



Back-to-School Grass Roots NCLB Strategies for America's Governors



RES PUBLICA GROUP

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Why *grass roots*?

Because in “seeding” your state’s education landscape, grass-roots efforts will engage your constituents in promoting educational quality and assist in implementing both NCLB and the governor’s education agenda.

As part of the governor’s comprehensive communications plan, grass roots will:

- extend the reach of your message
- reinforce the message
- localize and personalize the message
- provide independent verification for the message.

Grass roots also:

- Help to “anchor” the governor’s education policy objectives and communication plan across the state.
- Take a one- or two-day news story and give it a self-sustaining life that can support the governor’s policy goals.
- Provide an opportunity for a broad cross section of your state to participate and take “ownership” in the state’s education initiatives.
- Can be the *one opportunity* for business, labor, teachers, administrators, parents and students to get in the “same boat, rowing in the same direction” toward improving the quality of education.
- Provide the critical “third-party and independent” validation for the state’s education plan on NCLB to be successful.
- Allow a governor to localize and customize an initiative to particular audiences, geographic, ethnic and racial groups throughout the state.
- Should provide low-maintenance, continuous, self-sustaining (as much as possible) reinforcement to your state’s education goals.
- Give the governor’s education plan more credibility, since a variety of different audiences and regions are reinforcing the goals through independent spokespersons.

I. Back to School- Parents Checklist for Achievement

WHAT: Governor announces publication of a “Back-to-School Checklist” to emphasize the important role of parents in improving education quality. It contains 12 simple things every parent can do at back-to-school time to improve their child’s education.

The checklist is a short, simple, easily understood list that can be widely distributed through everything from newspapers to newsletters, refrigerator magnets, bookmarks and church bulletins.

HOW: Governor can partner with retailers, businesses, labor and education associations, libraries and religious institutions in promoting the 12-item checklist. Prior to school opening, governor can join parents, retailers and other partners who will agree to put “checklist” in publications (newsletter), print and post or mail (i.e., utility companies) to remind parents of their role in improving school quality.

WHY: A recent poll showed that 70% of voters believe that no matter what schools do, most students struggling in math and reading will not meet state standards in reading and math without parental involvement in their education. The Governor should articulate an important principle that everyone agrees is true, but too few take to heart.

Each state’s plan to implement NCLB and/or governor’s education agenda should include a role for everyone, especially parents and students. NCLB has been viewed as empowering parents, families and communities. The more parents know that quality teaching has the single-biggest impact on student learning and achievement, the more it empowers them to urge their schools to support quality teachers.

WHEN/WHERE: Governor could join some parents and kids doing “back-to-school shopping” from their “shopping list.” Use the “shopping list” as the link to using another list for school-related things that parents and kids also need – the “Parents Checklist for Achievement.” Retail, utility and publication partners announce their agreement to help distribute, as do clergy, teachers and others.

Checklist tool kit:

- A. Checklist long version
- B. Checklist short version
- C. Press release
- D. Public service announcement
- E. Letter to private sector seeking help with distribution of checklist

Governor's
photo here

BACK TO SCHOOL

From the Governor: 12 things parents can do to help their school achieve excellence



PARENTS CHECK LIST for ACHIEVEMENT

For your child

- ✓ Talk and listen
- ✓ A good night's rest and a healthy breakfast
- ✓ Learn and read together
- ✓ Start young
- ✓ If options become available, choose schools and tutoring wisely

For your child's teacher

- ✓ Communicate often
- ✓ Help enforce rules
- ✓ Support your teacher

For your child's school

- ✓ Volunteer
- ✓ Stay informed
- ✓ Be ready for state achievement tests
- ✓ Involve your community

Parents Back-to-School

Checklist for Achievement

For your child

- √ **Talk and listen.** Offer praise for school achievement. Challenge them to do their best.
- √ **A good night's rest and a healthy breakfast.** Make sure your child gets enough rest and has a good breakfast before school.
- √ **Learn and read together.** Read to your child daily and help her with math.
- √ **Start young.** If your child is in pre-school, read to him. Watch to ensure that he is developing normally (ex.: two- or three-word sentences between ages 2 and 3, speech easily understood between ages 3 and 4).
- √ **Choose schools and tutoring wisely.** Know whether your school offers you the option of choosing a different school or getting after-school tutoring. Consider your options carefully.

For your child's teacher

- √ **Communicate often.** Talk regularly with your teacher. Attend parent-teacher conferences. Visit school open houses. See science fairs. Show up when invited for special classroom events. Attend workshops for parents.
- √ **Enforce rules.** Understand and reinforce school rules at home. Ensure your child's attendance in school. Help get homework done. Limit TV.
- √ **Support your teacher.** Offer praise and encouragement when teachers and staff do a good job. If you learn that a teacher has been designated "not highly qualified," do not be alarmed. That federal government designation indicates a need for certification. It does not tell the whole story about your teacher's talents.

