



## W elcome to The Education Trust Family

As the Community Liaison for the Education Trust, Inc., I invite you to enjoy the Parent/Community Newsletter—one of our newest initiatives in our continued efforts to keep you informed and engaged in the education of your children. It is more important today than ever before to create coalitions and work toward a common goal of ensuring that all children are taught to high levels. For us, it is important to encourage schools, colleges, and whole communities to mount effective campaigns so that all their children will reach high levels of academic achievement. By receiving a high-quality education delivered by highly qualified, effective teachers, these students will be able to become productive members of their communities and the greater society in general.

I am humbled and feel truly blessed to have been entrusted with such an important and vital role as Community Liaison for the Education Trust in their work of advocating on behalf of all children in this nation's public school systems. The mission of reforming our educational systems across this nation is in full throttle and parents and community members—for the first time—are on board front and center. The reauthorization of Title 1 has opened

doors to parents and communities that have heretofore been locked and for the most part we accepted those locked doors as the norm. Today we have access to information, such as student and school-level data, and believe it or not, a chair has been placed for us at the decision-making table. We are encouraged to be meaningful partners in the education of our children.

Many have, for the last 50 years, believed that the promise of *Brown v. Board of Education* was being realized. There was no longer a separate but equal educational system in this country, our schools like our communities were seemingly diverse and the quality of life was improving—or so we thought. Now, at the dawn of the new millennium, we have hard and often painful evidence that prove we had clearly lulled ourselves into a false sense of security, believing all was well in our public school systems nationwide. Today we see the facts/data that say otherwise. We have allowed huge academic achievement gaps to exist among different groups of children in this country and have cloaked these gaps with the “not-so-soft bigotry of a nation.”



In my travels across this country, I'm finding more and more parents and community members willing to step up to the challenge of helping to create a climate of equity in education for the first time in this nation's history.

There is work enough for all to do and believe me I've found no shortage of workers in the vineyard. Teachers, administrators, students, parents, community leaders, indeed all stakeholders are collaborating on one goal, one very clear objective: to provide a high-quality education to each and every child in our public school systems delivered by highly qualified, effective teachers, ensuring a society populated by the best on the planet.

This first edition of our Parent/Community Newsletter opens yet another door to meaningful partnerships, and provides—now as it will in the future—a venue for information sharing, candid insightful discussion, and networking that will link us in a strong, unbreakable chain as we forge ahead on behalf of our children and all children to ensure they receive the high-level, quality education they not only deserve, but are entitled to receive.

We look forward to including you as we move throughout the communities in the country and remember we are only a phone call or email away.

Thank you,

*Zattura*

Zattura Sims-El

Community Liaison

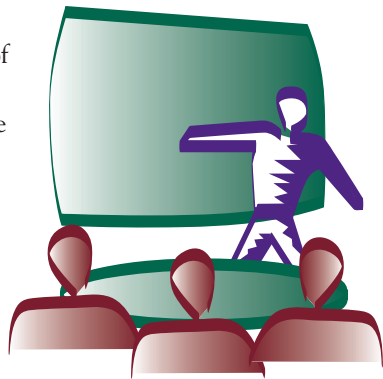
## Train-the-Trainer: What We Do

With that statement in mind, the Capacity-Building Program was developed to train community-based organizations (CBOs) and parent groups (whether you've had experience presenting workshops or not) in the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct a workshop for parents and other community members on the advocacy aspects of the No Child Left Behind Act.

Participants will experience various interactive hands-on activities that will enhance their capacity to empower parents, both as meaningful and involved partners in the education of their children, and as advocates for higher standards for all children and a more equitable educational system.

We welcome all interested organizations and parent groups who have committed themselves to the much needed work of ensuring the educational success of all children, regardless of family income, race or ethnicity, language barrier or disability. We know that all children can and do learn to high levels when they and their educators receive the necessary and adequate resources and support.

The Training Package is web accessible and can be downloaded after completion of the program. Continued support is offered through our web conferencing capabilities.



