Lack of teacher time.
- Teachers’ misperceptions of parents’ abilities.
- Lack of understanding of parents’ communication styles.
- Limited family resources, such as transportation and child care.
- Parents’ lack of comfort at the school.
- Tension in relationships between parents and teachers.
- Mobility.
- Lack of vested interest.
- Difficulties of involvement in the upper grades. (Jones, 2001; Baker, 2000; Caplan, 2000; Liontos, 1992)

Additionally, Drake (2000) suggests that family involvement programs are often not fully implemented for the following reasons:

- School staff had not been trained to work with families.
- Administrators and teachers worried that increased family involvement would add to their already busy schedules.
- Educators were concerned that closer relationships with families would mean giving up power and decision-making.
- Families were not sure how far they could go in making suggestions or asking questions; they worried that children would be punished for their parents’ actions by a teacher or principal who was annoyed or threatened by the parent.

Magnitude of the Need
In his January 2011 State of the Union speech, President Barack Obama discussed the shared responsibility of the home, school, and community in enhancing our country’s education system, stating, “...the question is whether all of us — as citizens and as parents — are willing to do what’s necessary to give every child a chance to succeed. That responsibility begins not in our classrooms, but in our homes and communities.”

In his keynote address at the MOM Congress on Education and Learning in May of 2010, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan likewise defined his vision for how parents can and should be engaged in their children’s education:

“My vision for family engagement is ambitious...I want to have too many parents demanding excellence in their schools. I want all parents to be real partners in education with their children's teachers, from cradle to career. In this partnership, students and parents should feel connected—and teachers should feel supported... We need parents to speak out and drive change in chronically-underperforming schools where children receive an inferior education. With parental support, those struggling schools need to be turned around now—not tomorrow, because children get only one chance at an education.”

The President’s and Secretary’s remarks are aligned with a robust and comprehensive view of the role of families in their children’s schooling. Instead of the involvement of parents being seen as a peripheral, compliance-driven aspect of whole school improvement, their vision calls for parents to be full partners with school staff and other members of the community in the work of creating and sustaining excellent schools.

Our nation’s leaders recognize the power of parents. However, the limited capacity of parents and state-, district-, and school-level personnel to partner with each other and share the responsibility of improving student performance factors heavily into the relatively poor execution and oversight of the Title I parent provisions Mapp, K. L. (2011).

Percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 whose parents reported participation in school-related activities, by poverty status: 2007
Capacity Building Across America

Project Appleseed actively looks for schools, districts and states, that share our set of standards for effective parental involvement. We seek to form partnerships that will organize parental involvement around these beliefs:

- Standards for family engagement are best defined by frameworks compatible with the Six Slices of Parental Involvement.
- Individual parent responsibility is outlined in a learning compact that builds social capital like the Parental Involvement Pledge.
- Effective outreach includes systematically welcoming parents into the school building by giving parents and families the Red Carpet Treatment.

Project Appleseed rests on two truths that are founded in research: First, we know that when parents and caring adults volunteer in schools and commit themselves to supporting children, educational outcomes skyrocket. And second, while recruiting such school volunteers is not always easy, aggressively recruiting community members by going door to door — in other words, community organizing — does work.

Like the double helix that combines and recombines genetic material to renew life, according to the Rand Corporation, a school improvement strategy must combine two complementary strands:

- The outside strand attracts and mobilizes community and political support and other resources from outside the traditional school bureaucracy — from taxpayers, businesses and the larger community.
- The inside strand focuses on the content of schooling (curricula, academic standards, incentives and work rules for teachers and a philosophy of school management).

Many communities have the financial, intellectual, and leadership resources needed to build their own educational improvement strategies. To initiate an effort to improve the public schools, Project Appleseed concentrates on the outside strand of school improvement. Families must be mobilized and organized to become engaged with their local public schools (Hill 1989).

Project Appleseed’s Capacity Building Partnership program supports the development of family engagement throughout multiple schools, multiple school districts and across entire states. The individual components — parental engagement and community organizing — will be delivered in a researched-based and integrated manner, to increase student achievement.

