

# Parental Involvement Toolbox



Project Appleseed  
the national campaign for public school improvement

# The Six Slices of Parental Involvement

tm



**Parenting**



**Volunteering**



**Learning at Home**

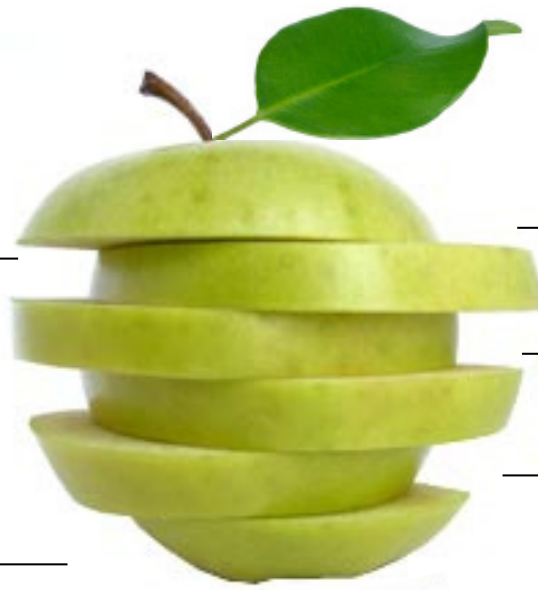
**Communicating**



**Collaborating with Community**



**Decision Making**



## Project Appleseed

tm

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### Order the Parental Involvement Toolbox Now!

Project Appleseed's Parental Involvement Toolbox is designed for educators and parent leaders who strive to increase family engagement. The Toolbox is aligned with the Six Slices of Parental Involvement. By purchasing the Toolbox, your schools can organize parent responsibility with an effective researched based program - that meets district and state mandates and best practices.

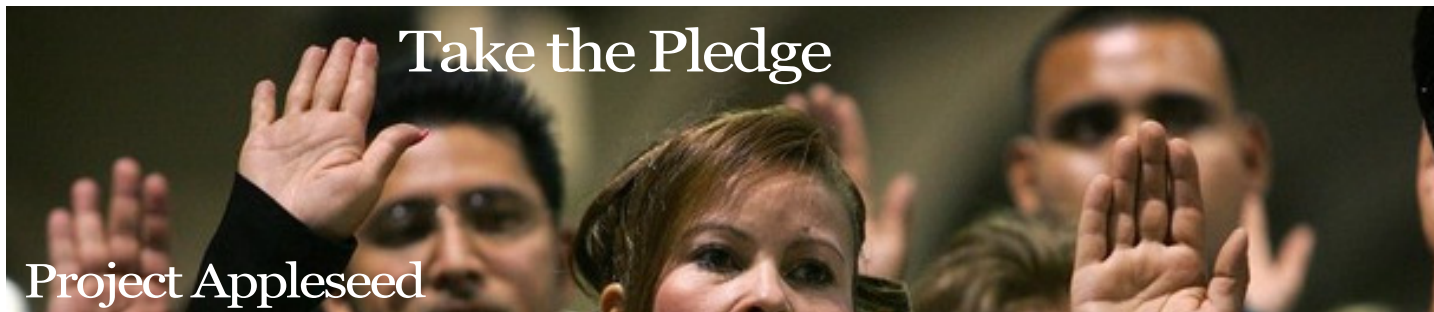
Parental involvement is a centerpiece of high performing schools and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Project Appleseed worked with the White House and helped pioneer the original parental involvement provisions in the 1990's. Title I defines the term "parental involvement" as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities.

By using these tools, you can increase the number of family members involved in your schools and the "transparency" for parental involvement in children's education.



Order on-line at [www.projectappleseed.org](http://www.projectappleseed.org)





# Take the Pledge

## Project Appleseed

### Our Parental Involvement Toolbox contains five effective parent engagement tools:

- **The Parental Involvement Pledge**, Title I Compact, branded with your school's name and school logo, for distribution to every student and family on National Parental Involvement Day & Public School Volunteer Week and all school year long!
- **The Parental Involvement Pledge Online**, branded with your school's name, and linked to your school's web site - for accessibility anywhere.
- **The Parental Involvement Report Card** - branded with your school's name and school logo, this is a self diagnostic tool for distribution to every parent, grandparent, and caring adult.
- **Parent Organizing Database** 1.0.1 software runs on any Windows computer, and is easy enough for everyone to learn.
- **The Toolkit for Title I Parental Involvement from SEDL** (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory) We provide the most recent research inside the Toolbox 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.
- **BONUS!** Certificates of Parental Involvement for schools and parents! Plus a family wellness compact the **Fitness and Nutrition Parental Involvement Pledge!**

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- School Leader \$100.00
- Community Leader \$150.00
- National Honor Roll \$250.00

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## The Need for Project Appleaseed

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 Appleaseed'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.



