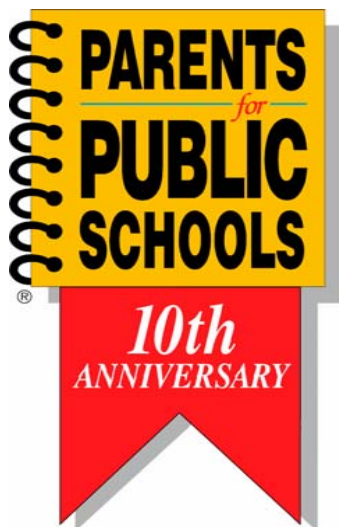


Gaining Traction:

A Report of the Founding and First Decade of Parents for Public Schools, Inc.



1991 – 2001

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SOULMATE SALUTES

The work of public school advocacy and reform requires many hearts and hands and voices. Throughout this first decade, PPS has been supported and nurtured by many individuals. It is not practical to list by name the thousands of parents who have joined this movement because of their commitment to public education in their own communities and their conviction about a more civil society. But chapter profiles, national board and membership rosters, annual gifts, victories in the schools, and news stories from the trenches record their hard work and its many forms. We salute these soulmates.

And there are others: enlightened corporate and civic leaders, a rare mayor or two, maverick superintendents, dedicated teachers, grandparents and extended family members, and allied organizations. They, too, are part of the fabric of Parents for Public Schools. They have stood with us as part of the larger community, without which public schools cannot exist or survive.

And finally, a word of thanks to our funders for recognizing that among all the stakeholders in public education, public school parents make the most *personal* investment of all. Their financial investment in us has made all the difference.

Kelly Allin Butler
Executive Director
April 2002

SPECIAL TRIBUTE

It is fitting to pay tribute to two individuals whose vision and confidence in Parents for Public Schools have made them effective champions for our work within their respective philanthropic agencies. This organization has been significantly strengthened by their involvement. Because of them, we are gaining traction. Thank you....

**C. Thompson Wacaster
and the Trustees and Staff of
The Phil Hardin Foundation
Meridian, Mississippi**

**for uninterrupted support towards program development
of the national organization since its founding.**



Janice Petrovich

**and the Trustees and Staff of
The Ford Foundation
New York, New York**

**for strategic investment in planning and capacity-building
of the national network since 1995.**

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THE FOUNDING OF A MOVEMENT

Local Efforts Ignite National Vision

Parents for Public Schools began informally in Jackson, Mississippi in the mid-1980's to recruit families to stay in or come back to the public schools in the discouraging aftermath of desegregation. The founders—twenty public school parents--were concerned about the impact a reconstituted, but still-divided and inequitable system (public vs. private) would have on educational quality. As individual parents, they valued public education for what it offered their own children. As public citizens, they felt a responsibility to support and improve an institution that would benefit *all* children.

The wholesale abandonment of public education by Jackson's civic and economic leaders was intolerable to these courageous few. They knew that without a viable public school system, the city could not thrive. Their early challenge was to market not just the public schools to parents but the importance of public education to a complacent community.

Recruitment efforts took many forms, from individual tours of the schools, to special meet-the-faculty receptions for prospective parents in the homes of public schools parents, to full-scale ad campaigns, including billboards and televised promotions. Within eighteen months, these twenty parents grew to more than eight hundred families and Parents for Public Schools of Jackson was born. The year was 1989.

Interest from the national media in what parent activists were doing in this southern city to stem the tide of middle class flight fueled momentum. As parents in other cities joined the work, the National organization was formed in 1991. Today, Parents for Public Schools, Inc. has community-based efforts in more than a dozen states--each inspired by and modeled after the mother chapter in Jackson.

PPS Mission

Parents for Public Schools is a national organization of community-based chapters working to strengthen public schools through broad-based enrollment. Invigorated by a diverse membership, our proactive involvement helps public schools attract *all* families in a community by making sure *all* schools effectively serve *all* children. We believe that quality public education is vital to our democracy and to America's future.