Significance & Magnitude of Effect

The “curriculum of the home”—the bundle of attitudes, habits, knowledge, and skills that children acquire through their relationship with their family and that facilitates their school learning—is more predictive of academic learning than the family’s socioeconomic status. Researchers have found the nuances of parent-child communication regarding expectations to be a particularly powerful source of motivation for minority children and children living in poverty. These children especially benefit from visions of what is possible for them beyond the circumstances in which they find themselves at the time, and their parents contribute both to that vision and to the children’s confidence that they can reach out and attain it. Jeynes (2002)

Research shows that schools can improve their students’ learning by engaging parents in ways that directly relate to their children’s academic progress, maintaining a consistent message of what is expected of parents, and reaching parents directly, personally, and with a trusting approach. Effective parent engagement must be comprehensive in nature, with the school consistently interfacing with parents at many points, in many venues, over the course of the school years. This is vital for all students at all grade levels, in all settings.

Dr. Joyce Epstein’s 1995 typology of family involvement in education has become the standard of the field and appears in various adaptations, including Project Appleseed’s Six Slices of Parental Involvement and the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships from the national PTA (n.d.). A comprehensive family-school partnership (which Epstein defines as an ongoing relationship rather than a program or event) addresses all Six types of family involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.
Goals, Inputs, Activities and Outcomes

Unlike parent involvement projects that focus on an individual child’s school success, the goals of education organizing focus on system change and school accountability. While organizing sometimes involves helping individual children and reforming single schools, organizing groups work toward changing the system for all children. Primary issues addressed by community organizing include accountability, parent engagement, school environment, equity, standards and performance, special programs, and quality of instruction (Lopez 2003).

Goals
- Children and youth are better prepared for post-secondary success.
- Family members are wise consumers and active partners in their child’s education.
- Schools are transformed, high-performing, and accountable institutions.
- The school district has a systemic and co-constructed family engagement strategy.

Inputs
- A shared vision for family engagement.
- A connection between family engagement and student learning.
- Strategic investments in programming and staff.
- Robust communication systems.
- Evaluation for accountability and continuous learning.

Activities
- Recruit family and community volunteers by use of learning compact.
- Examine how welcoming and family-friendly schools are.
- Encourage family engagement and college preparedness thru home visits.
- Provide technical assistance to community, school, district & state leaders.
- Disseminate targeted materials on parent involvement and college preparedness.
- Build relationships with school, district, community organizations & state leaders.
- Develop coalitions of parent groups, ed. organizations and programs.
- Disseminate Project Appleseed materials to funders & partner organizations.
- Build relationships with potential funders.

Short-Term Outcomes
- Increase in number of parents who volunteer in school and are trained as parent leaders.
- Increase parent knowledge on how to become involved in their children’s education and college preparedness.
- Number of parent leaders trained.
- Collaborate and share information to promote and sustain parent involvement.
- Increase commitment to Capacity Building Partnership and its sustainability.

Long-Term Outcomes
- Increase parent capacity leads to boost in student achievement and college attainment.
- Increase parents’ levels of involvement in their children’s education.
- Parents work closely with school systems and seek leadership positions.
- Establish Project Appleseed sustainability.
The Parental Involvement Toolbox

Project Appleseed’s Parental Involvement Toolbox is the point of enrollment that schools take to become involved in the Capacity Building Partnership. It is designed for educators and parent leaders who strive to increase family engagement. The Toolbox is aligned with the Six Types of Parental Involvement. Schools organize parent responsibility with an effective, researched-based program that meets district and state mandates and best practices.

Parental involvement is a centerpiece of high-performing schools and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Project Appleseed worked with the Clinton White House and helped pioneer the original parental involvement provisions in Section 1118 of Title I in the 1994. Title I defines the term “parental involvement” as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.

By using these tools, schools increase the number of family members involved in schools and enhance the “transparency” for parental involvement in children’s education.

The Toolbox contains three primary engagement tools:

- **The Parental Involvement Pledge** - Project Appleseed’s Title I learning compact, the most widely employed learning compact in the nation, is branded with each school’s name and school logo, for distribution to every student and family.

- **The Parental Involvement Report Card** - This is a self diagnostic tool for distribution to every parent, grandparent, and caring adult. Branded with each school’s name and school logo, the Report Card quizzes parents with questions based on standards found in the Six Types of Parental Involvement developed by Epstein.