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. Parents will not only be asked to walk a mile in the shoes of administrators and teachers; they will be asked to walk beside these professionals as partners and stakeholders.

## The Need for Family Involvement

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 (Caplan, 2000). 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 (Riggins-Newby, 2004; Norton, 2003; Caplan, 2000; Binkley et al., 1998; Funkhouse and Gonzalez, 1997). 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 (Caplan, 2000; Funkhouse and Gonzalez, 1997; Henderson, 1987).

## 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; American Association of School Administrators, 1998; 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:



U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Project Appleseed president, Kevin Walker

"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 2011, Title I and Parent Involvement: Lessons from the Past, Recommendations for the Future)

### Engaging Families in Student Learning

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 (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Redding, 2000). In his meta-analysis, Jeynes (2002) 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 (Hoover-Dempsey, 2005).

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 (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005; Redding, 2000). These echo the conclusions of Swap (1993) that 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 schooling years. This is vital for all students at all grade levels, in all settings.

# The Six Slices of Parental Involvement

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.



## Slice 1 - VOLUNTEERING

GOAL: Recruit and organize parent help and support

## Slice 2 - PARENTING

GOAL: Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.

## Slice 3 - COMMUNICATING

GOAL: Design more effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications with all families each year about school programs and their children's progress.

## Slice 4 - LEARNING AT HOME

GOAL: Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curricular-related activities, decisions, and planning.

## Slice 5 - DECISION MAKING

GOAL: Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.

## Slice 6- COLLABORATING WITH COMMUNITY

GOAL: Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

## 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.

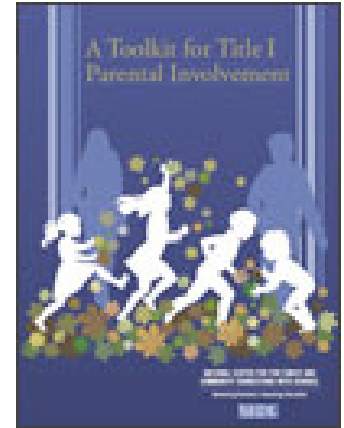


Parental involvement is a centerpiece of high-performing schools and Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Project Appleseed worked with the Clinton White House and helped pioneer the original parental involvement provisions in Section 1118 of Title I in the 1994. Title I defines the 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 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**

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 Parental Involvement Pledge learning compact. The pledge asks parents to donate five hours to public schools each semester and 15 minutes per night to reading, homework, or enrichment activities.

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:

**Principals' Views on the Helpfulness of Title I School-Parent Compacts, by School Poverty Level**

	Highest-Poverty (75-100% )		Low-Poverty (0-34% )	
	Helpful (includes very helpful)	Very Helpful	Helpful (includes very helpful)	Very Helpful
Homework completion	85	33	64	25
Parents helping with learning at home	84	21	67	24
School climate	89	42	63	31
Student discipline	82	38	61	26
Reading at home	81	35	68	32
Student attendance	80	38	61	28
Teacher-parent relations	78	37	70	32
Student preparedness for school	77	30	53	20
Parent volunteers	76	30	42	17

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

- 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.



### **Project Appleseed 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 (National Center for Schools and Communities, 2002b).