Expanding the Mission: Middle Class and the Issue of Equity

From the beginning and because we believe the health of a community is tied to its public schools, PPS has recruited broad-based public school enrollment that is reflective of the whole community. We are the only organization of its kind engaged in this recruitment work and our strategy to retain middle class resources remains an important value and feature of the organization.

However, because the early vision did not forecast a national movement, PPS's mission has evolved over time. We recognize that the vast majority of public school families, especially in urban and rural sites, never entertain an exit option, and a lot of them are stuck in failing and under-resourced schools. For this reason, our new work to improve public schools--enhanced by a commitment to equity--knits together three important elements:

- The strength of middle class families as participants in reform;
- The needs of underserved families to be better served, as well as their untapped potential to be included in the reform process; and
- The broader interests and responsibility of the community to provide quality education for all.

Expanding the Work: Promoting a New Brand of Parent Involvement

In working on school improvement to benefit all children in a system, PPS has chosen to focus its efforts at the district level where the voices of public school parents are often missing. PPS

aims to elevate the role of parents in public school advocacy and reform by promoting a new standard and a new attitude for involvement at every level. PPS members think of themselves as **owners** of a system; you will recognize them by these traits of meaningful parent involvement...

Equal partners - PPS reworks relationships between families, communities and schools so that parents are equal and actively engaged partners, not passive, external constituents of their public school systems.

Proactive problem solvers – PPS moves parents beyond reactive, help-only-when-asked modes to identify problems and bring their talents and ideas to the policy table, not just the homework table.

Effective decision makers – PPS provides the resources and ideas that help parents work with educators to define and analyze issues and find solutions.

Standard raisers – PPS challenges mediocrity at every level in public schools by setting high standards and helping student and educators meet these standards.

Mentor to others – PPS paves the way for ongoing and significant involvement at all levels of the district by creating welcome spaces and meaningful roles for more parents.

Committed to diversity in action -- PPS crosses racial, cultural, and socioeconomic lines to develop partnerships among parents that are needed to effectively promote the best education for *all* students.

Think nationally and act locally – PPS does its local work as part of a national effort and shares resources and ideas with other PPS parents across the nation.

Community advocates – PPS answers a civic duty to help make public schools effective for all children and strong anchors for their communities.

Fostering Best Practices

Parents for Public Schools chapters have access to best practices from a national clearinghouse of information and network of grassroots parents who share common goals. PPS sponsors annual conferences, manuals for chapter formation, action guides about specific strategies, and consultation on fundraising, strategic planning and leadership development. We help communities develop local solutions for local problems with local leadership.

PPS encourages parents to think differently about their involvement and to move front and center to initiate and propel reform. More and more, chapters are having significant impact because these questions guide planning and implementation...

- How does this practice demonstrate the attitude that parents are owners of the schools? How does it improve the working relationships with teachers, administrators, policy makers, and the community?
- How does this practice yield new skills for parents that help improve schools and boost student achievement?
- How does this practice provide opportunities for the effective involvement of all parents, especially those not typically at the decision-making table?
- How does this practice bring about district level action that benefits *all* children?
- How does this practice affect student performance directly or indirectly?
- How does this practice affect the practice of teachers, principals, or superintendents directly or indirectly?
- How does this practice improve the process of inclusive decision-making directly or indirectly?
- How does this practice build confidence and inspire hope in public education?

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE FIRST TEN YEARS

During these first ten years, PPS has carried out work at the grassroots with parents in more than 80 communities in 28 states. From these experiences, we have learned a lot about parent organizing, school governance and finance, and the equity issues that are driving public education reform. We have waded boldly into some turbulent, sometimes hard-to-navigate waters and we've had some remarkable victories.

As an organization *of* parents, *for* parents, PPS possesses an unrivaled perspective and intimate knowledge of the hunger public school parents have for more meaningful involvement and the intense isolation they experience in attempting to “go it alone.”

