



When Good Is Not Good Enough: A Quest for Quality in Illinois' Schools

A Progress Report on The Statewide Action
and Grassroots Education (SAGE) Campaign

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“If Americans desire to be both ignorant and free, they expect what never has been and what never will be.”
Thomas Jefferson (1816)

Foreword

“As the citizenry of the great State of Illinois, we hold the responsibility of defending our right to freedom and quality education. May God give us the courage to meet these challenges with insight and determination as we present ourselves to inquiry, learning, and action on behalf of all Illinois students.” **Dr. Patricia Watkins**

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States of America, led the fight that resulted in public education becoming a hallmark of our democracy. He saw ignorance as a form of bondage, stating that if America was to remain free, she would need to enlighten her citizens through public education. The American people embraced these ideals, and ultimately the U.S. became the global leader in education and secured its position as a world power.

Based on our history, one would think that America would proudly equip every generation of students with the necessary and relevant academic skills to compete in a global world. But, oh, how we have fallen!

After decades of decline and a range of reforms, we still find that even our good schools are not good enough. Fortunately, there has been a growing chorus across the country, calling the U.S. back to its original commitment to being the global leader in education.

With the launch of the **Statewide Action & Grassroots Education Campaign in Illinois (SAGE)**, we add our voices to that chorus.

When Good Is Not Good Enough: A Quest for Quality in Illinois' Schools

The Statewide Action & Grassroots Education (SAGE) Campaign Progress Report

The United States has experienced many waves of school reform over the last few decades. Yet, the unfortunate reality is that American students still lag far behind their international peers in academic performance. In the subjects of math and science, the average *top-scoring* American students rank statistically lower than students in 23 other nations. Disturbingly, Americans are no longer the most educated in the world. Over the past ten years, at least ten nations have surpassed our high school graduation rate.

Because Illinois' performance mirrors that of the United States', education advocates have concerns, and rightfully so. These facts suggest that even Illinois' highest-performing students are not prepared to compete with their global peers. We are facing a national crisis that will definitely require bold action.

However, in order for the public to support and own these actions, we need to employ a process that raises public awareness, values collective learning, and decision-making, builds strong leadership, and spurs political action. And that process must be sustained by a base of constituencies. By building its education reform policy agenda on the shared ideas, values, and concerns of our multi-sector partners and collaborators, the SAGE Campaign will provide a timely, viable response to the challenges associated with attaining quality in the Illinois school system.

The 1983 report, "A Nation at Risk," sounded an alarm about the deteriorated condition of America's education system, stating, "American education can be both understood

and corrected if the people of our country, together with those who have public responsibility in the matter, care enough and are courageous enough to do what is required." Those words are equally relevant today. Based on the bold strides of the previous work of education advocates, it is clear that there is no lack of courage in Illinois. What we need now is collective action sustained by a multi-sector constituency.

How We Started

In 2008, Parents & Residents Invested in School and Education (PRISE) Reform—a coalition of community-based organizations—established to help amplify the voices of local parents on issues of school reform—began holding community discussions with representatives from Advance Illinois (a statewide education advocacy organization), the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago (a business group), the Academy for Urban School Leadership (an education management organization), and Grow Your Own Illinois (a teacher preparation program).

The plan was to obtain a better understanding about each group's goals and strategies for school reform. Though the goals and strategies were diverse, the discussions went well, culminating in each of the organizations making an enlightening presentation at PRISE's Citywide Education Organizing (CEO) Summit in March 2009. More than 350 concerned residents attended.

During the Summit, we also released our 2009 CEO report entitled, "Parent Perceptions vs. Student Realities," which revealed the perceptions and expectations of approximately 1,400

Chicago and suburban parents and other residents regarding the quality of their local schools. The attendees listened intently as parents presented the research results while the youth rebutted each perception, explaining the realities they struggled with daily. There was an obvious disconnect between parents' perceptions and student realities.

During the summit, participants discussed the information presented by each of the sector speakers as well as the youths' illuminating presentations on their lived experiences. When called to decide the next steps for our work, the 350 participants voted on several recommendations.