#### **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

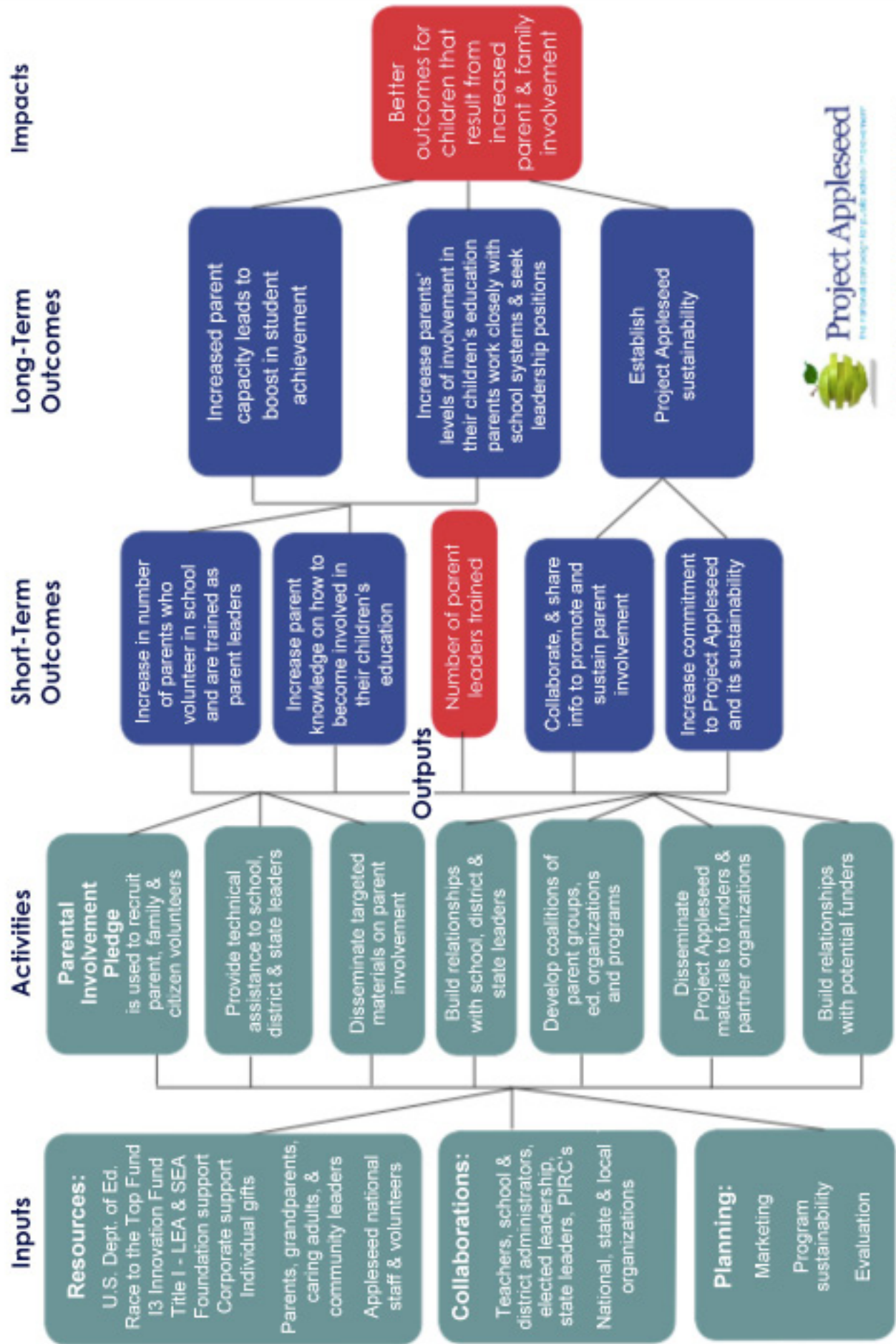
#### **Short-Term Outcomes**

- 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**

- Increased 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

# How Does Project Applesseed Work?



ADAPTED FROM THE HARVARD FAMILY RESEARCH PROJECT



## Need Ideas? We've Got It All From A-Z! Twenty-Six Ways to Reach Out to Parents.

**Hello From Project Appleseed!** When parents are involved in children's learning, at school and at home, schools work better and students learn more. Project Appleseed is working with schools, families, employers and community organizations to develop local partnerships that support a safe school environment where students learn to challenging standards. Passing out the Parental Involvement Pledge once or twice will not get many parents involved! To get the best results from your parental involvement efforts we recommend that you use Project Appleseed's web site as a resource and do some of the following:

**Ask** your school board, mayor, city council, state representative or governor to issue a proclamation celebrating Public School Volunteer Week (Third Week of April) & National Parental Involvement Day (Third Thursday in November) and highlight the value of parental involvement.