We understand the frustrations that seemingly savvy parents have with bureaucratic encounters. We know the total alienation historically disenfranchised parents have with educational elitism, racism, and classism. We have used each of these experiences—painful and positive—to inform and improve our work. The following chapter profiles tell some of the challenges and victories along the way.

Parents for Public Schools of Jackson, Mississippi
Parents for Public Schools of Starkville, Mississippi
Parents for Public Schools of Pitt County, North Carolina
Parents for Public Schools of Waco, Texas
Cincinnati, Ohio Parents for Public Schools
Charleston County, South Carolina Parents for Public Schools
Community & Parents for Public Schools of Portland, Oregon
Parents for Public Schools of San Francisco, California
Parents for Public Schools of Syracuse, New York
The PPS Rural Experience
Jefferson Davis County, Mississippi
Hudson Valley, New York
Lancaster, South Carolina



The Mother of All Chapters PPS of Jackson, Mississippi *Incorporated, September 1989*

Enrollment: 32,000; Schools: 58

The Mother Chapter Ten Years Later. The “mother of all chapters” continues to serve as a laboratory for many of the strategies that get tested and perfected across the network. Following the early recruitment efforts, PPS of Jackson recognized the need and potential of parents to be involved in tackling persistent, systemic problems in the district. Several strategies have been underway during this time...

In 1996 the chapter formed a district-level task force to accelerate school improvement. Within a year's time, the task force, made of up parent liaisons from all middle- and high schools in the district developed a comprehensive plan to resolve the issue of overcrowding. After a thorough examination of school facilities usage and enrollment trends in the city, the chapter made a strategic report to the School Board. It included emergency measures (before the end of the year), intermediate measures (to be completed during the next school year) and long-term measures (for more permanent resolution of problems). The School Board adopted the chapter's recommendations wholesale and the chapter is now monitoring the final stages of the long-term plan, which includes oversight of funding for additional construction.

Beginning in 1999, PPS of Jackson became the fiscal agent and lead collaborator for a multi-partner initiative targeting the lowest performing feeder system in the district. Working in alliance with a local college's Principal's Institute, principals from the targeted schools, and The Algebra Project, the Ask4More collaborative is training school site teams in the use of data to build and implement better school improvement plans that yield improved student achievement. The enthusiastic response has prompted the superintendent to plan for replicating this model across the district with guidance from PPS.

Today, PPS of Jackson is working in partnership with the Mississippi Department of Education and the Public Education Forum to launch a public engagement campaign across the State of Mississippi to educate the public, gather input, and garner support for newly-mandated accountability measures in public schools. Again, PPS is the initiator of and lead agent in this important project.

Recruitment Pays Off
PPS of Starkville, Mississippi
Incorporated, March 1991

Enrollment: 4,700; Schools: 7

Parents in Starkville, Mississippi knew a good thing when they saw it. Taking their cues from the Mother Chapter, this university town formed the second chapter of Parents for Public Schools. It was this decision that prompted the formation of the national organization, and thus launched a movement.

From the beginning, PPS of Starkville has consistently fulfilled its role to showcase the good schools this college town provides. Through their efforts, PPS of Starkville avoided the plight of so many southern communities in the aftermath of desegregation. Middle class families stuck with the public schools. Racial make up of the district has remained completely constant since the chapter first began its work. (32% white; 64% African-American; 4% other). Intensive hands-on involvement by parents during the past ten years has resulted in national accolades for this mid-size district:

- ★ Sudduth Elementary was among the first schools in the nation to be designated a Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education;
- ★ Overstreet Elementary School was named one of the 51 Best in the U.S. by *Redbook Magazine*;
- ★ Armstrong Middle School was selected one of seven schools in the nation to develop a model for successful middle schools; and
- ★ Starkville High received a Kennedy Center for Performing Arts Creative Ticket Award for excellence in the arts.