For your child's school

- √ **Volunteer.** Ask your school about parent volunteer opportunities. Help out at before- and after-school programs, parent fairs, field trips.
- √ **Stay informed.** Read school newsletters and the information you receive about standardized testing and school report cards.
- √ **Be test-ready.** Know when the state will test students to measure annual yearly progress toward school performance standards. Review sample questions, make sure your child is ready and reinforce the importance of doing well (especially for high school seniors).
- √ **Involve your community.** Work to involve local businesses, faith communities, organized labor, civic organizations and all segments of your community in the life of the school.

Governor Issues Back-to-School Checklist for Parents

Tough new state and federal improvement standards for schools will require more parental involvement than ever before, said Governor _____, who released a back-to-school checklist of a dozen things parents can do to ensure that “no child is left behind in our state.”

“Parents, their children and teachers need to hit the ground running as the school doors open this fall,” Governor _____ said. “Many schools face new challenges to improve test scores, enhance teacher training and ensure that children of every background are learning. Parents have a crucial role to play and I firmly believe that if every parent did their part our schools would all live up the challenge.”

New state education reforms, many of them building on the federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation, expect steady improvement in test scores and other measures so that all children are proficient in math and reading by the 2013-2014 school year.

Under recent reforms, schools must measure math and reading scores not only for the student body as a whole, but for select populations of students, such as low-income students and those who speak English as a second language. Failure to meet achievement targets for all populations can cause a school to be placed on a “needs-improvement” list, no matter how well it does in other areas.

Schools on the list for two years must offer parents the option of sending children to a different school. Schools also must initiate remedial actions.

“We all have a moral responsibility to teach our children – not just teachers, but parents, businesses, religious communities and civic organizations. Recent reforms give parents more power than ever, and, therefore, more responsibility,” he said.

Gov. _____ released a list of a dozen things parents could to help their children, teachers and schools. They include:

- Make sure your child is well rested and has a good breakfast before school.
- Read with your children when they are in pre-school and early school years.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and help children complete homework assignments, maintain high attendance and follow school rules.
- Volunteer for school activities and stay informed so you can help your school meet ambitious new performance standards.

Citing the new state and federal requirements, the governor said it was important for parents to help prepare their children for standardized tests, be prepared for options in school choice and tutoring and realize that teachers must comply with new standards to ensure that they are “highly qualified” to teach.

He said that some parents may be notified that their child is being taught by a teacher who is “not highly qualified” according to new federal standards.

“Parents should not be unnecessarily alarmed. Many great teachers will not automatically be rated ‘highly qualified.’ This is part of a broad effort to identify those teachers who need to upgrade their training. We will work to make sure that teachers who need training get it. If a great teacher is unfairly singled out by this provision, we will work to help them come into compliance,” he said.

Gov. _____ said that he encourages schools and private organizations to distribute copies of his checklist to parents via newsletters, church bulletins, fliers and websites.

“I’d like to see the checklist on refrigerator magnets so that parents can see it every day, right there next to the children’s drawings, straight-A report cards and other things that decorate the family fridge.”

Public Service Announcement for Governor's back-to-school checklist for parents

Ready for your kids to go back to school? Who isn't?

But if you're a parent like me, you have a long list of things to do and buy for your kids' school needs.

Sadly, however, many parents forget the most important things of all on that "to-do" list for your child's education.

Do you remember to read every night with your child?

Make sure he's rested and well fed before school?

Volunteer to help your child's teacher?

Studies show that when parents are involved in schooling, kids do a whole lot better.

For a list of 12 simple things to do for your child's education, go to Gov. _____'s web site at www.url.gov.

Letter soliciting private sector support to distribute parent back-to-school checklist.

Dear _____,

This year opens a new chapter in the improvement of public education in our state. Reforms enacted in our state, combined with new federal “No Child Left Behind” standards, will challenge our schools to improve test scores, ensure that teachers are fully trained and qualified and reward progress. We are in the early stages of a 12-year effort to get every school in our state to provide an excellent education to 100 percent of our students.

We welcome the challenge, but it will not be easy. Many schools and teachers will suffer setbacks on the path to excellence. More than ever, schools in your community and across the state will need the support of business leaders, faith communities, civic organizations and all segments of the community. Perhaps most of all, students and schools will need support and active involvement from parents.

I’m asking for your help. I recently announced a new effort to educate parents about 12 easy things they can do to improve schools and help their children. My administration has published a “Back-to-School Checklist for Parents.” I need your help making sure that this checklist gets in the hands of every parent and that parents see the checklist multiple times.

I am asking leaders in the private sector to publish and distribute this checklist using all available means. If you send bills to your customers or newsletters to your members, please include our checklist. Create refrigerator magnets with the checklist and your logo. Publish it in your church bulletin. Put it on the bulletin board of your employee lunch room. Insert it with paychecks. Any place you think parents can be reached, we would appreciate you passing along this valuable education material.