- **The Toolkit for Title I Parental Involvement from SEDL (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory)** The Toolbox provides the most recent research with detailed explanations of the Title I, Part A parental involvement provisions as well as 33 tools to assist state departments of education, districts, and schools in meeting these requirements. Both the explanations and the tools are designed to help educators increase parental involvement and provide opportunities for parents to engage in and support their children’s academic achievement. The toolkit includes information on the following topics:
  - Policy, Planning, and Building Capacity
  - Communication, Notification, Reporting, and Information Sharing
  - Parent Rights and Options
  - Meaningful Involvement and Decision Making
  - Fund Allocation

**Learning Compacts**

Parents are the missing ingredient in most systemic school reform plans. We know that 91% of children’s time from birth to age 18 is spent outside of school (Usdan, 1991; cited in Ooms & Hara, 1991). Once students start school, 70% of their waking hours are spent outside of school (Clark, 1990). Furthermore, the task force from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (Task Force on Youth Development and Community Programs, 1992) noted that America’s youth have a great deal of discretionary time. They judged that of the adolescent’s waking hours, 60% was committed to such essentials as school, homework, eating, chores, and employment; 40% of their time was considered to be discretionary.
NASHVILLE – In the federal government’s $5 billion Race to the Top competition, applicants are judged on their ability to reach out to parents, community members, and others in their plans. Six months before successfully applying for over $501 million in the 2010 Race to the Top competition, Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen used National Parental Involvement Day in November of 2009, to begin a three year bi-partisan effort to systematically improve the state’s parent engagement - using all of the engagement tools advocated by Project Appleseed.

“As we ask and expect more from our students, we must also ask and expect more from our parents and guardians,” said Education Commissioner Bruce Opie. “Active parent participation informs and influences policies, practices, and programs that support expanded learning opportunities. Tennessee can only successfully rise to the top with the help of our parents.”

For three consecutive years the state employed Project Appleseed’s National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer week as a time when the state embraced the celebrations and program design that make up Project Appleseed’s Parental Involvement Toolbox:

• In 2009, Governor Phil Bredesen (D) asks all schools to advertise National Parental Involvement Day throughout their communities. He urges schools to combine school programs honoring parents with potential training activities such as: information about new rigorous standards and assessments under the Tennessee Diploma Project, interpreting test scores, parenting skills and tips on helping children with homework. For high school parents, conduct a Career Day and ask parents with a variety of occupations to speak to students.

NATIONAL PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT DAY 2010
November 18, 2010 marked the 17th annual National Parental Involvement Day. In recognition, the Tennessee Department of Education began promoting new Parental Involvement Standards and more frequent participation from parents both at home and in the classroom. The adaptation of the Six Types of Parental Involvement shared by the National PTA and Project Appleseed was advocated by the Tennessee PTA.

• November 18, 2010 marked the 17th annual National Parental Involvement Day. In recognition, the Tennessee Department of Education began promoting new Parental Involvement Standards and more frequent participation from parents both at home and in the classroom. The adaptation of the Six Types of Parental Involvement shared by the National PTA and Project Appleseed was advocated by the Tennessee PTA.

• National Parental Involvement Day 2011, Governor Bill Haslam (R) and First Lady Crissy Haslam, continue the bi-partisan tradition, first begun by former Governor Phil Bredesen, to promote National Parental Involvement Day with a video from the First Lady promoting the full participation of parents and families.

• Months later, in April of 2012, during Public School Volunteer Week, Governor Haslam signs legislation that requires parents to sign parental involvement contracts like Project Appleseed’s Parental Involvement Pledge. The legislation encourages school districts to develop parental involvement contracts with students’ parents. Under the legislation, parents agree to, at a minimum to review their student’s homework and offer assistance when needed, sign report cards, ensure that their student is not truant, attend school functions, and make every effort to attend parent-teacher conferences.

“Parent involvement is a critical part of achieving a high quality education system and helps ensure student achievement. It is important that parents and educators form strong partnerships that will result in higher achievement of students.” said (former) Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen

Parental involvement shows a student that his or her parent cares,” said Julie McCargar, Executive Director of Federal Programs. “It takes all of us to build an environment that fosters learning and success for every child.”
Data from the Prospects Study of Student Outcomes (1998) provide evidence that when compacts are effectively implemented, positive student outcomes, including higher achievement, result. Schools with compacts were compared with non-compact schools on parental involvement and student achievement. Schools with compacts had higher levels of family involvement in those activities in which parents worked directly with their own children. These activities included parents’ monitoring of homework and reading with their children. The study concluded that, after controlling for other factors, positive student outcomes found in compact schools were associated with the greater involvement of parents in supporting their own children’s learning. Other activities, such as volunteering and decision making, may be valuable in their own right but were not shown to significantly affect learning (National Assessment of Title I, 1999, Source: Heid and Webber, 1999.).

The study found:

- In the highest poverty schools, **85 percent of principals found Title I compacts helpful** in supporting homework completion.