The top recommendation was that the presenting groups, including the youth, Advance Illinois, the Academy for Urban School Leadership, the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, and Grow Your Own should unite together to develop a shared policy agenda that captured the ideas, values, and concerns of all parties, with the goal of improving educational opportunities for all Illinois students.

Decision-making in the Face of Uncertainty

With this recommendation, PRISE's work expanded from a neighborhood project with a vision of amplifying the voices of Chicago parents in the school reform and decision-making process, to engaging in a broader, multi-sector, statewide education organizing campaign for high quality schools. While we did not know if this feat was even possible, over the next year, PRISE Reform's six community-based organizations, including Action Now, Neighbors United, People's Community Development

Association, Inner-city Muslim Action Network, West Town Leadership United, South West Organizing Project, and TARGET Area DevCorp, together with the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, the Academy for Urban School Leadership, and Advance Illinois, began to hold a series of meetings with the goal of trying to find out if it was even possible for us to integrate our common concerns about the quality of the Illinois educational system and then work together to achieve them.

Along the way, the group was joined by the Hands That Help Community Organization and the St. Paul Church of God in Christ from Rockford, Illinois; Youth With a Positive Direction Organization and the Main Street Church of the Living God from Decatur, Illinois; Central Pointe Community Services out of Bloomington, Illinois; Disciples for Christ Church from Oak Lawn, Illinois; and Ambassadors For Christ Church and Mothers Opposed to Violence Everywhere in Chicago. These organizations came together and united to launch the Statewide Action and Grassroots Education (SAGE) Campaign during the Quest for Quality Summit of 2010.

Where We Are Now

Using a social movement model, this project weaves together and amplifies the voices of parents, students, and leaders of community, business, philanthropy, and organizations calling on public officials, politicians, concerned citizens, and school leaders, to join the ranks of those that are committed to achieving a level of quality in Illinois schools that will rival our global competitors.

The SAGE Campaign Goals

1. Build consensus around policies that address the education concerns of our broad-based constituencies, including a cross section of community and partner groups;
2. Raise public awareness and amplify the voices of parents in the policy and decision-making process;
3. Mobilize 1000s of Illinois residents to advance substantial school reform policy that improves college readiness, reduces the dropout rate, and increases the quality of education for all Illinois students.

There are four components of the SAGE Campaign, including 1) Parent Development; 2) Youth Development; 3) Cross-Sector Learning and Advocacy Engagement; and 4) Statewide Mobilization.

About the Four Components of the SAGE Campaign

1. Parent Leadership Development Institute

Enhances critical thinking, leadership, and evaluation skills of parents, increasing their ability to develop and support a shared education policy agenda. The Institute training includes:

- 20 hours of basic organizing and training in what research reveals about quality schools;
- Leading surveys, interviews, and advocacy activities;
- Participating in focus groups and strategy sessions.

2. Young Researchers' Pipeline to Policy Professions

Creates employment pathways to research and policy professions for young people of color, by providing a yearlong comprehensive research and policy training program that connects youth with:

- Community organizations to identify research projects;
- Mentor-researchers to guide the design and implementation of research projects; and
- Other partners to train the Young Researchers on using popular education methods, such as, spoken word, street theatre, song, and social media to present research results.

3. Cross Sector Education & Policy Development

Convenes business people, parents, experts, advocates, researchers, and other education leaders to discuss community issues, education ideas, and successful campaigns to inform our shared policy agenda through:

- Collective learning opportunities
- Cross-sector relationship building
- Strategic policy discussions

4. Statewide Mobilization

Engages a cross-section of Illinois residents in advocating for a shared education reform agenda that benefits all Illinois students including,

- Cross-sector public education campaign
- Multilateral action agenda
- Forums, conferences, and rallies

The Statewide Action and Grassroots Education (SAGE) Campaign is a cross sector effort to move an education

reform policy agenda built on the shared ideas, values, and concerns of community, business, labor, and faith organizations, that are committed to improving the quality of education for all Illinois students.

This will not be an easy task; people have tried to accomplish these goals many times in the past and have found them stubbornly elusive. Fortunately, the unique nature of this coalition sets it apart from prior efforts. SAGE is intergenerational, multi-sector, statewide, and grassroots based. We use strategies that build participants' capacity to lead, learn, and advocate for change in a cross-sector environment. We are informed by lived experiences, quantitative research, legislative policies, and past advocacy efforts for school reform. These characteristics place the SAGE Campaign in a powerful position to actuate meaningful change in the policy reform arena.