Studies show that students with involved parents are more likely to earn better grades and test scores, pass classes, attend school regularly, behave and socialize better and graduate. This is true for children of any income or background.

With parental involvement, quality schools will create the workforce we need for business success tomorrow. They will produce better citizens and stronger communities. Improving our schools is a moral responsibility shared by every citizen. Please help me distribute our parent’s back-to-school checklist. A copy is enclosed. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Governor

II. State Congress of Educational Excellence

Florida Congress of Teaching Excellence

WHAT: At a teacher-training or professional-development workshop (preferably held by a teachers union) before school opens, announce the formation of a “Congress for Teaching Excellence” made up of the most qualified teachers from throughout the state.

Eligibility for membership in the Congress could be limited in a variety of ways. It might be open to any teacher who is determined to be “highly qualified” under NCLB guidelines, if the percentage of such teachers is relatively low. Alternatively, it could consist of highly qualified teachers who have also achieved some other academic or professional achievement that sets them apart and above the rest.

The Congress will be asked to serve as leaders on improving teaching quality and advise, inform and work with the governor on state-wide efforts to improve teaching quality.

- Recognition of outstanding professional achievement by individual teachers.
- On-going governor/state advisory board on improving educational excellence.
- Possibility for governor to “convene” the Congress as a “teleconference” around the state to ask for ideas, help in moving student and school achievement.
- Student achievement gains can be a demonstration of competence for teachers.

WHY: Keeps focus on the importance of the quality of teaching in overall student learning and achievement. Develops a direct partnership with active and highly qualified teachers. Includes the teachers’ unions through their members without forfeiting control of the governor’s education agenda.

HOW: Once a teacher is determined to be “highly qualified,” it would trigger a letter from the governor informing them that they have been admitted to the State Congress on Teaching Excellence.

Look to a university or college of education along with corporate sponsors to handle any administrative responsibility. Ask your state’s association of school superintendents and teachers associations to support effort.

Governor or department of education can issue press releases to local papers announcing the awards to local teachers and school districts.

WHEN/WHERE: Announcement made prior to school opening at a teacher or teacher union-sponsored teacher-training or professional-development institute.

State Congress on Teaching Excellence Tool Kit:

- A. Press release announcing conference
- B. Press release announcing winning school or teacher

Governor to Convene New Congress of Top Teachers

Gov. _____ announced today that he would convene the state's most qualified teachers in a new Congress for Educational Excellence, where leading educators can showcase teacher training achievement and share ideas about how to do a better job of improving the skills and knowledge of all teachers.

Speaking at a meeting of teachers preparing for their return to classrooms in the fall, the governor said, "Nothing we do is more important than teaching children, and no job is more important than that of teachers. We can do a better job of providing teacher training in this state and a congress of great teachers can help guide us in that direction."

Recent state school reforms, combined with new federal "No Child Left Behind" requirements, are focusing new attention on teacher qualifications. By the end of the 2005-2006 school year, anyone teaching core academic subjects in public schools will be required to be rated as "highly qualified," meaning fully certified, holding a bachelor's degree and demonstrating competence in their subject area.

"Studies have repeatedly shown that when teachers are well trained in the subjects they teach, student achievement increases," Governor _____ said. "That is why schools will soon be required to have highly qualified teachers. Teachers value training and want to improve their skills. The challenge is for all of us to work with them to get them the training they will need and want."

Gov. _____ said that the Congress of Educational Excellence will:

- Recognize outstanding achievements in teacher training, including individual teachers who excel and teaching programs that demonstrate exemplary effectiveness.
- Advise the state and governor on problems and solutions in the quality and availability of teacher training.
- Provide role models for all teachers.

The governor said that "it is essential that we give all parents confidence in the qualifications of the teachers in whom they place their trust." He noted that the issue has been increasingly a concern of parents as they receive letters from schools informing them whenever their child's teacher's qualifications do not comply with the state-federal definition of "highly qualified."

Gov. _____ said that teachers would be eligible for membership in the Congress if they demonstrate outstanding academic achievement, either in the field of teaching or in their academic subject area.

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Smithtown Teacher Inducted into Congress of Best Teachers

Spencer Graham, a math teacher at Wilmette Junior High School, has been inducted into the State Congress of Educational Excellence, Gov. _____ announced today.

Graham, 39, was honored for having received a master's degree in mathematics, as well as receiving official designation as "highly qualified" for teaching in the state.

"Teachers like Mr. Graham are models for math teachers everywhere," Gov. _____ said. "As a member of our Congress of Educational Excellence, I look forward to having him added to the pool of talent that is giving our state guidance on how to improve teacher training statewide."

Graham (insert biographical information)

The governor announced formation of the Congress of Educational Excellence in August, saying its purpose was to:

- Recognize outstanding achievements in teacher training, including individual teachers who excel and teaching programs that demonstrate exemplary effectiveness.
- Advise the state and governor on problems and solutions in the quality and availability of teacher training.
- Provide role models for all teachers.