PPS of Starkville produces annual events that have become familiar community traditions to promote public education and maintain broad-based enrollment;

- Spring kindergarten open houses; family barbeques in the fall; seasonal pre-schooler parties aggressively recruit prospective parents.
- Annual Celebration of the Arts highlights arts infusion in the schools;
- Regular paid advertisements in the local press touts the quality education available in Starkville Public Schools.

Diversity, Unity, Equity
PPS of Pitt County, North Carolina
Incorporated, September 1992

Enrollment: 20,300; Schools: 31

PPS of Pitt County (PPSPC) works on many levels to help empower parents to work across barriers of race and class to build quality schools for all of Pitt County's children. Diversity was an early theme for this chapter, reflected in their Back-to-School Picnics to celebrate cultural diversity through culinary expressions.

By forming coalitions of individuals and organizations, PPSPC has a united voice when advocacy is needed. The chapter actively teaches parents the skills they need to help their children at home, to communicate with their children's teachers and administrators, to advocate for their children's individual needs, and to work toward system-wide improvement by serving on School Improvement Teams and other district committees.

Collaboration is the watchword for PPS of Pitt County. They have initiated and continue to lead a countywide Parent Involvement Coalition that serves as a communications platform for all organizations working to support the public schools. In addition they have spearheaded the Community Issues Coalition, which sponsors a series of Study Circles on Race Relations.

The barriers of race and class are profound in this rural-like district of 20,000+ students. With the goal of quality schools that serve all children well, PPS of Pitt County is tackling these barriers by creating more roles for parents and preparing them to serve effectively. The chapter's fully funded Grassroots Leadership Development program is designed to reach out to parents whose children are at high risk of failure and to help them develop the skills necessary to assure their children's success. The project begins in three schools whose School Improvement Teams do not reflect the demographics of the students they serve. Through parent-friendly workshops and hands-on training operated from a neighborhood base, new parent leaders are emerging and the profile of decision-makers in Pitt County schools is beginning to change.

The staying power of this PPS chapter made it a logical site for one of two satellite offices (est. August 1998) of the national organization.

Well, they're PUBLIC Schools!

PPS of Waco, Texas

Incorporated, July 1993

Enrollment: 16,000; Schools: 30

Through hard work and high visibility, PPS Waco has played a significant role in creating an environment that supports difficult yet necessary decisions by district-level decision-makers. More importantly, it has expanded opportunities for parents to be much more involved as decision-makers themselves. The chapter has worked successfully to close the gap between the schools and the business community by bringing civic leaders into dialogue and strategic planning with the district. Because of this chapter's focused work to renew the community connections and increase parent input on many levels, the district's comprehensive promotion policy became a model for Texas. Performance data reveal that learning in all areas has significantly improved, most especially for minority students.

In keeping with its mission to build stronger alliances between the district and the community to which it is accountable, these parent leaders pay close attention to the workings of the school board. Through diplomatic and threatened legal channels, PPS Waco was responsible for moving school board committee meetings from behind closed doors back into the light of day. In applauding this parent-initiated victory the local paper declared, "Well, they're PUBLIC schools!" Taking the notion of accountability to new heights, now five of the seven Waco Independent School District school board members are from the PPS ranks.

Early on, PPS Waco successfully advocated a change in district policy to increase the number of parents serving on site-based governance teams. The chapter serves as a resource to the district to train teams for more effective work. As a result of this more intensive work at the campus-level, the chapter has zeroed in on faculty turnover and disparities in educational offerings among schools. Its newly launched Teacher Recruitment and Retention project makes it the first chapter in the network tackling this aspect of equity. In the first year, teacher vacancies at the start of school were at an all time low of twelve.

The strength of this chapter made it a logical site for one of two satellite offices (est. January 2000) of the national organization.

Who's Not at the Table?