What We Have Learned

Research suggests that in many cases, our culture is not aligned with many of the ideas that are common in high-performing countries that achieve academic excellence. Some of these ideas are reflected in the findings of the Young Researchers—a primary and active component of the SAGE Campaign.

Over the last five months, the Young Researchers—comprised of 12 youth, ages 14-23 years old—participated in a series of trainings aimed at unearthing primary issues impacting the U.S. and the Illinois school system. They found that in the not so distant past, the United States was the global leader, producing

more high school and college graduates than any other country in the world.

Just 30 years later, however, the U.S. school system has fallen far behind, ranking just 18th in comparison to 23 industrialized countries. Though, advocates and researchers argue that there are a multiplicity of reasons for this achievement gap, the Young Researchers sought to discover whether these theories align with their lived experiences and what could be done now to improve educational outcomes in Illinois schools.

The Young Researchers' Findings

Under the tutelage of mentor researchers, the youth analyzed approximately 100 Illinois schools and reviewed research about a number of high-performing foreign countries. Besides the familiar findings such as teacher quality, funding equity, social ills, and the shallow pool of qualified school leaders, the Young Researchers discovered that the United States school system lacks many of the common traits found in high-performing nations.

Asian teachers spend an average of 25% of the total classroom time on mathematics, while American teachers spend approximately 10% of class time on math.

The average school year in high-performing countries is 62 days longer than the U.S. school year.

Some of these characteristics could be added easily to our school system, while others would require legislation and a change in our approach to learning.

The three characteristics found consistently across all of the highest-performing countries of Japan, and China, but lacking in the United States, include: 1) more class time allotted to the core subjects of math and science; 2) more time spent in school; and 3) higher expectations for student achievement.

In high performing countries, teachers spend substantially more time teaching the core subject areas of math and science. Asian teachers spend on average one-fourth of the total classroom time on mathematics, while American teachers spend approximately one-tenth of their time teaching math. Clearly, these differences can have a tremendous impact on the educational achievement of American children, including a decreased familiarity with core subjects and poor academic outcomes.

In addition to the disparities found in classroom instruction on core subjects, it is important to understand the differences between American and Asian educational settings. According to Stevenson (2002), American and Asian teachers differ in three fundamental

areas workload, responsibilities, and teaching skills and requirements.

Chinese and Japanese children attend school for a half-day on Saturdays and have fewer holidays than do American children. As a result, the average length of the school year in these nations is about 240 days, when compared to an average of 178 days in the U.S. (Stevenson et. al, 1986). This time difference allows for greater opportunities for Asian teachers to engage their students with more in-depth lessons.

Parents and teachers in Asian societies place more of an emphasis on hard work or effort, while parents and teachers in the United States are more likely to believe that innate ability or disability has a greater influence on a child's performance. Moreover, the traditional philosophy of education in East Asia proposes that one's ability is limitless as long as he or she strives hard. Because of such distinct cultural differences, Asian students are encouraged to work harder at academic pursuits, and generally have more positive attitudes about achievement than do their American

High-performing countries promote a culture of learning that holds higher expectations for student achievement.

