

KIDS TO SPEAK OUT TODAY ON EDUCATION REFORM AT 25 LOCAL EVENTS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

*Unusual Focus Gives A Key Group – Students – A Chance to Be Heard;
Feedback to Go to White House Through “Letters to the President” Web Site.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.//October 14, 2004//More than two dozen “Kids Speak Out” events will take place across the United States today so that students – the missing voice in the education reform debate – can express their ideas about the best ways to improve American schools.

Local events are taking place at 25 sites in Concord, N.H., New York City, Washington, D.C., Phoenix, San Diego, Columbus, OH., Harrisburg, PA., and at many other sites across the nation. The overall effort is coordinated by Results for America (<http://www.ResultsForAmerica.org>), a project of the Civil Society Institute and such groups as the Afterschool Alliance and Parents for Public Schools.

Comments made at the events by children, parents and others who speak out on education reform also will be submitted to “Letters to the President” (<http://www.letterstoprez.org>), a nonpartisan website sponsored by Results for America and several national organizations. The “Letters to the President” Web site asks students, parents, teachers and other concerned individuals to tell the next President what shape education reform should take in 2005.

Commenting on the “Kids Speak Out” events, Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **"The people who should be the most intimately involved in education policy -- students, parents, teachers -- have been marginalized. Decisions about curricula, evaluation and standards are essentially being made by those with the least connection to the daily lives of kids and their learning needs. If education policy in the next four years is to serve the best interests of kids, who politicians glibly call ‘our nation’s future,’ it is critical that policy makers here from those who know best. It is encouraging to see that children, in particular, aren't afraid to be honest about what is going on in our schools. These are voices that need to be heard by the next President of the United States."**

The following is a summary of some of the key events taking place Thursday:

Concord, New Hampshire. Results for America is joining with the Afterschool Alliance, Early Learning NH, and PlusTime NH to sponsor a Town Hall at Rundlett Middle School from 6-8 p.m., in which young people will discuss what they think about their learning both in and out of school with policymakers including Dr. Eugene Hickok, U.S. deputy secretary of education, and Nick Donohue, New Hampshire Department of Education commissioner. Contact: Stefany Shaheen, sshaheen@earlylearningnh.org.

New York City. New York City schoolchildren will participate in a unique public forum tonight in which they can tell local school officials and public officeholders how best to improve the education process. Speakers will include: 10 local school children; New York City Councilmen Robert Jackson and Councilman John Liu; Jessica Garcia of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity; Leonie Haimson of Class Size Matters; Ann Cook, principal, Urban Academy; Tim Johnson,

president, Presidents' Council District 2 (a coalition of 42 parent associations); and Ellen Raider of the Independent Commission on Public Education. The event takes place from 7-9 p.m., October 14, 2004, Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School, 240 Second Avenue at 15th Street. Contact: Kathleen Gomez, nyts@aol.com.

Syracuse, New York. Parents for Public Schools of Syracuse is organizing a Kids Speak Out rally. Students from high school government classes will speak out on what education means for them, and share their views about what makes good schools and learning environments. The students will highlight the needs inside the schools, which are facing a \$30 million budget gap that may result in the loss of over 100 positions as well as extra-curricular activities. Contact: Kim Rhodofax, Kfoxceaser@aol.com.

Waco, Texas. Parents for Public Schools Waco is partnering with a number of local organizations - including Gear Up Waco, a local youth collaboration, the local paper, the Chamber of Commerce, Baylor University and the Waco School District – on the local youth speak out event. Young people in Waco have participated in a series of preparatory workshops in which they did research on learning and education. They will present their findings in a formal panel discussion in front of an audience of elected officials, business leaders, parents, teachers and other students. Student essays will be compiled in a written report, and will be incorporated into Letters to the President. Contact: Kris Olson, ppskris@sbcglobal.net or (254) 741-6455

Jefferson Davis County, Missouri. The local Parents for Public School chapter is sponsoring a youth rally from in which young people will address a range of issues including state tests, qualified teachers, safety in the schools, student's civil rights, curriculum and putting children first. Student Councils from each of the high schools will work with younger children from middle and elementary schools to develop a message on behalf of all children. Contact: Cindy Hall, h288cindy@aol.com or (601) 792-2455.