###

III. Governor's Education Ambassadors *Indiana Education Ambassadors*

WHAT: Inaugurate the “Governor’s Education Ambassadors” with “founding” Ambassadors comprised of citizens from all walks of life – parents, labor, business, farming/ranching, clergy, non-profit, civic, teachers – willing to promote and support a “quality education agenda” in their community.

Founding Ambassadors might include a celebrity or two to pique public and media interest. The Ambassadors could enlist by meeting certain criteria to support the governor and state’s education improvement plan. They would help deliver the message about teaching quality, serve as a positive local force for pushing to successfully implement state reforms and assist the state in meeting NCLB.

WHY: Messages on quality education and the goals of NCLB need to be extended and reinforced throughout the state by different voices in every community and among various constituencies, including the most critical.

WHEN: First day of school, Governor opens the schools doors with founding Education Ambassadors saying that “every segment of the community must be involved in supporting teachers, promoting a quality agenda – quality schools and quality teaching is the recipe for a quality and successful life for all children.” Follow-up stories should begin as different communities around the state announce their Ambassadors.

HOW: Business and civic organizations would be encouraged to publicize the program internally in all possible forums – internal publications, company cafeteria, etc. They will be asked to commit to enlisting members, i.e., Farm Bureau commits to signing up 15 Ambassadors statewide, state retailers’ association takes 10, etc. Teachers’ union members should be included as Ambassadors and asked to be partners in the program.

- Prep work includes recruiting a small, core group of Ambassadors whose organizations can do the database, website and other administrative functions of the websites sign-up. Communications can be through chambers of commerce, trade associations, the governor’s office and department of education.
- Ambassadors can be a largely “virtual” organization, where volunteers sign up on websites and get e-mail updates on key dates, goals and issues relating to NCLB and the state’s quality education agenda.
- Press announcements “herald” naming of Ambassadors.

- Governor can use the number of Ambassadors per county, town, labor union, etc. as something he talks about every week or refers to in local visits. For example, he can mention that the town's "Education Ambassadors" are working to ensure that "every child in every classroom in the town receives the quality education they deserve."

Encourage organizational partners to make sure they have at least one "Education Ambassador" in their organization. No local Rotary Club should be without a member designated as Ambassador.

Tool kit contents:

- A. Press release for launch
- B. Letters to editor
- C. PSA
- D. Newsletter "drop-in."



Governor Launches Education Ambassadors in Support of Education

Governor _____ today heralded the launch of “state-name Education Ambassadors,” a broad cross-section of state citizens supporting education quality in communities around the state.

“Whether you are a union carpenter, a small business owner, a teacher, a local mayor, whatever your occupation, there is an important role for you to play in supporting our teachers and our schools and the entire education system in the state in helping every child, in every school have the quality education they deserve,” xxx said.

“Quality education and quality schools are not just the responsibility of teachers and administrators. We each have an important role to play. Meeting ambitious new performance standards for schools will require the support of parents, businesses, faith groups, organized labor, teachers and all segments of society,” Gov. _____ said.

“Every child – whether they are our own or our neighbor’s – is a child of the community in which we live. It is the duty of us all to ensure that every child excels in school and has a fair chance to thrive into adulthood.”

Gov. _____ said that individuals can sign up as private citizens or as representatives of community and civic organizations. By signing on, Ambassadors agree to receive and disseminate information about supporting quality education plans.

“Every church, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce and local labor union in the state should have members willing to serve as an Education Ambassador to the schools in the communities served by that church. The job of ensuring quality schools is all of our responsibility, not just teachers, parents and administrators alone,” he said.

To find out the requirements and to apply to become an xxstate Education Ambassador, go to www.url.org.

###

Letter to editor from a teacher or principal regarding Governor's Education Ambassadors

Dear editor,

Governor _____ this week encouraged citizens throughout our state to volunteer as Education Ambassadors. As a teacher, I couldn't have been more pleased to hear his call for all segments of the community to join with us in improving the quality of our schools.

No school is as successful as it can be without the full involvement of parents, local business, working people, social service agencies and faith leaders. Together we need to make our community a nurturing environment that helps all children – not just the majority of children – acquire the skills they need to live a full life. Improving schools is a fundamental responsibility of a civilized society and we should all take part.

Recent state and federal school reforms place new responsibility on teachers also. We will face new scrutiny to ensure we are fully certified to teach the subjects we are assigned. Nobody appreciates the value of training more than a teacher, so we welcome opportunities to enhance our skills and establish public confidence in our qualifications.

I encourage your readers to sign up to be a Governor's Education Ambassador. To sign up and learn more, visit [www.\(url\).org](http://www.(url).org).