**Begin** with a Parental Involvement Pledge breakfast for families, community members, school leaders, teachers, and students. Food is a big draw! Host a series of breakfast forums on volunteering opportunities, higher standards, the school's curriculum, conflict resolution, dealing with peer pressure, linking community art, museum and cultural resources with the schools and applying to college.

**Check** <http://www.projectappleseed.org/chklist.html> and download the Checklist For An Effective Parent-School Partnership. One way to start improving your school's parent-school partnerships is by assessing present practices, says Joyce Epstein at Johns Hopkins University. Asking the right questions can help you evaluate how well your school is reaching out to parents. Which partnership practices are currently working well at each grade level? Which partnership practices should be improved or added in each grade? How do you want your school's family involvement practices to look three years from now?

**Duplicate** and Distribute the Parental Involvement Pledge which ask parents to volunteer 10 hours each in their local school and spend 15 minutes each night reading with their children. Sending the Pledge home with students will get a response rate of about 25%--or less. Asking parents to take the Pledge during their parent teacher conference will get a response rate approaching 80%. Constantly ask parents to take the Pledge at every opportunity. Use Project Appleseed's web site as a place in which parents can take the Pledge or Report Card online. The web site will print a hard copy for the school and parent. Once parents take the Pledge--**CALL THEM** and get them involved!



**Enlist** young people to play an important leadership role in family and community involvement in education. They may be your best salespeople and invaluable leaders in the effort to keep public attention and increase public engagement.

**Find** ways to make reading a fun part of everyday life. Community literacy might be a focus of your National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week activities. Hold storytelling nights, guest author and poetry readings, read-aloud programs, dramatic readings, book fairs and book drives, a read-a-thon or a book report festival, family literacy nights, or other literacy activities for the whole community. Work with local colleges and universities to help get work-study students and other college students into the schools as reading tutors. Older students, such as Girl Scouts, can also work as reading tutors for younger students.

**Get** the Parental Involvement Tool Box for other schools in your area. Project Appleseed can send other schools the tool that will dramatically increase parental involvement. This cost efficient tool is the learning compact called the Parental Involvement Pledge. With the Pledge the average school district can create thousands of hours of new volunteer time with a minimum wage value that is worth tens of thousands of dollars. A small investment that yields enormous dividends.

**Host** an open house at the school for parents and community members. Hold it in the evening or on the weekend so that more people can attend. At open house, ask every family to bring a member of the community to the picnic who did not have kids in the school. It provides parents with an opportunity to see the school firsthand and feel more comfortable with the idea of getting involved.

**Initiate** a parent involvement policy. Start with Project Appleseed's learning compact, the Parental Involvement Pledge. The Pledge provides a great opportunity to convey a school's commitment to involving families and the community. Set up a parent resource center where families can come to get more information on topics of interest and where families can meet and talk with one another and with school staff.

**Join** Project Appleseed. As a member you are part of a network that shares and implements promising practices in family involvement and in improving our schools. You may be interested in participating in the exciting national activities of Project Appleseed -- such as National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week. On our web site, we will keep you informed of these and other Project Appleseed activities.

**Kick** off National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week with a special welcome for new students and families in the community. In Bennington, Vermont, local businessman Terry Ehrich worked with the local school district to hold a first-day-of-school celebration. Local businesses gave their employees time off, and hundreds of parents went back to school with their children. Everyone involved agreed that the day was a great success!

**Launch** a community mentoring program where parent volunteers and college students mentor high school and middle school students who, in turn, can mentor elementary school students. Mentoring can involve learning math and science - key gate opening courses for college - going to a museum, community service activities, recreational activities such as a mentor basketball league, tutoring and homework help.

**Make** sure you involve all members of your community in your National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week efforts, including families and students who are limited English proficient and who have disabilities.

**Name** your special day Insert School Parental Involvement Day and Insert School Public School Volunteer Week.

**Organize** a rally and/or a parade. Often, communities with large events have a steering committee of various interested community and school leaders, such as the school superintendent, the mayor, school board members, city council members, local business people, and representatives from organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.



**Present** an honorary award to a local government official or local leader in recognition of his or her contribution to education in your community. Awards could be based on the level of involvement community members have given to the school. Celebrate with recognition ceremonies for teachers, students, parents, and community and religious organization volunteers who have made a long-term commitment to children's learning.