- About 8 out of 10 principals in high-poverty Title I schools rated compacts as helpful, as did a majority of principals in low-poverty schools.

In a second study from the same time period (Funkhouser, 1999), an examination of ten schools found that four aspects of parent involvement in their own children’s education correlated highly with achievement and other outcomes. These were: the parent caring about what occurred in the Title I classroom; the parent encouraging the student to read; the parent keeping track of the child’s progress in school work; and the parent making sure that there was a place for the child to study at home.

A substantial majority of schools -- especially those serving high concentrations of low-income children -- do find compacts helpful in promoting parent involvement, especially higher poverty schools. But principals continue to identify lack of parent involvement as one of their major reform barriers.
Family Engagement Plan
The research identifies certain types of parental involvement and specific strategies as effective in supporting student learning. According to Feuerstein (2000), increasing the number of contacts between the school and the parent does appear to stimulate parent volunteerism. He also noted that parent communication with school and parent participation in a PTO/PTA can be influenced by schools. Bourdieu’s 1990 study found that increased school-initiated contact resulted in reciprocal parent contacts. Thus, enhanced school contacts with parents should increase the parents’ contacts with school. Creating opportunities to engage parents to a greater degree in school can increase their involvement in the school’s organizational structure.

Project Appleseed uses the Parental Involvement Toolbox to engage parents and schools in two ways:

1. School and community self-managed outreach:
   - Individual Schools, Districts & Nonprofits

2. Capacity Building Partnerships are managed by Project Appleseed in partnership with schools, communities, organizations and sponsors.
   - Regional - urban, suburban & rural
   - Statewide
   - Multi-State
   - Nationwide

Generally the partnership consists of multiple schools, school districts and states and require significant funding. Project Appleseed works with education leaders in targeted states and provides schools with the Parental Involvement Toolbox as a means of improving the schools and the community.

By the year 2017, The Buffalo Soldiers Calvary will build parent and family involvement

The Buffalo Soldiers originally were members of the U.S. 10th Cavalry Regiment of the United States Army, formed on September 21, 1866 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The nickname was given to the “Negro Cavalry” by the Native American tribes they fought. The term Buffalo Soldiers became a generic term for all African-American soldiers. The “Buffalo Soldiers” were established by Congress as the first peacetime all-black regiments in the regular U.S. Army. It is now used for U.S. Army units that trace their direct lineage back to the 9th and 10th Cavalry, units whose service earned them an honored place in U.S. history.

Using Americorps as a model, by the year 2017, Project Appleseed will seek to enlist the nation’s most promising future leaders to be our 21st century Buffalo Soldiers and organize parental involvement in communities throughout the United States. Project Appleseed aspires for the “Calvary” to work as key members of our leadership team and engage parents and families in local schools and communities.

To be eligible, exceptional Buffalo Soldier Family Engagement Leaders must be 21 years or older, have graduated from an undergraduate or graduate program at a university OR a veteran of the United States Armed Forces who possesses a high school diploma and has served on active duty at any time over the past five years.
Family Engagement Leaders

Until they are joined by the Buffalo Soldiers in 2017, our staff level Family Engagement Leaders will build parent and family involvement from scratch, developing new leadership where none existed and organizing the unorganized. It is a process where people are brought together to act in the interest of their school communities and the common good.

Built on the AmeriCorps model, there are four key strategies that our Family Engagement Leaders will use when building the capacity and, ultimately, the sustainability of Project Appleseed Capacity Building Partnerships. These are:

A. Recruitment And Management of Volunteers
- Family Engagement Leaders assist in developing systems and materials for volunteer recruitment and support.
- Family Engagement Leaders coordinate volunteer recruitment as an integral component of their individual activities with their partner schools and organizations.
- Recruit volunteers with the goal of increasing the level of service provided to the school community.
- Selected Family Engagement Leaders specialize in volunteer recruitment and management

B. Partnerships with Community Members and Organizations
- Family Engagement Leaders succeed with limited resources by developing partnerships and building organizational capacity, for more than one organization at the same time.
- Sustained activities through strong partnerships

C. Marketing And Promotion
- Family Engagement Leaders present information to a variety of groups. Presentations include information on schools as well as their specific volunteer assignment.
- Family Engagement Leaders serve as spokespeople and role models in the media and community outreach.
- Family Engagement Leaders organize and run promotion booths and resource centers during school and community events.