Sincerely,

Teacher

Newsletter drop-in for Governor's Education Ambassadors

Governor _____ has called upon civic and not-for-profit organizations to support public schools by helping him recruit Governor's Education Ambassadors.

Gov. _____ said that people can agree to be an Education Ambassador either as a private citizen or as a representative of a community or civic organization. By signing on, volunteers agree to receive, by e-mail or fax, information about opportunities to support local schools. They also agree to have their names submitted to local school administrators so that opportunities for volunteer support at the local level can be communicated.

“Meeting ambitious new performance standards for schools will require the support of parents, businesses, faith groups, organized labor, teachers and all segments of society,” Gov. _____ said. “Every child – whether they are our own or our neighbor's – is an offspring of the community in which we live. It is the duty of us all to ensure that every child excels in school and has a fair chance to thrive as an adult.”

“Every church in the state should have members who serve as Education Ambassadors to the schools in their communities. Every Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce and AFL-CIO local should have Education Ambassadors. The job of teaching is too big for teachers, parents and administrators alone,” he said.

Our organization president encourages members to serve as Education Ambassadors. If you are interested, please contact the president and sign up at www.URL.com

30 second Public Service Announcement
Governors Education Ambassadors

Man's voice: I've been teaching in (state) public schools for 15 years.

Woman's voice: I've been a public school principal for eight years.

Man: We teachers love the challenges and rewards of helping kids learn and grow.

Woman: But teachers and schools can only do so much.

Man: When parents are involved, when local businesses and civic groups help in public schools, my students do far better.

Woman: Studies prove it. When the whole community creates a nurturing environment for its school, kids do better on tests and learn more.

Man: Do your part. Become an Education Ambassador.

Woman: Find out more and sign up at [www.\(URL\).org](http://www.(URL).org)

IV. Governor’s Education Leadership Community

WHAT: Challenge communities to become partners in school improvement by becoming an “Education Leadership Community” supporting quality schools and providing a nurturing learning environment that extends to every corner of a community. The program creates healthy competition among communities so that those who receive the honor can use it to promote themselves as good places to live and do business. All parts of a community would be required to participate – businesses, churches, teachers, labor, community organizations, etc.

Communities winning the designation could benefit in a variety of ways:

- An important selling point for businesses considering a location or investment in the community. It also would help in retaining existing business and jobs.
- Display a specially designed road-side sign or marker at highway entry points.
- Display an Education Leadership Community logo on stationary, newsletters, websites and other public documents.
- Use the logo in marketing materials distributed by community economic development authorities, as well as commercial and residential real estate agents.
- Appear on a map – to be published by the state annually – designating leadership communities statewide.

WHY: The award creates an economic incentive for communities to build the kinds of broad-based support of schools that is known to improve school performance. *A commitment to quality schools is not just for teachers and administrators.* Communities would know that the designation would be attractive to business and help attract jobs. In a knowledge-based economy, a quality education equals economic opportunity for citizens, communities and the state.

HOW: All stakeholders should get input on the criteria for designation as an “Education Leadership” community. The criteria could be as stringent or loose as desired, but an emphasis on simplicity would be preferred to minimize administrative headaches. Criteria could include:

- Educators, civic, business, labor, clergy, parents and community organizations might simply sign a formal pledge to support quality education in their schools and a quality learning environment in the community. All segments of the community would be expected to sign on (a “pledge” form like attached), assuming certain responsibilities for promoting quality schools. Each would do their part to support a quality education and a supportive learning environment for students, teachers, parents and the community at large.

- Commit to spending, say, eight hours per month to the goal. Governor lists various options for fulfilling this, i.e., by helping to communicate and educate employees about NCLB and state quality education initiatives through internal corporate communications vehicles, cafeteria bulletin boards; bring in speakers to workplace; agree to allow employees to have time to do parent-teacher meetings.
- A designated percentage of the population might be expected to agree to become “Education Ambassadors.”
- Criteria might allow any kind of community to be eligible – rural or urban, affluent or low-income.
 - In rural areas, for example, communities could be judged according to how they use technology to bridge geographic barriers to bring resources to students and teachers.
 - Neighborhoods within large cities might be able to apply as leadership communities.
 - Business might be expected to begin mentoring programs or other linkages to schools.
 - Communities could be required to show how they support teacher training and attendance in graduate school to become “master teachers.”
 - Employers might be expected to show how they help employees visit their child’s school once a month or volunteer at the school.

WHEN: The kick off would be part of a “back-to-school” campaign aimed at pulling everyone into the effort to improve quality education. From the start of the year, entire communities would know that quality schools are not just the responsibility of teachers and educators; they are everyone’s responsibility.

WHERE: Governor could launch initiative in a community that is in great need of improvement so the emphasis is on the “collective effort” to improve school quality, as opposed to the more “accusatory” stories the media are likely to do.