Birmingham, Alabama. Organizers are partnering with the NBA's Atlanta Hawks and the Minnesota Timberwolves to celebrate Lights On Afterschool at a pre-season NBA game. The game at the Birmingham Jefferson Convention Complex will include thousands of afterschool youth. A series of other events will take place throughout the week. Contact: Peggy Sparks, Birmingham City Schools, (205) 231-4827.

Phoenix, Arizona. There will be a rally at the State Capitol sponsored by the Arizona School Age Coalition. Students will leave "Don't Lock Us Out" postcards and banners for the Governor and state legislators. Kim Morgan, Arizona School Age Coalition, (602) 234-3941, ext. 44.

San Diego, California. Local organizers will host a gallery night at San Diego's new library, where samples of the children's artwork will be on exhibit. Student emcees will describe the artwork and tell guests about afterschool activities. The event will conclude with refreshments. Contact: June Dudas, "6 to 6" Extended School Day Program, (619) 236-6473.

Washington, DC. Culminating a week of activities, there will be a gala celebration Thursday at McKinley High School. Elected officials will be invited to speak, seven programs will have students perform, and the program will begin and end with the singing of an original composition,

“Lights On After School.” Artwork will be showcased throughout the building from afterschool programs and dinner will be provided for families. Contact: Marsha Greenfield, DC Public Schools, (202) 422-5588.

Athens, Georgia. Four middle schools will “adopt” one elementary school in the area and hold Lights On Afterschool events from 4:30-5:30 p.m. The students of each middle school have been asked to decide what kind of program they will create for their “adopted” elementary school. Contact: Suzanne Kennedy, Clarke County School District, (706) 546-7721.

Lake Charles, Louisiana. The local program will take place at the New Jerusalem Baptist from 3:30-6:00 p.m. There will also be a competition of middle school bands, and skits by high school students about the importance of afterschool programs and their value to the community. Parenting classes will be available for adults, and refreshments will be served. Contact: Brinda Fobbs, Agape Way Academy Cadets, (337) 562-7892.

Leonardtown, Maryland. Organizers will hold a rally at the local shopping center from 5-7 p.m. An estimated 75 students will join the festivities, which will include a "Trivia Relay" at which County Commissioners and Board of Education members will quiz children on what they have learned about local government. There will be a brief presentation about the importance of afterschool programs. Contact: Mark Smith, St. Mary's County Public Schools, (301) 475-5511, ext. 137.

Columbus, Ohio. Some 1,500 children will attend a Lights On Afterschool rally and free visit to the Columbus Science and Industry (COSI) Museum from 3:30-5:30 pm. The Mayor is hosting the event, which will include a reception for community leaders. While at the museum, children will vote on the main reason afterschool programs are important to them. This poll will be conducted by the Columbus Youth Commission. Contact: Amy Gordon, Communities in Schools, (614) 214-6864.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. An event will be held at the State House at noon with several hundred youth from programs around Harrisburg. The children will visit State House offices and deliver materials they have worked up about afterschool issues. The Lieutenant Governor is scheduled to take part in the festivities. The Governor’s cabinet secretaries from various departments will be dispatched to eight regional events later in the day. Contact: Dorothy Hershey, PA Department of Education, (717) 783-7089.

Salt Lake City, Utah. This event will take place from 3:30-4:30 p.m. at four program locations: three elementary schools and a fitness center. The mayor of Salt Lake City will speak at one location about the importance of afterschool programs and may read a proclamation. U.S. Representative Chris Canon, a director from the school district, and the Director of the YMCA have also been invited. Contact: Margaret Peterson, Community Education Partnership of West Valley City, (801) 949-9812.

ABOUT RESULTS FOR AMERICA

Results for America is a project of the nonprofit Civil Society Institute, which is based in Newton, Massachusetts. The mission of the Institute is to serve as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business, that can help to improve society. Visit Civil Society Institute on the Web at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>.

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the importance of afterschool programs and advocating for quality, affordable programs for all children. It is supported by a group of public, private and nonprofit organizations that share the Alliance's vision of ensuring that all children have access to afterschool programs by 2010.

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.

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