**Quiz** potential volunteers about the talents, skills, and time they are willing to share using the Inventory of Volunteer Interests in Step 3 of the Parental Involvement Pledge. Potential volunteers can be individual community members or local businesses and organizations with specialized services, such as technology know-how. Set up a Pledge skills bank to help match volunteers to school needs. Showcase volunteers in your National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week event.

**Read** and learn why PARENTING MAGAZINE & TEACHER MAGAZINE chose the founder of Project Appleseed as a parenting leader and one of the most influential people of the decade. You can also create awareness of the importance of parent, family and community involvement and the opportunities to get involved in education through a community wide public relations campaign.

**Submit** an article or guest column or write a letter to your local newspaper describing your event and explaining why building good parental involvement, mastering the basics, revitalizing the schools are so essential to improving education. Give a speech, or enlist local celebrities to speak, about parent involvement.

**Train** volunteers and teachers. Whether a 2nd-grade reading tutor or an 9th grade "algebra mentor", volunteers need training in their specific assignments. Teachers, in turn, need training in how to get families and community members involved and how to use volunteers in the classroom.

**Use** Project Appleseed's web site as a place in which parents and citizens can take the Pledge or Report Card online. The web site will print a hard copy for the school and parent. If your community has a lot of retired persons, start a senior school volunteer corps. Get your students to tutor the seniors on how to use computers. If your community has a lot of high-tech businesses, invite them to help your schools with their technology plans. If your community has businesses, organizations, faith communities and individuals interested in supporting schools financially, offer special community-sponsored grants to provide innovative programs and services that meet your school community's needs.

**Visualize** Where will your school be in mastering each of the five key education areas? How do you picture your community in 5 years? 10 years? 50? 100? How do you picture your schools? Your children? Your future? Create a plan to make it happen and start with National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week. Whatever the challenges, think big!

**Work** local businesses to encourage them to allow their employees to take the Parental Involvement Pledge and time off to come to school - to volunteer, to attend a parent-teacher conference, to find out what's going on in the schools.

**X-ray** your efforts to see how they're going. It's important to evaluate what you're doing to find out if you are achieving your aims, and how you can improve your efforts. An evaluation can be as simple as asking people what they think or conducting a short survey. Don't let problems go unattended. If something is not working, get a group together to problem-solve and figure out a better way. Taking the time to reflect on what's happening will be worth it in the long run when you see sustained success and true collaboration in place!

**Yell** it from the rooftops! Make sure your entire community knows about your National Parental Involvement Day and Public School Volunteer Week event(s). Contact your local news media outlets (newspapers, radio and television stations) to ask for their assistance in promoting your event and your partnership. Often they will write editorials, air public service announcements, or give coverage to your event.

**Zero** in on children. As everyone gets busy planning, meeting and working hard, don't lose sight to your ultimate goal - helping all children learn to high academic standards!