Leadership Community tool kit:

- Press release announcing program
- Letter to mayors announcing program
- Press release announcing a city being designated

Governor to Showcase State's Leading School-Community Partnerships

Underscoring the need for communities to organize and volunteer on behalf of school improvement, Gov. _____ today announced a plan to designate model communities, towns and cities as "Education Leadership Communities."

"Throughout our state more and more communities are becoming places where parents are fully engaged as volunteers in their schools, where businesses contribute to school improvement, where not-for-profit groups coordinate closely with teachers and administrators. They are desirable places to live, raise families and grow business. The world should know about these places and we will tell the world."

Gov. _____ said that by establishing the designation, communities would compete with one another for the honor and use it to enhance quality of life, attract business and increase property values.

"Making schools better is the responsibility of every citizen, organization and business. Those who take up their moral responsibility for helping children in school deserve to be saluted."

Gov. _____ said he planned to work with teachers, businesses, parents, local officials, organized labor and faith leaders to develop criteria for designation of Education Leadership Communities. He said measurable criteria would be developed that could include:

- Achievement of a minimum number of volunteer hours from parents donating time to their children's schools. This measure could be a sliding scale to accommodate schools with high percentages of single-parent households.
- Active involvement of area businesses and other groups in school policy-making, teacher support, donations.
- Close coordination of social service agencies and not-for-profit groups with school programs.
- Success at improving school performance test scores, keeping schools safe and providing after-school help to students.

Studies show that when parents and communities are closely connected to the life of their schools, student achievement improves. Gov. _____ said that new state and federal "No Child Left Behind" school reforms will require a more concerted community-wide effort to meet improvement goals.

“I want our state to go beyond federal requirements for community involvement in schools. Competition among communities will help encourage that and one day we hope all our communities can win designation as an Education Leadership Community.

Designated communities would be able to:

- Display a specially designed road-side sign at highway entry points.
- Display an Education Leadership Community logo on stationary, newsletters, websites and other public documents.
- Appear on a map – to be published by the state annually – designating leadership communities statewide.
- Use the logo in marketing materials distributed by community economic development authorities and commercial and residential real estate agents.

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Letter to mayors announcing eligibility to apply for Education Leadership Communities

Dear Mayor,

I am pleased to announce a new opportunity for communities in our state to win official designation as an Education Leadership Community. I encourage you to consider mobilizing the citizens of your community to qualify for this honor.

Recently, our state opened a new chapter in education reform. State efforts to improve schools, combined with federal “No Child Left Behind” requirements, will present new challenges to schools, teachers, students and parents throughout our state. The schools in your community will need support from parents, businesses, civic organizations, religious congregations and all segments of the population.

Designation as an Education Leadership Community will go to those who fully unite behind their schools. Criteria for the award will include such things as:

- Commitments by business to provide employee “flex time” to volunteer in school or attend parent-teacher conferences;
- Evidence of a high level of school volunteer support among parents and other citizens;
- Close coordination of social service agencies with schools;
- Efforts by churches to provide tutoring, homework support and a place that nurtures a learning environment;
- Community recognition of outstanding contributions of teachers and school administrators.

Should your community receive this designation, families and businesses will recognize your town as great place to live, hire workers and prosper. Your quality of life will be evident to all who see the “Education Leadership Logo” on road signs, websites and community brochures. It will, of course, be an impressive feather in any mayor’s cap.

For more information about applying for this designation, please call

Downloadable forms for the award are at www.url.gov. As always, thank you for your service to the people of your community and best wishes for successful designation as an Education Leadership Community.

Sincerely,

Governor

Press release announcing a city designated as an Education Leadership Community

Smithtown Basks in Designation as Education Leadership Community

Gov. _____ today designated Smithtown as an “Education Leadership Community,” one of 24 cities in the state honored to date for community wide support of public school improvement.

“The people of Smithtown – including its business leaders, civic organizations, religious communities, parents and schools – all deserve credit for coming together to improve the quality of life and educational excellence of their city,” the governor said.

“The people of Smithtown joined hands for its school children. Smithtown deserves to be singled out as a place where people are working hard to make it a great place to live, do business and raise a family.”

Smithtown Mayor Roger Smith said, “This sets us apart as one among a small number of communities that truly believe that school children are everyone’s responsibility. We are all doing our part, and we think people who are looking for a place to live or locate a business will take note of our achievement.”

Gov. _____ said Smithtown won the designation by initiating several steps to improve schools:

- More than half of Smithtown business owners agreed to participate in school improvement programs, including mentoring programs, employee “flex time” for parent-teacher conferences and job shadowing for students.
- Leaders from 15 churches of a variety of faiths met in December to formally sign an agreement to provide volunteers from their congregations to be reading and math tutors. They also offered space in their church facilities for after school homework assistance and other school-support programs.
- Sixty percent of parents served as volunteers at a minimum of one school event in the past year, contributing 3,500 person-hours of volunteer time.
- State school report cards last year indicated that 90 percent of Smithtown schools made adequate yearly progress toward 2013 education achievement goals. Statewide, 50 percent of schools made adequate yearly progress.