PPS of Cincinnati, Ohio

Incorporated, May 1995

Enrollment: 42,000; Schools: 75

Cincinnati PPS (CPPS) has its roots in political activism. The founding members already enjoyed good working relationships with district and civic leadership. Many of them had long been involved in a local organization that lobbied for improved funding for public schools. The district itself has been on the cutting edge nationally for standards-based reform, enlightened union leadership, and corporate involvement. The city has been under fire for heightened racial tensions. All of these factors have contributed to the work and challenges of CPPS.

CPPS set out to mobilize grassroots parents across the city. Increasing the involvement of under-represented families remains a chapter priority.

- Low attendance on the first day of school in the poorest neighborhoods was due in part to a lack of school supplies among low-income families. CPPS launched a citywide Back to School/Ready to Learn initiative and distributed more than 4,600 book bags of supplies to Cincinnati's most vulnerable children. Families from every one of the district's 75 schools came to get supplies. As a result, Day 1 attendance resembled attendance two-weeks into the school year. Pressing further, they discovered that many low-income family paychecks had run out by the first day of school when it was time to buy supplies. Successful lobbying moved the official starting day forward. This project has forged new relationships among parents across the lines of race and class and engaged the community in solving a problem.
- As the chapter grows in membership, CPPS hosts three "roundtable" forums a year to foster dialogue across a wider spectrum of public school parents and the superintendent. More than 60% of the schools have participated in these forums to bring building level/parent concerns to the district's attention.
- With growing unity and confidence among parents, CPPS is tackling district-wide issues through a newly established Parent Involvement Task Force. Parent-led work groups are focusing on five areas of concern identified by parents across the district: district-level and site governance, volunteer involvement, communications, and parent friendly school issues. These work groups provide new opportunities and support for under-represented parents to play unprecedented leadership roles.

Wing Walking
Charleston County, South Carolina PPS
Incorporated, July 1998
Enrollment: 48,000; Schools: 75

Public education, as an enduring entity to teach children of all races, creeds, and colors, is primarily a 21st Century construct in Charleston County, South Carolina. Those who chose to leave the system after integration occurred have given little moral support to Charleston County public schools and have fostered a lack of trust in the public schools in segments of the community. Into this environment steps Charleston County Parents for Public Schools (CCPPS).

Since 1998 CCPPS has envisioned a role for parents in helping to bring about school improvements by building unprecedented dialogue in this community of historic divisions. “Wing walking” is a skill perfected by this chapter that describes the balancing act that these parent leaders face in building a community-based structure to support public school advocacy, while tackling the daily challenges of public school reform. It also depicts the constant vigilance that is required to get and keep disparate groups to the table. CCPPS has accomplished a lot in a short period of time and has earned a reputation for getting things done by taking risks when others are paralyzed, complacent, or entrenched.

The most far-reaching effort of CCPPS has been its work to secure adequate funding for the Charleston County School District (CCSD). State legislation limited the amount of revenue the CCSD could generate from local property taxes. This local limit law conflicted with other State mandates resulting in a financial crisis that forced the district to threaten teacher layoffs and curtail many programs. After thorough study of the issue, CCPPS established that the district was truly under-funded. In response, the chapter initiated a “friendly” lawsuit (joined by the City of Charleston) to alleviate this stalemate. The State Supreme Court ruled in favor of CCPPS allowing the School Board to move ahead with necessary collections and expenditures.

At present, the CCSD has moved past its funding crisis. A new optimism among parents, teachers, and administrators is evident throughout the county. People are returning to the public schools. CCPPS has turned its sights to increasing accountability within the system and, in particular, taking steps to ensure every school gets the resources needed to provide quality instruction.

Filling a Void in Parent Leadership
CPPS of Portland, Oregon
Incorporated, March 1999
Enrollment: 55,000; Schools: 100

Community & Parents for Public Schools of Portland (CPPS) was formed when five different community-based organizations decided to combine forces. Today, the chapter is the only organization in the city devoted to building the leadership skills and knowledge of parents and moving them into decision-making roles for system-wide change in policy and practice.