D. Increasing and Diversifying Resources
- Form and implement local corporate partnerships and deploy resources.
- Fund diversification.
- Developing streams of earned income

Recruitment Outline

Below are some of the highlights that Family Engagement Leaders will use to organize parental involvement in Capacity Building Partnership sites:

1.) Parent/Teacher Conferences
An important part of the process includes the distribution of Parental Involvement Pledge at parent teacher conferences.

2.) Door-to-Door Canvassing
Door-to-door canvassing will also be a valuable technique in recruiting parent volunteers and hard to-reach parents.

3.) Mail Distribution
The Pledge will be sent to parents by U.S. Mail with a self-addressed return envelope. Now only if someone would call these parents to remind them to return the Pledge!

4.) Phone Calls
While we distribute Parental Involvement Pledge via U.S. Mail, Family Engagement Leaders will call parents and families to remind them to volunteer by completing the mailed National & State Partner’s Family Involvement Pledge and returning it to school.
5.) Red Carpet Treatment
The Red Carpet Treatment is an opportunity for schools to examine how welcoming and family-friendly they are and allows them to develop strategies that can be implemented to make them more inviting to families and the community. The overriding objective of this program is to increase parent involvement; and to help parents, visitors and members of the community feel more comfortable coming to school. (Welcoming Atmosphere Walk-Through, NCPIE, 2005).

Components
- A walk-through is conducted by a team comprised of parents, community representatives, school staff members, and Project Appleseed personnel gathered at each District school to look at features that help parents and community members know they are welcomed as partners.
- School-wide Practices & Policies: Interview with principal/administrative staff.
- Welcoming School Staff: Observations in the main office, hallways, and places open to the public; listen and look for inviting friendly tones.
- Written Materials: Newsletters, parent handbook, flyers, and other materials distributed by the school. Web sites and telephone message lines are also included, if applicable.
- The Physical Environment: Parking areas, classrooms, lobbies, hallways, etc.

6.) Training
Project Appleseed’s Capacity Building Partnership has a vision of improving outcomes for children by increasing family member involvement in their children’s education (with a primary focus on parents). To achieve this, Capacity Building Partnership recruits and trains parent leaders in communities using a series of workshops. The workshops teach parent leaders how to get involved in their children’s education and also how to train other parents in their community to get involved. The Partnership then supports ongoing training in communities by providing parent leaders with technical assistance on training and disseminating materials on family involvement to all parents who go through the workshops.

Our Capacity Building Partnership also works within communities to build a system of family involvement and training that is sustainable over time. We want to build relationships with schools to ensure that family involvement is welcomed and supported. In addition, the Capacity Building Partnership builds coalitions of organizations locally that are interested in sustaining and building a family involvement agenda within their community (Mediratta, K., Shah, S., & McAlister, S. 2009). Project Appleseed’s Capacity Building Partnership has selected the following training development and delivery:

The Center for Education Organizing at Brown University will be contracted to design the overall training for our Capacity Building Partnership. The Center teams up with community organizers and leaders, national and local teachers unions, and civil rights organizers and advocates to develop, support, and strengthen their education work.

Exceptional parent and district leaders will be sent for training at the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) at Johns Hopkins University. NNPS offers customized professional development workshops, including basic training for district leaders and for school teams to start their programs and advanced topics for members of NNPS who are ready to tackle tough challenges to involve all families in their locations. The workshops prepare district leaders to conduct district-level involvement activities and to facilitate schools’ partnership programs.
Target Market

Project Appleseed reaches loyal parent leaders and educators who look to our organization for information on all things local and national in parental involvement. We offer consistent quality and credibility, and the organization has had a presence on the Internet since 1993 – long before the World Wide Web became a force in our culture.

Project Appleseed is a resource high-ranking education decision-makers rely on when making decisions about parental involvement in public schools. Project Appleseed’s supporters are the stakeholders who drive product discovery, pilot, purchasing, implementation and adoption in many of the nation’s school districts.

Our Target Audience:
- Parents or other primary caregivers of 52 million public school-aged children (approx. 4-18).
- Parent leaders in America’s 100,000 schools and 16,000 public school districts.
- District Administrators/Principals
- Teachers
- Curriculum Decision Makers/Influencer’s
- Professional Development Decision Makers
- Title I Directors
- State education Agency Directors

Project Appleseed reaches:
- Over 9.2 million family members participate in our signature events - Public School Volunteer Week & National Parental Involvement Day
- Our events are celebrated at over 18,000 schools in all 50 states each school year.
- The Parental Involvement Pledge is the most widely used learning compact in the United States with an estimated 500,000 in circulation each year.
- Project Appleseed’s web site has 15,000 unique visitors each month and an annual audience of over 175,000 public school leaders
- Over 67% of our visitors are women between the ages of 25-54
- Appleseed Today reaches nearly 30,000 superintendents, legislators and teacher’s union leaders in 42 states covering 85% of school districts.