“Beginning immediately we will update all of our community marketing materials to reflect our new designation,” the mayor said. “I plan to send letters to about 200 business contacts informing them that Smithtown is raising a workforce with the skills they will need today and for years to come.”

###

V. Governor's Achievement Circle

Michigan Achievement Circle

WHAT: Unveil the “Governor’s Achievement Circle” saluting those schools that achieve “adequate yearly progress” goals or attain goals for improving student achievement as established by the governor or the state’s educational improvement plan. This is the positive achievement list – an alternative to the lists of “non-performing” or “low performing” schools.

Find a location in state capitol area where the names of schools achieving noteworthy incremental improvements can be displayed in a visible “Achievement Circle.” Enlist a state artist to design a special circular image symbolizing inclusiveness for all children in the “circle of achievement,” showcasing the state’s desire to have quality schools serve children in every community, ethnic and racial group.

There can be great fanfare as each school “enters” the Achievement Circle. Local leaders, Education Ambassadors, city council, mayor, etc., recognize the accomplishment with a wide possibility of congratulatory activities. These salutes could include gifts, banquets, parent-student rallies, etc.

Title I already requires states to establish a system of recognizing schools that excel. The fact that local schools and their teachers are being honored by state government leaders can help shift the dynamic away from negative messages.

HOW: The governor’s office and the department of education should develop selection criteria and get buy-in from key stakeholders, particularly teachers and administrators.

The criteria should generate more “winners” than there are schools expected on the “needs improvement” list. The goal should be to have as many as possible receive positive reinforcement for achievement in different areas.

Some states may wish to have a system of lesser awards for achievement in narrower categories so that most schools could have bragging rights of some sort. Also, individual students who have made remarkable turnarounds in their academic achievement could be recognized. The media would naturally gravitate to these human-interest stories, which would serve as useful anecdotes to tell the larger story.

Consider *improvement* of student test scores in addition to adequate yearly progress.

When a school reaches a particular goal qualifying them for the “Achievement Circle,” it should trigger follow-up communication and media for the school:

- a “photo-op” of the school’s name being “entered” into the “Achievement Circle”
- a letter of congratulations from the governor with a press release to local media
- a school visit and award presentation by the governor, mayor, whomever, welcoming them to the “Achievement Circle”

WHEN: Governor launches at the beginning of school year, with “each new school year comes with high hopes for success and achievement for the year. Achievement comes in many shapes and forms and here in (name of state), we’re going to make sure we recognize all those different forms of achievement.”

States can follow the NGA NCLB Communication Timeline (http://www.nga.org/cda/files/0703NCLBCALL_TIMELINE.PDF) to advise media that “the announcement of the new schools entering the ‘Achievement Circle’ will be in one week.” Build up expectations for a positive story.

“Achievement Circle” tool kit:

- A. Press release announcing new award
- B. Press release announcing first list of schools entering the Achievement Circle
- C. Photo outline

Press Release for “Achievement Circle”

Governor Directs Spotlight for School Year on Achievement Announces Launch of “Achievement Circle”

Every school that surpasses annual improvement goals should receive applause from all of us, said Gov. _____, in launching the “Michigan Achievement Circle,” a special honors program for school improvement.

“As good teachers have always known, pointing out failings is not the best way to encourage students to learn and achieve. Well, schools and educators aren’t any different. I get very dismayed to see only the stories where progress might fall short. We should hold up as exemplary those schools that excel if we are to encourage quality and achievement for every child in our state,” said Gov. _____.

“Our new Achievement Circle will be a symbol of honor for those schools that successfully embrace all their children of every background and raise the quality of their education,” he said.

New state education standards, many of them tied to federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation, require steady improvement in test scores and other measures so that all children are proficient in math and reading by the 2013-2014 school year. Gov. _____ said he wants help for schools identified as falling short of annual goals as well as kudos for those that reach and exceed goals.

“Too often we judge school only by their test scores. I want us also to give credit to the school that shows important progress after working for years with such things as drop-out rates and non-English speaking students.”

Under the new federal No Child Left Behind law, schools must measure math and reading scores not only for the student body as a whole, but for select populations of students, such as African-Americans and those who speak English as a second language. Failure to show progress for all populations can cause a school to be placed on a “needs-improvement” list, no matter how well it does in other areas.

“My homework assignment for myself and the entire state is to focus on improvements in the quality of education from now on. The important measure is not where you stand today, but how far you have moved toward solid improvement in the quality of education,” said Gov. _____.

###

Governor Inducts 108 Schools Into "Governor's Achievement Circle."

Gov. _____ today singled out 108 public schools statewide that made dramatic improvements in test scores and teacher quality during the past year. An additional 344 schools were cited for significant gains in narrower fields targeted for improvement.