## Who We Are

The Education Trust is a nonprofit Washington-based organization focused on eliminating achievement gaps among different groups of students at all levels, kindergarten through college. The Education Trust encourages schools, colleges, and whole communities to mount effective campaigns so that all students will reach high levels of academic achievement. In our efforts to bring about a better understanding of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, we have developed a program designed to assist Community-Based Organizations and education advocacy groups in their work with parents and other community members interested in improving the educational opportunities for all children.

## Standards Make The Difference

It is important for parents to understand that standards-based instruction will help improve academic achievement for their children. It means that there is a common expectation in your state of what students should know and be able to do in each grade in key subjects like reading and math. Students then take state-developed assessments to measure how well they are meeting the standards. When parents and communities know what children are supposed to know and be able to do, it makes the partnerships between home, school, and community more effective.

You may be hearing how impossible it is to realize the goal of all children achieving levels of proficiency in the core academic subjects by the 2013-2014 school year; yet there are schools, districts, and states realizing that goal

every day. The following schools are just a small sampling of what is happening all over the country and we know your school, district, and state also share the goal of closing these unacceptable academic achievement gaps, which they are more than likely plagued with as well.

Indeed, some of the most impressive gains are coming from school districts and schools all over. For example,

- In Pittsburgh, PA, in 2002, only 22 percent of African-American 8th graders were reading on grade level. Now, 40 percent of African-American 8th graders read on grade level. That's a difference of 18 percentage points in two years.
- Norview High School in Norfolk, Virginia, is in many ways a typical urban high school. With 1,400 students, half of whom are poor and almost 70 percent African American, it is the kind of school many people expect to be low-performing. And it was. The first time Virginia's tests of learning were administered, in 1998, only about 13 percent of the students passed the history test, and the other subjects weren't much better. Today Norview students score toward the top of the state. Last year, 87 percent passed the history test; 93 percent passed the reading and language arts test; and 89 percent passed the math test, including 88 percent of students with disabilities.

**Every child deserves a high-quality education delivered by highly qualified, effective teachers. There is no time to waste. Children take only one trip through our schools.**

- At Lapwai Elementary School in Idaho, achievement has increased so much that students performed in the top 8 percent of all Idaho schools in fourth-grade reading in 2003. The math results were even better: in the top 6 percent in the state.

The preceding schools are just a small sampling of what is happening all over the country when districts and schools hold high standards for all children. We encourage you to visit these schools and districts to learn more about what they did to raise student achievement.

## Ed Trust Work— Professional Development Standards in Practice (SIP)

The Education Trust's Standards in Practice (SIP) is a professional development tool based on the theory that students can do no better than the assignments they are given. If teachers have expectations for high-level learning from their students—and teach the relevant skills and knowledge—students will meet these expectations. But if students are asked to demonstrate third-grade skills, they will do so, even if they are in sixth grade.

SIP works by engaging teachers in teams to examine their assignments, as well as the resulting student work on a regular basis. As a result of SIP training, teachers report choosing more rigorous activities for students and feeling empowered to demand a higher level of achievement.

We have also trained parents to understand and become involved with SIP through a special brochure entitled, *“Does My Child’s Homework Meet the Standards?”* It enables parents to become familiar with the school district’s standards as they seek to compare that work with the work required to meet the Standards in Practice.

SIP is a quality control tool that can be used to evaluate classroom

assignments, projects, courses, curricula, even teachers’ and administrators’ performances, ensuring that all activities in classrooms parallel those with the utmost capacity. It works by engaging teachers in teams to examine their assignments, as well as the resulting student work on a regular basis.

## The Writers’ Trust

Oftentimes we underestimate what our children are capable of doing and at what age. Through the work of the Writers’ Room program, parents can see how their child’s teacher is able to move all students to high levels of proficiency in writing by challenging their students to write and rewrite until they know they have done the best job possible. In one model of the Writers’ Room, parents are trained to participate as coaches to help students move from simple to more complex writing, which enables parents to become familiar with the process and allows them to assist their children at home. The Writers’ Room demonstrates that all children can learn to write proficiently if given the right instruction and the right support.