**Kevin Walker**

A Johnny Appleseed for the Schools

**Andre Agassi**

An Ace Who Scores for Kids

**Senator Barbara Boxer**

Safe-Kids Campaigner

**Nancye Gaj**

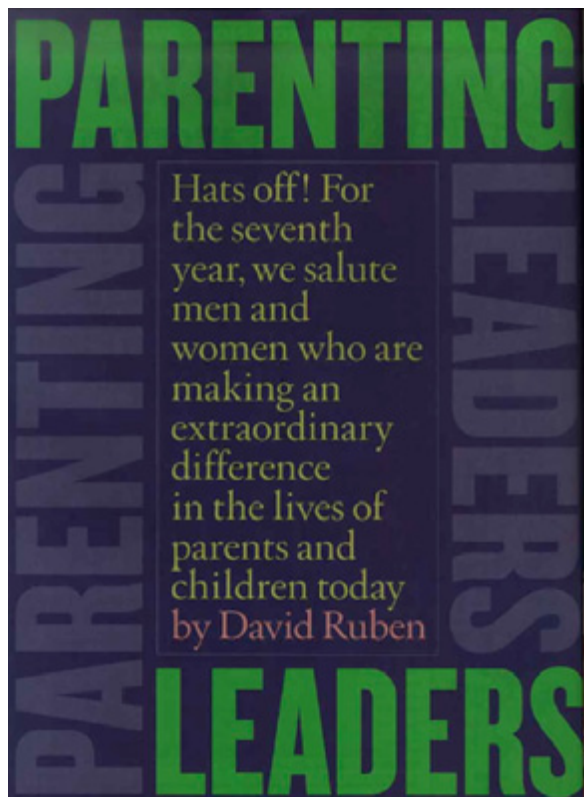
Reading Revolutionary

**Lynn Price & Andi Andree**

Family Menders

**Donna Lenhoff**

A Fighter for Family Leave



# A Johnny Appleseed for the Schools

Three years ago, Olive Chase was surfing the Internet when she stumbled onto Project Appleseed's website and clicked on its Parental Involvement Pledge.

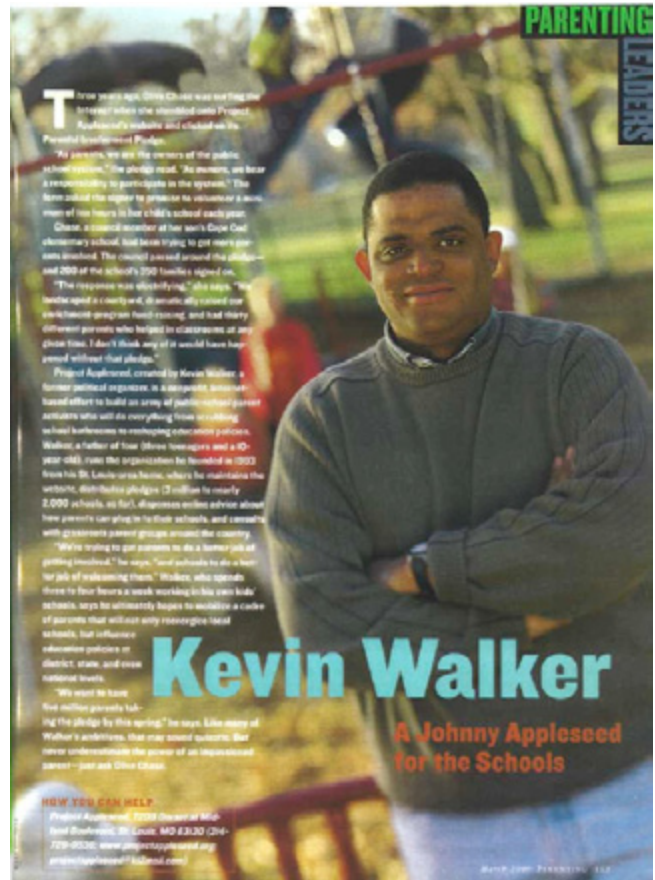
"As parents, we are the owners of the public school system," the pledge read. "As owners, we bear a responsibility to participate in the system." The form asked the signer to promise to volunteer a minimum of ten hours in her child's school each year.

Chase, a council member at her son's Cape Cod elementary school, had been trying to get more parents involved. The council passed around the pledge and 200 of the school's 350 families signed on.

"The response was electrifying," she says. "We landscaped a courtyard, dramatically raised our enrichment-program fund-raising, and had thirty different parents who helped in classrooms at any given time. I don't think any of it would have happened without that pledge."

Project Appleseed, created by Kevin Walker, a former political organizer, is a nonprofit, Internet-based effort to build an army of public-school parent activists who will do everything from scrubbing school bathrooms to reshaping education policies. Walker a father of four (three teenagers and a 10 year old), runs the organization he founded in 1993 from his St. Louis-area home, where he maintains the website, distributes pledges (3 million to nearly 2,000 school so far), dispenses on-line advice about how parents can plug in to their schools, and consults with grassroots parent groups around the country.

"We're trying to get parents to do a better job of getting involved," he says, "and schools to do a better job of welcoming them." Walker, who spends three to four hours a week working in his own kids' schools, says he ultimately hopes to mobilize a cadre of parents that will not only reenergize local schools, but influence education policies at district, state and even national levels.



# PARENTING

"We want to have five million parents taking the pledge by this spring," he says. Like many of Walker's ambitions, that may sound quixotic. But never underestimate the power of an impassioned parent - just ask Olive Chase.

How You Can Help: Project Appleseed, 520 Melville Ave, St. Louis, MO. 63130, Website: [www.projectappleseed.org](http://www.projectappleseed.org),