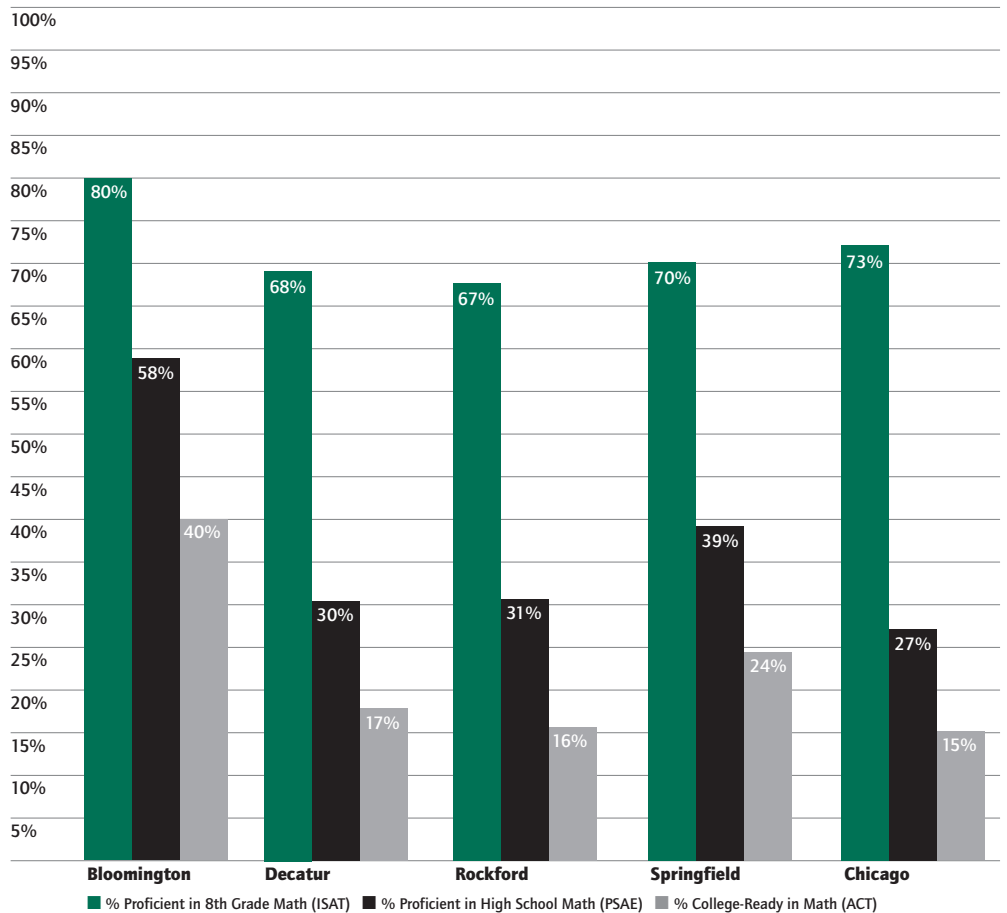
counterparts. These traits are seldom found in the Illinois school system. However, the Young Researchers did discover one Illinois circumstance that should be addressed immediately, namely, the “8th Grade Cliff.”

The 8th Grade Cliff

After analyzing the report cards of nearly 100 Illinois schools, the Young Researchers found that achievement levels across the state appear to

plummet as students move from 8th grade to high school. This is not because achievement drops as students enter high school, but because there is no alignment between the academic standards for the elementary school test — Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) — and the tests administered in high school — the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) and the American College Testing (ACT) exam.

**The 8th Grade Cliff
Student Proficiency Levels in Math—2009
Illinois 8th Grade, High School, & College Readiness**



Source: The Interactive Illinois Report Card Website



Young Researchers for the SAGE Campaign

Their names and organizations are as follows:

Ameenah Muhammad
Inner-City Muslim Action Network

Aniyah Orr-Target Area DevCorp
(not pictured)

Areyonne Young
Target Area DevCorp
(not pictured)

Christine Spires
Action Now

Deondrie C. Harris
Action Now

Jasmine Harris
Action Now

Jessica F. Cobbs
UCCRO (not pictured)

Joaquin Perez
West Town Leadership United

LaQuida Van Pelt
Target Area DevCorp

Sadia Nawab
Inner-City Muslim Action Network
(not pictured)

Simone Snulligan
Target Area DevCorp

Tariq Simpkins
Inner-City Muslim Action Network
(not pictured)

Valencia Pringle
Target Area DevCorp

Every public school student across the state is vulnerable to the “8th grade cliff.”

Therefore, even though students may indeed “meet or exceed” the performance standards in elementary school based on the ISAT, their scores reflect a drop in performance just three years later when they take the PSAT and ACT exams. This discrepancy is due in part to the fact that the state “lowered” Illinois elementary school standards in 2006, which effectively re-determined the ISAT score required to “meet or exceed” the state standards. As a result, the cut score, at which a student is deemed proficient on the ISAT, is so low that students who score just above it have only a slim chance of meeting state standards in high school (Easton, Ponisciak, and Luppescu, 2008).