There has been broad agreement in this community that the school district lacks the leadership to implement a new strategic plan for reforming the organizational structure of education in the city. The plan, itself, was initiated and developed by a wide array of community change agents, including many chapter members. CPPS is well positioned to assist in training parents for new roles in the decentralized governance, as called for in the plan. Other chapter strategies in place include:

- Taking the lead to assist the district in defining multiple, broad-based measures of student achievement to ensure effective teacher practice for *all* students.
- Strengthening school leadership by working with the district to clarify the role of principals and to implement a 360-degree evaluation to involve more stakeholders in the process.
- Ensuring that parents have input in the selection of a new superintendent; and
- Continuing an annual survey and well-attended CPPS Parent Summit to inform the school improvement process and strengthen policies for parent and community involvement.

Portland Public Schools face the same challenge as many districts around the nation: an achievement gap dividing students along faultlines of race, language/culture, and economic standing. Student demographics have changed markedly over the past decade, due to an influx of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe. The chapter welcomes these new comers in chapter work and brings them into the district as owners and change agents. The Portland chapter is responsible for the latest translation of the PPS logo into Russian; Vietnamese is on the drawing board.

Who Let the Parents Out?
PPS of San Francisco, California
Incorporated, September 1999
Enrollment: 60,000; Schools: 115

The indomitable group that is Parents for Public Schools of San Francisco (PPSSF), first coined this phrase which has now become a part of PPS parlance. “Who let the parents out?” surely characterizes the response that PPSSF has generated in the City by the Bay. It takes gumption to challenge a community’s perception of public education, but they hit the ground running in 1999 to challenge the media’s misrepresentation of public schools in San Francisco. So compelling was their case that local funders came forth with support to help launch the effort. Having earned a reputation for getting things done AND the ear of the superintendent, PPSSF has an impressive track record for its young years.

- A willingness to tackle tough issues and work to get input from parents has yielded a powerful relationship with the district, especially decision-makers in the central office. Their work so inspired the superintendent, that one of the chapter’s founding members was quickly hired as the district’s Parent Involvement Liaison.
- In true PPS form, chapter leaders were pro-active in assisting the district to resolve a controversial enrollment policy. They have helped simplify the application process, communicate options to parents, and enhance exposure of what the chapter calls “under the radar” schools—those that are little known but of excellent quality.
- Recruitment efforts to these “under the radar” schools now show a rise in enrollment to these good schools and an appreciation by local principals for these marketing allies in their midst.
- Through a series of district-level task forces, the chapter has carved out substantive work groups around: Recruitment and Enrollment; School Lunch Program; and Equity.
- Their Media Watch initiative has scrutinized the tone of public school coverage in the local press. Recent analyses reveal a shift in this coverage with greater understanding and attention to detail on the part of journalists.

The Equity Project
PPS of Syracuse, New York
Incorporated, November 1999
Enrollment: 23,000; Schools: 38

Equity has been the central theme of this chapter since its inception. Parents for Public Schools of Syracuse (PPSS) aims to elevate the role of parents in public school advocacy and reform. Their concern for equity translates into a variety of projects that attempt to level the playing field for students in this urban New York district.

Among its earliest efforts, PPS of Syracuse developed a “Voter Action Packet” to simplify and clarify school board election issues and bring equity to the forefront. Three of four incumbents were defeated, and two parent members of PPSS were elected and now hold office of president and vice-president of the board.

The PPS Equity Project began with the School Profiling initiative in the fall of 2000. The chapter surveyed parents, teacher and administrators about individual schools across the district. The primary goal of the project has been to move from discussions about the equity problem toward effective, collaborative remedies and action. Community Exchanges throughout the academic year resulted in action plans, and these strategic sessions led to targeted workshops to achieve fair distribution of resources across the district. Strategies to implement equity goals include:

- Publicizing the results of the Project’s findings;
- Sponsoring workshops to bring educators and other community leaders into the problem-solving process.
- Linking the Equity Project with Syracuse’s Partners in Education & Business to specifically address school-to-work issues.
- Connecting Syracuse parents to the statewide legislative network to push for changes in the school funding formula in New York.