Schools receiving the highest honors and inducted into the "Governor's Achievement Circle" in the capitol building include:

- an inner city school with a troubled past that was in the top 10 percent of schools ranked according to their percentage improvement in overall test scores;
- a suburban school that showed marked improvement in eight out of 10 categories of school improvement, a turnaround after several years of disappointing scores;
- a high school in an affluent community that achieved 100 percent compliance with all 10 categories of improvement objectives.

"These schools are setting the pace for the rest of our state, showing that they have their eye squarely on the ball and are on track for 100 percent excellence by the year 2013," said Gov. _____.

"By their example, in every part of the state and in rich and poor neighborhoods alike, they show us that we can and will reach our goal of great schooling for every single child."

The Governor's Achievement Circle schools were announced Tuesday shortly before the state Board of Education released a separate list of schools in need of improvement.

"School improvement is a long range prospect. Our reform plans assume it will take over a dozen years to get where we want to be," the governor said. "Some schools will have good years, others not so good. We need to remember that how a school looks in a given year is less important than what the school is doing for the long term."

###

Photo outline for Achievement Circle

Circle of Honor

Smith Junior High School Principal Herman Hernandez helps Gov. _____ place the Smith Junior High name in the Governor's Achievement Circle Wednesday in the state capitol building. Smith Junior High was one of 108 schools statewide singled out for outstanding improvement in test scores and teacher quality during the past year. "Smith Junior High is setting an example for schools everywhere," said the governor. "We in the Capitol need this daily reminder on our wall that school excellence isn't only possible, it is real and right here for all to see in our Achievement Circle." The circle symbolizes the inclusiveness of state education goals, which aim at helping students of all ethnicities and economic circumstances.

VI. Teacher for a Day

WHAT: Invite prominent local community leaders and parents to serve as a “teacher for a day” on a specific date, ideally held on the same date statewide to drive media coverage. Community leaders would shadow teachers, learn the job, teach a class, participate in staff meetings and, generally, get a feel for what it’s like to walk in a teacher’s shoes.

WHY: Chicago, Phoenix and other communities have a popular “principal-for-a-day” program in which community leaders in business, politics and not-for-profit organizations fill the shoes of a principal and learn about the day-to-day challenges of running a school. Teacher for a Day extends the idea to a wider audience and elevates the stature of the teacher.

An annual Teacher-for-a-Day event, held statewide, allows the Governor to call attention to the important role that teachers play and use the timing of the event to showcase any initiatives he or she may have to help schools retain, train and reward teachers.

HOW: The Governor could announce the program with teacher associations and announce that he/she will be a “Teachers for a Day” to kick it off. Consider recruiting other local celebrities for involvement. Participants need not spend the entire day; it might only last a couple of hours.

WHERE: Media could be drawn to schools that showcase an issue of greatest interest to the Governor. For example, he might be a teacher himself at a school that is a “turn-around” success story or one that is in need of stronger parent or community support.

WHO: Schools would coordinate their own Teacher-for-a-Day events by inviting target audiences to be a teacher for a day. Participants could be drawn from parents, prominent retirees, local government, state legislators and others.

Teacher for a Day tool kit:

- A. Press release
- B. Teacher for a day wall certificate

Press release announcing Teacher for a Day

Governor Calls for Parents and Community Leaders to be a “Teacher for a Day”

Gov. _____ today called on schools throughout the state to set aside Wednesday, Sept. 24, for “Teacher for a Day” events in which average citizens and parents could see what it is like to be a teacher in a public school.

“The job of teaching our children in public schools has never been more challenging,” Gov. _____ said. “On Sept. 24, let’s invite parents and community leaders into our schools, match them with a teacher and let them spend all or part of a day seeing what it is like to do the most important job in our state: teaching our children.”

Gov. _____ said that recent state school reforms, paired with federal “No Child Left Behind” requirements, have placed greater burdens on educators and heightened public interest in teacher training and qualifications.

“It is fair to expect our teachers to be trained for what they teach and certified as good instructors,” the governor said. “But it is unfair for us as a society to place new burdens on teachers without first taking the time to understand the full nature of their jobs.”

The governor said he would let schools use their discretion in determining who serves as a Teacher for a Day. He suggested that schools should invite a cross section of parent leaders and people prominent in the community who may not have children in school but need to appreciate the contributions of teachers to community life.

The governor said that citizens invited to participate would not necessarily be expected to teach a class, since that could interfere with student instruction plans. Rather, they would shadow a teacher for all or part of a day, observe a teacher’s day-to-day challenges, and acquire an appreciation for the art of being a good teacher. He said participation by schools would be voluntary, but he strongly encouraged schools to choose Sept. 24 as a way of generating public awareness through media coverage.

###

Wilmette Junior High School
Teacher for a Day

This certifies that

[name here]

*served the entire community of Wilmette and especially its children
as Teacher for a Day on this ___ day of the year 200__*



{Teacher title}

{Government}



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