Moreover, citing the Consortium on Chicago School Research, a report issued by Advance Illinois, entitled “The State We’re In: Advancing Education in Illinois” (2008), noted that eighth graders who meet state standards, scoring proficient on the ISAT, have less than a 10 percent chance of achieving a score of 20 (*the average level of achievement required for students to have a 50% chance of obtaining a B or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses*) on the ACT in the 11th grade. As rightly noted in

the Advance Illinois 2008 report, Illinois students should be able to rely on two things: first, that reaching proficiency on tests of academic achievement in elementary and middle school signals that they are on track for life after high school; and second, that the high school diploma they earn means they are prepared for college. Unfortunately, neither is the case in Illinois.

Maintaining the status quo of low academic standards in elementary school leaves students susceptible to the “8th grade cliff,” placing them at a substantial disadvantage upon entering high school. Many of these students eventually languish-through or dropout of high school, and are therefore ill-prepared for careers and/or post-secondary education. These statistics are startling; and, they call for immediate reform in our educational system.

Because a large percentage of elementary school students meet the ISAT standards every year and receive good grades on their report cards, parents, advocates, and education organizers have been lulled to sleep concerning this issue. However, when students reach high school, many parents will



be shocked to discover that their children’s “good” schools and “good” grades are not good enough to meet the demands and competition of our times. And for many, it will be too late.

Every public school student across the state is vulnerable to the “8th grade cliff.” This will continue to be the case until parents, students, and other partner advocates demand significant changes to our educational system in Illinois.

The Next Steps for the Campaign

The entire state is faced with persistent questions that no sector-group can answer alone. In building the SAGE campaign, we are asking ourselves a series of challenging questions, some of which will be asked by parents and other partners as we raise public awareness about the conditions of our schools.



Dealing With Daunting Questions

What options does a community have TODAY when the highest performing elementary school in the neighborhood prepares less than 20% of its graduates for high school?

Lived Experience

Sharon always brought home straight “A’s” in school. Her parents were very proud of her accomplishments, especially because Sharon attended the highest performing school in the neighborhood. When Sharon reached the 7th grade, her mother enrolled her in a high-performing private school. Ms. Perkins was shocked to learn that Sharon ranked below average in the major subjects of math and science, especially since she had always been a straight “A” student. Ms. Perkins, stated, “As it turns out, what equates to an “A” in the highest performing school in the neighborhood may equal a “D” in other schools.”

In light of the fact that education is one of the key drivers behind building a highly skilled and diversified workforce, what are the prospects of attracting new businesses in Illinois when business leaders learn that the Illinois’ school system has produced 1.7 million high school drop-outs; adds 42,000 new drop-outs, every year, and graduates only about 76% of its high school students, many of which are functionally illiterate?

Lived Experience

One Illinois employer lamented the fact that his firm rejects 840 out of every 1000 applications submitted by Illinois high school graduates for entry-level jobs, because the applicants, reportedly, fail to complete the application forms correctly.

What choices does a student have TODAY when nearly 90% of the high schools in the district prepare fewer than one out of five of its students to meet standards (CPS High Schools, 2008)?

Lived Experience

In light of her daughter's elementary school experience, Ms. Perkins struggled to find a good high school for Sharon. She started by researching all of the high schools in the surrounding neighborhoods. After much analysis, she learned that only 15% of the students at the local high schools in her neighborhood and in surrounding areas met or exceeded the standards in math and reading. Ms. Perkins lamented the fact that her daughter had no real choices for a quality high school education.





Learning the Hard Truth

In 2008, PRISE Reform and other community advocates uncovered an important issue that may not have been considered in past efforts to reform schools. After interviewing 1400 parents in 44 Chicago communities and 6 suburbs, PRISE and other organizing partners were surprised to learn that 80% of the parents reportedly believed that their local schools were performing well; 75% said they believed the school had high expectations for their child; and 93% expected their high-schoolers to graduate well-prepared for college.

Most were unaware of the elevated drop-out rates at their local schools, the poor achievement outcomes, and that violence is a major problem (*Parent Perceptions vs. Student Realities, 2009*).