The PPS Rural Experience

The Parents for Public Schools model provides a framework for engaging parents wherever a committed group is in place. Nevertheless, district size, school conditions, the education marketplace and community resources are factors that come into play. This is especially true in rural America. The dynamics unique to rural life influence relationships between families and schools—in positive and negative ways. The issues of power and authority, race and class, tradition and reform are sometimes heightened in small towns. These vignettes capture some of the challenges faced by parent leaders in rural places as they claim ownership of their public schools.

Jefferson Davis County, Mississippi (Enrollment: 2,500; Schools: 6)

Prentiss, Mississippi and nearby Bassfield (total population of 14,000) comprise the Jefferson Davis County school system. Even though the majority of students in the district is African-American (86%) only recently has the elected school board and administration begun to reflect the ethnicity of the district's enrollment. More and more African-American parents have begun to step into this demographic void by assuming leadership roles through Parents for Public Schools. Already the chapter has taken on a range of issues from improper storage of milk to lingering concerns about racial and sexual harassment of students to the prospects of consolidating two high schools into one. There is a work in progress; this is a place to watch.

Hudson Valley, New York (Enrollment: 18,000; Schools: 14)

The education establishment in small towns wields a lot of power. Helping parents find a place in policy discussions can be difficult. Take the case of one fearless chapter working to retain the parent perspective on the district's site-governance teams. When parents were no longer welcomed at this "open meeting", a chapter member attended as an observer. But a school official had her arrested! As a police officer handcuffed and escorted her away, she inquired what the charges were. "Attempted parent involvement."

Lancaster, South Carolina (Enrollment: 11,000; Schools: 18)

Legislation over the past decade has brought sweeping changes in accountability of public schools. Central to these changes has been the increase in standardized testing as a way to measure student achievement and hold individual schools accountable. Concerned that Lancaster public schools were being unfairly judged based on a single state test, this PPS chapter challenged the district to expand assessment portfolios to include student work. Through their actions, Lancaster County Public Schools are rated based on an inventory of measures. Public response has been overwhelmingly favorable.

CARVING A PATH, LEARNING LESSONS

The National Reach of PPS

As of December 2001, PPS had an organizational presence in 15 states. Included in the total list of PPS incorporations during this decade are sites that struggled without success to pave a new way for parents in their community. For a variety of reasons (timing, resources, bureaucratic bullying) their staying power was compromised. But, we honor them, too, for their lessons and challenges have informed our work. They are very much a part of Parents for Public Schools' incredible journey to transform parent involvement--community-by-community and against great odds. The hope of public education is at the grassroots and it cannot happen without parents.