Google Rank:
- Project Appleseed is a top ranked resource for ‘parental involvement in public schools’.
- Our Six Slices of Parental Involvement is a top ranked image for ‘parental involvement’.
- There are currently over 100,000 active links to our signature events & 50,000 additional links to the Pledge.

Web traffic projectappleseed.org

Demographics of Project Appleseed Web Visitors

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A partnership with Project Appleseed benefits America’s most important assets – our parents and families.

Signature Family Events Corporate Sponsorship
Successful partnerships with businesses, foundations, and organizations are fundamental to providing support to families who seek to improve schools for all children. Engaging families contributes to a brighter future, better schools, and a stronger community for all. Through National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week - we provide sponsors with the opportunity to reach local parents, grandparents and caring adults through their local public schools.

Partners and sponsors support our mission and vision in a variety of ways:

- Employee-centric volunteer partnerships
- High-impact cause-related marketing relationships
- Foundational philanthropic gifts that drive growth

Corporate sponsorships create brand awareness, increase brand loyalty, reinforce brand image, drive retail traffic and showcase community responsibility. Project Appleseed offers valuable opportunities for corporate sponsorship.

As a National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week sponsor, promotional programs will be developed to build your brand equity. These programs will leverage the Project Appleseed brand to maximize your brand’s exposure nationwide.

Sponsorships include:
- Unique sponsorship packages customized to meet client-specific marketing objectives.
- Exclusivity for major sponsorships within category.
- The ability to use the Project Appleseed brand name and logo in promotional campaigns.
- The potential to benefit from editorial coverage in the press.
- High visibility and brand association with parents and families throughout America.

Project Appleseed seeks to create synergistic alliances with partners and sponsors whose business objectives can be met through a partnership with Project Appleseed. Any partnership should achieve at least one of the following goals or any combination thereof:

Goals
- To increase student achievement for all students.
- To increase parental involvement by expanding the number of parent volunteers taking the Parental Involvement Pledge.
- Generate incremental revenue for Project Appleseed locally, nationally or both.
- Heighten public awareness for Project Appleseed.

Strategy
- Target partners where Project Appleseed can build awareness nationwide
- Target partners whose target audiences includes women between the ages of 25-54, parents, grandparents and caring adults.

Whenever possible, Project Appleseed should work directly with the partner rather than through third party intermediaries. When intermediaries are the original point of contact, Project Appleseed should obtain direct contact with the primary partners at the earliest possible time.
Experience & National Awards

Project Appleseed’s award winning staff has over 70 years of combined leadership and experience in education, government, public policy, fundraising and communications. These are the vital skills needed to successfully engage and organize public school parents and families in America. We work toward effecting systemic change in an individual school, school districts, and across entire states. Since schools alone cannot solve the problems imported into them from society, Project Appleseed reaches beyond schools.

We draw upon the power of parents, public school alumni, businesses, civic groups, and community organizations to improve schools and aspects of life in the community that impact education.

In 1993, Project Appleseed expanded its reach exponentially as one of the first nonprofits to utilize the Internet to organize parents. Today the organization’s site remains a premier resource for parental involvement tools, news, and information on the Web and a top Google search result for the topic of "parental involvement," even surpassing the U.S. Department of Education.

The management shares a unique variety of skills in parent organizing, education reform, project management, program management, at-risk program management, local and national media relations and fundraising. For nearly two decades, Project Appleseed has inspired millions of parents to volunteer in thousands of schools nationwide. The organization has had a leading role in spreading effective parental involvement practices across the United States.