Re-thinking the Plan

SAGE collaborators, including PRISE Reform, Advance Illinois, the Academy for Urban School Leadership, and the Civic Committee of the Commercial Club of Chicago, saw a clear disconnect between what Illinoisans expect and what they ultimately get from our education system.

In addition, we realized that working separately to achieve similar goals was myopic and disempowering.

Further, in the late 1980s, community advocates, business leaders, academia, and philanthropy united forces to move an education agenda that was hugely successful in changing how schools operate. Their *combined* efforts resulted in a successful social movement for local control of public schools. SAGE collaborators point to that model as a precedent for a new social movement for quality public education in Illinois.

The Campaign Work

In order for the SAGE Campaign to be effective, business, community, academia, and advocacy must close ranks and work together. To mobilize this work, SAGE collaborators will develop 15 consortia across the state that will include one or more parent organizing groups, an education advocacy organization, a church or faith organization, and a business group, with the objective that the member groups participate in common activity and pool their resources to achieve campaign goals.

Parents identified through the process of organizing and leadership development will work as collaborators and decision-makers within local and state consortia to advance comprehensive school reform policy that result in:

- meaningful opportunities for parent engagement in the schools;
- an increased focus on providing social supports;
- equitable distribution of quality teachers and other resources;
- adequate funding for all Illinois schools; and
- timely access to quality data for parents, teachers, principals, and other decision-makers to be utilized to raise achievement, improve college readiness, and reduce the drop-out rate.

The SAGE project collaborators began meeting in late 2008 and have laid the groundwork for a new level of cooperation and shared understanding among diverse groups, previously working separately to improve education. As it builds momentum, the SAGE Campaign will expand to cover additional cities across the state.

Timing Is Everything & Now Is The Time

The timing is right for a new social movement for quality education in Illinois. Research shows that when there is an evident chasm between the current aspirations of people and the present reality with which they live, the stage is set for a social movement.

The glaring gap between reality and perception was well documented in the CEO report and is clearly reflected in the multiplicity of efforts by youth groups, community organizations, business entities, and government, working to achieve better educational outcomes for Illinois students. From Senator Meeks' efforts to provide vouchers for students attending the lowest performing schools, to business groups working to expand charter schools, to community groups defending local governance of public





schools, creating a pipeline for teachers of color, and building youth capacity to reduce the high school drop-out rate, there is no lack of effort in Illinois for creating strong and effective schools.

What is missing is collective effort. Thus, SAGE looks to social movement theory to inform its work. Three themes are particularly salient in most contemporary movement theory literature.

- 1 The presence of extant mobilizing structures (i.e., organizations that regularly mobilize people);
- 2 The collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action (i.e. they learn together and share an understanding of what the issues are and which goals and outcomes represent best-case solutions); and
- 3 Timing that acknowledges political opportunities and challenges (i.e., a window of opportunity opens to move political will, such as the 2010 elections or other events).

Aligned with social movement practice, the SAGE Campaign has partnered with experienced and respected organizations with mobilizing capacities worked over the last year to develop a collective

interpretation of the challenges of public education and has prepared a five-month learning and leadership plan for grassroots mobilization around legislative sessions, with a specific focus on the 2010 gubernatorial race. (See Appendix A & B)

Our Commitment

Admittedly, numerous efforts have been made to engage parents in social movement around education reform in the last decade, but most have been fragmented, achieving limited success and ultimately slowing community engagement to define quality education. These failures may be attributed to poor coordination among reformers, myopic messaging, flawed information, lack of support, apathy, and relentless skepticism. However, with cooperation from our collaborators, the SAGE Campaign in Illinois will overcome many of the obstacles that have short-circuited previous attempts to mobilize a broad-base of informed constituents to push for real changes in our education system.

As was the case with the neighborhood and citywide iterations of this project, the SAGE Campaign is committed to creating powerful responses to the daunting questions that plague our school system. We will use research to inform our work. We will make the hard choices.

And we will demand changes that will increase quality in our schools. Justifiably, our demands for quality schools will not be in word only, but in actions and in deeds, uniting, empowering, and building capacity of parents and partners to move a shared policy agenda for quality

schools. As we achieve our goals of advancing quality and educational achievement, Illinois will no longer hold the dubious education title of “average state in a below average nation,” but, rather, we will be known as “a shining example of academic excellence”—a cross-sector vision that all of us can embrace.