Anniston, Alabama ~ Birmingham, Alabama ~ Fairhope, Alabama ~ Jackson, Alabama ~ Monroe County, Alabama ~ Northport, Alabama ~ Little Rock, Arkansas ~ Pine Bluff, Arkansas ~ Canejo Valley, California ~ San Francisco, California ~ West Valley, California ~ Denver, Colorado ~ Windermere, Florida ~ Americus, Georgia ~ Dublin, Georgia ~ Macon, Georgia ~ Sandersville, Georgia ~ North Chicago, Illinois ~ Springfield, Illinois ~ Waukegan, Illinois ~ Zion, Illinois ~ Knox, Indiana ~ Sellersburg, Indiana ~ Woodford County, Kentucky ~ Bogalusa, Louisiana ~ Covington, Louisiana ~ Northampton, Massachusetts ~ Annapolis, Maryland ~ Macomb County, Michigan ~ Memphis, Michigan ~ Oakland County, Michigan ~ Columbia, Missouri ~ University City, Missouri ~ Aberdeen, Mississippi ~ Amite County, Mississippi ~ Batesville, Mississippi ~ Brookhaven, Mississippi ~ Claiborne County, Mississippi ~ Clarksdale, Mississippi ~ Columbia, Mississippi ~ Crystal Springs, Mississippi ~ DeKalb, Mississippi ~ Greenville, Mississippi ~ Grenada, Mississippi ~ Jackson, Mississippi ~ Jefferson Davis County, Mississippi ~ McComb, Mississippi ~ Natchez, Mississippi ~ Starkville, Mississippi ~ Tylertown, Mississippi ~ Vicksburg, Mississippi ~ Waynesboro, Mississippi ~ Yazoo City, Mississippi ~ Hertford County, North Carolina ~ Lee County, North Carolina ~ Lenoir County, North Carolina ~ Blair, Nebraska ~ Teaneck, New Jersey ~ Elko, Nevada ~ Amityville, New York ~ Buffalo, New York ~ Croton, New York ~ Ellenville, New York ~ Syracuse, New York ~ Cincinnati, Ohio ~ Cleveland, Ohio ~ Cleveland Heights, Ohio ~ Toledo, Ohio ~ Portland, Oregon ~ Southeast Delco, Pennsylvania ~ Andrews, South Carolina ~ Florence, South Carolina ~ Charleston, South Carolina ~ Lancaster, South Carolina ~ Henderson, Tennessee ~ Jackson, Tennessee ~ Knoxville, Tennessee ~ Memphis, Tennessee ~ Bland, Texas ~ Houston, Texas ~ Brenham, Texas ~ Tyler, Texas ~ Waco, Texas ~ Front Royal, Virginia ~ Milwaukee, Wisconsin ~

HOW PPS CHAPTERS FUNCTION BEST

Essentials for Impact

The PPS chapter concept provides an unprecedented framework for parents to become engaged in the work of reform. The most successful ones exhibit these qualities...

- A vision that embraces the PPS philosophy of public education in their community.
- A distinct mission that transforms parent involvement and ties it to factors that improve schools and student achievement.
- An organizational infrastructure that includes identifiable leadership, financial support, permanent staff (whether paid or unpaid), and an inclusive process for making decisions.
- A plan and mechanism for communicating locally derived goals and strategies.
- A plan for carrying out activities that reflect PPS-defined best practices.
- A commitment to diversity by working on behalf of all children and all schools and by building membership representative of parents and others throughout the district, including those who have had the least connection to schools.
- Accountability to the PPS network through exchange of best practices and participation in network functions.

BREAKING THE MOLD

What It Takes to Sustain Involvement

The energy for public school reform comes from the grassroots. In the long run, the potential of parents as change agents should be viewed against the backdrop of superintendent resignations, school board terms, bureaucratic entrenchment, and trendy promises of reform. With the organization and national network that PPS provides, parents gain the credibility and legitimacy that other stakeholders get by law, by job description, by force of power, or by funding.

The profiles presented in this report demonstrate that even without significant funding or professional staff support, tenacious parents do make a difference in the way a school district functions and in the way a community views its schools. And yet, to sustain this work for greater impact over time and to guarantee a meaningful role for the next generations of parents, these grassroots activists will need adequate funding to remain viable and credible. America's future depends on good public schools. And public schools need the proactive involvement of parents.

Join us. We're Parents for Public Schools....

“Public education works when you do your part.”

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AFTERWORD

Ultimately, our children give us a reason to take a stand....
As these [Parents for Public Schools] parents recognized, our most
fundamental responsibility as citizens is to love not only our own
children, but other people's as well—including the children we will
never meet, who grow up in situations we'd prefer to ignore.
Too often, we're taught to ignore or excuse the pain inflicted on the
distant and not-so-distant children of others.
To be sure, we'll always listen most attentively to our own children's
cries. But if we don't heed the cries of others' as well,
America will be lost, and we'll risk losing our souls.

from--Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time
by Paul Rogat Loeb, 1999

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