Kevin Walker is the president, founder and national director of Project Appleseed. Like President Barack Obama, Mr. Walker began working as a community organizer in the early 1980’s. Mr. Walker is a national award winning organizer and public policy professional and has 30 years of local, state and national experience. He is the parent of four public school graduates and the founder of Project Appleseed. Under the leadership of founder and president, Kevin Walker, Project Appleseed has listed the following selected accomplishments:

- Named Top Ten People In American Education, Teacher Magazine (Publishers of Education Week)
- Shares Parenting magazine’s Parenting Leader Award with Andre Agassi and Sen. Barbara Boxer. (Publisher Time Inc.)
- Shares one of “10 Unsung Nonprofits That Should Be Household Words” with the Ms. Foundation.
- Project Appleseed was used as a model for the Clinton administration’s renewal of Title I the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Project Appleseed advocated for the inclusion of the parental involvement and learning compact provisions in Section 1118 of the legislation.
- Missouri Legislature proposed and passed legislation in Missouri that requires schools to publish school performance data or ‘Report Card’ annually (Senate Bill 380 passed into law by the Missouri Legislature 1993).
- Recipient of the Focus St. Louis "What’s Right With The Region" award
Ms. Remle Beard Johnson, V.P. & National Field Director

Ms. Beard will manage the field operations for the grant and will be responsible for the recruitment of 96,000 parent volunteers. Ms. Beard is a grassroots public affairs and public relations specialist with an extensive record of results in managing successful nonpartisan and bipartisan national, state and local campaigns, referendums, philanthropic initiatives, and major media events for public education, corporations, trade associations, interest groups and issue coalitions. Ms. Beard specializes in a wide range of activities including message creation and execution, communications strategy, coalition-building and mobilization, opinion-leader outreach, network building, activist training, meeting and events planning, materials development and fundraising. Ms. Beard is the Abbeville County (South Carolina) Democratic Party Chairwoman. She served as the Field Director for Joe Biden for President in South Carolina in 2008. She served as the campaign manager in Jack Carter’s 2006 U.S. Senate campaign in Nevada. The Upstate Political Director (Greenville) on Howard Dean’s 2003-04 South Carolina primary campaign. She was also the Gore-Lieberman South Carolina state director in Fall 2000. Ms. Beard and Mr. Walker first worked together in Hands Across America in 1986 when they directed the field and marketing staffs respectively.

Cara Bafile, Communications Director

Ms. Bafile is a curriculum writer and she will serve as the communications director for this grant. Cara takes knowledge and transforms it into exciting and useful messages, and disseminates it to the right audiences through the best distribution channels. She has 15 years of writing and editing lesson planning, curriculum, administration, and technology articles and “Wire Side Chats” for the Education World Web site; Creating lessons and articles that focus on all aspects of the curriculum and extracurricular areas; Authoring a biweekly series called “Partners for Student Success” that shares effective collaborations between schools and the community. She has over five years of teaching experience, two as a kindergarten teacher.
Quality of the Project Evaluation

Project Appleseed will retain the Harvard Family Research Project, at Harvard University, to perform an independent evaluation of our Capacity Building Partnership and disseminate the results. The Harvard Family Research Project believes that evaluation is essential to improving and maintaining the quality of all programs, services, and organizations. It can also ensure accountability and build a case for future investments. The Harvard Family Research Project can:

- Work with Project Appleseed on the evaluation and continuously inform the organization, partners, funders and the public about our strategies.
- Distribute evaluation results and keep our audiences up to date in the field of education.

Harvard’s evaluation experience is substantively rich, and includes early childhood, family involvement, out-of-school time, advocacy, communications, and policy change initiatives. They specialize in the evaluation of complex initiatives that involve multiple organizations and are spread out across multiple sites.

Research Design

At all times, Project Appleseed’s Capacity Building Partnership will employ a rigorous mixed method of design, using both qualitative and quantitative data. Examination of the entire group of 200 schools that take part will enable conclusions to be reached about the impacts of community organizing on school reform. This research will be carried out in a collaborative process with the sites themselves, enabling the sharing of preliminary findings at each state of analysis, so that the intimate knowledge of the work and of the school, district, and community contexts can inform the interpretation and understanding of the data. (Mediratta, K., Shah, S., & McAlister, S. 2009)

The Capacity Building Partnership study will be guided by several central questions:

- Does the new responsiveness and/or collaboration generated by community-based efforts to equalize power dynamics lead to new priorities and capacities within schools and communities that can facilitate successful learning for all children?
- Does the effort to equalize power dynamics — the core of the organizing approach — change the nature of accountability and quality of engagement between schools and communities?
- Do principals, teachers and parents find Project Appleseed’s Title I compact, the Parental Involvement Pledge, helpful in supporting individual student achievement?
- What effect does the Parental Involvement Pledge have on the level of community support?
- Which families are we reaching and which are hard to reach?
- Which present practices should change and which should continue?
- Has there been increased voter support for the schools?