Collaborating organizations:

- Action Now
- Advance Illinois
- Ambassadors for Christ Church
- Association of Elementary School Parents
- Academy for Urban School Leadership
- Central Pointe Community Services—
Bloomington
- Civic Committee of the Commercial Club
of Chicago
- Disciples for Christ Church—Oak Lawn
- Hands That Help Organization—
Rockford
- Inner-City Muslim Action Network
- Main Street Church of the Living God—
Decatur
- Mothers Opposed to Violence Everywhere
- Neighbors United—Oak Lawn
- People’s Community Development
Association
- Southwest Organizing Project
- St. Paul Church of God in Christ—
Rockford
- TARGET Area DevCorp
- West Town Leadership United
- Youth With a Positive Direction—
Decatur



Appendix A

SAGE Campaign

5-Month Learning and Action Component

Learning:

- 1 Assessment of local schools
- 2 Understanding where Illinois fits in the global community
- 3 How to articulate an accurate message about Illinois schools
- 4 Understanding of how to share information with family, friends, public officials
- 5 How to support local school development
- 6 How schools are funded & possible funding sources

Action:

- 1 Advocacy activities
 - a. Reach out to and lead:
 - Family*
 - Friends*
 - Co-workers*
 - Legislators*
 - b. Demand that legislators put education reform at the top of their agenda including:
 - Parent engagement and community outreach in low performing areas*
 - Quality school leaders*
 - Access and use of quality data in a timely manner for parents, teachers, and principals*
 - Adequacy in funding to support quality schools*

Time-Line

- April 29-30: 2-day Train the trainer
Survey Revision
Learning components 1-4
- May-June: Complete 1500-2000 surveys
- June-July: Focus group discussion
- July- September: Parent and Leadership Trainings

- September: Strategy Sessions
- October-December: Demand
- January-May 2011: Legislative/Policy Initiative

Appendix B

SAGE Campaign Policy Goals

Policy Goal

Move a statewide education policy agenda that increases the quality of education for all Illinois students, improves college readiness, and reduces the dropout rate

Current Policy Focus

school leadership and teacher quality, including preparation, evaluation, and accountability; parent engagement and increased social supports, especially in struggling schools; better access to quality data for decision-making; and adequacy in school funding.

Learning, Leadership, and Education Organizing Work

Strategic Steps

- 1 Build out our Education Discussion Group (EDG): The decision-making body that includes representatives from consortia in cities outside of Chicago and eight partner-groups in Chicago, along with business, advocacy, academia, and faith groups.
- 2 Develop an adaptable organizing model in partnership with 13 groups from around the state that incorporates a cross-section of stakeholders that work toward amplifying the voice of parents and partners in the school reform decision-making process.
- 3 Identify a lead CBO partner to form consortia in each Illinois city.
 - a. *Assist lead CBO with identifying a*

- cross section of stakeholder partners.*
- b. *Provide support and training for local consortium to establish and approve organizing model that works toward amplifying the voice of parents, youth, and sector-partners in the school reform decision-making process.*
- c. *Assist with the development and adoption of a shared policy agenda for statewide campaign.*
- d. *Ensure strong community leadership in the consortia and in the EDG.*

- 4 Provide structured action-learning opportunities, including school assessments, leadership development, and basic organizing training, to empower parents and other stakeholders for action.
- 5 Engage in ongoing advocacy activities to promote a shared policy agenda, including mobilization of a 1,000-parent statewide action network on specific campaigns.

Outcomes

- 1 A trained leadership core of several hundreds parents, students, and other stakeholders (including parent organizing groups, business entities, advocacy groups, churches, education management organizations, and social service agencies), with a sophisticated understanding of successful school reform strategies.
- 2 Increased parent engagement in local school and education reform efforts.
- 3 Expanded youth engagement and leadership development.
- 4 Mobilization of a cross-section of partners around a shared policy agenda.
- 5 Improved state-level education policy that increases the quality of education for all Illinois students, improves college readiness, and reduces the dropout rate.



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