Qualitative Data Sources

- Interviews – These include interviews with key stakeholders: organizing staff, parent and youth leaders, and educators.

- Observations – There will be observations of meetings, training sessions, negotiation sessions, and public actions, leader development and organizer development trainings.

- Document Review – A complete review of the materials produced by the Capacity Building Partnership will be conducted, including newsletters, organizational charts, and training materials.

- Context Review – Extensive background research on the local and state context for each school community will be performed, such as following local media coverage of education issues in all of the sites. These articles, combined with the interview data, provide a picture of the shifting context for reform in each site.
Quantitative Data Sources

- **Parental Involvement Pledge** – Data for the 37 volunteer choices in the compact yields volunteer data that will be used to determine volunteer pattern and characteristics.

- **Adult Member Surveys** – A survey of adult members will be conducted to probe member participation in organizing activities, as well as member perceptions of how participation in the group has influenced their engagement with schools and their involvement in their community.

- **Teacher Surveys** – Teacher perceptions of district and community support and involvement in their school will be probed, as well as of their school’s climate, professional culture, and instructional core. Schools and teachers participating in the survey will receive an additional small cash reward.

- **Public Datasets** – Baseline statistical data will be used in each school zone. Data will be collected on a variety of neighborhood indicators, such as percentage of school-age children in poverty, median household income, educational attainment, and percentage of homeowners. These data will be used to analyze the contexts in which the organizing is taking place. We intend to utilize a range of publicly available teacher and student data from all schools throughout the school year. Data includes measures of teacher and student race/ethnicity, years of teaching experience, dropout rates, graduation rates, student performance on standardized tests, and a range of other variables.

Data obtained from six districts that have core components of a systemic family engagement strategy in place reveal that implementing the core components requires a commitment to a set of five best practices. The Capacity Building Partnership will provide Sub-Grants for Promising Practices for all participating schools. Project Appleseed will fund the best practices of schools to ensure that family engagement efforts are interconnected and strategic across the various levels of a family engagement system at work. These promising practices are (Boutilier, 2004):

1. A shared vision of family engagement
2. Purposeful connections to learning
3. Investments in high quality programming and staff.
4. Robust communication systems
5. Evaluation for accountability and continuous learning

**Community organizing for school reform on student outcomes** For the past six years, the Community Involvement Program, now part of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, has been studying the impact of community organizing for school reform on student outcomes, with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Data suggest that organizing is contributing to sustainable school-level improvements, particularly in the areas of school–community relationships, parent involvement and engagement, sense of school community and trust, teacher collegiality, and teacher morale. Successful organizing strategies contributed to increased student attendance, improved standardized-test-score performance, and higher graduation rates and college-going aspirations in several sites. (Mediratta, K., 2009)
Project Appleseed Logic Model

Inputs

Resources:
- U.S. Dept. of Ed.
- i3 Grants
- Foundation support
- Title I - LEA & SEA
- Corporate sponsors
- Individual gifts
- Family & community members
- Parent leaders
- Appleseed national staff & volunteers

Collaborations:
- Teachers, school & district administrators, elected leadership, state leaders, PIRC’s
- National, state & local organizations

Planning:
- Marketing
- Program sustainability
- Evaluation

Activities

Use the Parental Involvement Pledge to recruit volunteers & leaders

Provide technical assistance to school, district & state leaders

Develop and disseminate targeted materials on parent involvement

Build relationships with school, district & state leaders

Develop coalitions of parent groups, ed. organizations and programs

Disseminate Project Appleseed materials to funders & partner organizations

Build relationships with potential funders

Short-Term Outcomes

Increase in number of parents who volunteer in school and are trained as parent leaders

Increase parent knowledge on how to become involved in their children’s education

Number of parent leaders trained

Long-Term Outcomes

Increased parent capacity leads to boost in student achievement

Increase parents’ levels of involvement in their children’s education

Collaborate, & share info to promote and sustain parent involvement

Establish Project Appleseed sustainability

Impacts

Better outcomes for children that result from increased family involvement

References

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Heid and Webber, School-Level Implementation of Standards-Based Reform: Findings from the Follow-up Public School Survey on Education Reform, 1999.


Hill, Paul T., Wise, Arthur E., Shapiro, Leslie, (1989) Educational Progress, Cities Mobilize to Improve Their Schools


USA Today, April 18, 2007. Tracey Wong Briggs, “Kindergartners enter a world of discovery,”

U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009 American Community Survey