The act of writing, rewriting, and rewriting again will improve everyone’s writing. An author is going to produce many rewrites before he/she is finally pleased enough with their work to ship it off to a publisher. We are all aware of the positive effects that practicing has on the final product; thus goes the saying “practice makes perfect.” Children should have the opportunity to write and rewrite. You’ll see the gleam in their eyes when they know they have put on paper exactly what they want to say.



The Writers’ Trust is another model of The Writers’ Room™ program created by Sheila Crowell and Ellen Kolba in Montclair, NJ. In the Writers’ Room™ model, trained writing coaches from the community visit classrooms, talk to students about their writing, comment on the strengths of the drafts, and make suggestions for revisions. Similarly, The Writers’ Trust is a program that supports student writers and writing teachers. The program helps districts that are unable to pull coaches from a community base to rethink how they should use teachers and/or university professors and students.

## The Transforming School Counselors Initiative

Counselors are your link to information about courses that will put your child on the road to success. The National Center for Transforming School Counseling provides professional development workshops for practicing school counselors and administrators in school districts throughout the country. The primary goal of these workshops is to make the practice of school counseling essential to the mission of schools and education reform by equipping school counselors with the skills and knowledge necessary to help all groups of students meet high-academic standards.

The workshop series is designed to help school counselors connect to school reform, and become an integral part in creating an equitable education system. The training helps practicing school counselors acquire and apply skills in leadership, advocacy, teaming and collaboration, and data use, all of which are directed toward systemic change designed to provide access and equity for all groups of students. Participants develop an action plan that they will implement in their building or district.

The Education Trust is training counselors to make sure they are working



to get students into challenging academic courses. The role of school counselors is rapidly changing and relationship-building is essential to this changing role. In a child's secondary school years, their counselor is one of the major factors in ensuring the right courses are taken to set your child on the path to a secure and prosperous future. You might not think that the courses taken in middle school are as important as those taken in high school, but believe me they are. Those years spent in middle school are the years spent setting the stage in preparation for high school and the role your child's

counselor plays in both middle and high school is vital. Course taking is so important it can mean the difference between being successful in college or in the workplace or not. Today being college ready and job ready takes the same level of academic preparation and academic success.

I invite you to urge your school and your district to learn about the Education Trust's research-based professional development programs. Please visit our website at [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org) to learn more about our efforts to ensure that all children are learning to high levels.

**Education is the mainspring of our economic and social progress. It is the highest expression of achievement in our society, ennobling and enriching human life.**  
—John F. Kennedy

## “Voices from the Community”

“I participated in the training that Zattura provided to the staff of the Ohio Parent Information and Resource Center. The training provided information on using local report card data while working with parents toward helping them understand school accountability and the achievement gap. The one thing that I discovered about the training was the development of a common language that PIRC staff will use to engage parents in this discussion. I thought Zattura provided a thorough understanding of the important issues as well as a simple, easy-to-use vocabulary of key terms to use when talking with parents.”

*Emby Miller*

*Project Coordinator*

*Ohio Parent Information and Resource Center*

“We have had the privilege of hearing two presentations at two different workshops, from Zattura Sims-El and from Kati Haycock. In both cases, the presentations were extremely informative. Not only did our leaders gain valuable information, they also were excited to move forward and empowered to confront education officials that previously were intimidating to them.

A good deal of our success is attributable to the fine training we received from the Education Trust.”

*John Musick*

*Michigan Organizing Project*

“...Please keep this initiative going because it is the most effective form of grass roots organizing I have ever encountered! It is so refreshing to be able to leave a meeting energized instead

of feeling bogged down in bureaucracy and rhetoric! Thank you, thank you!! We hope Zattura will come back to this geographic area for many more workshops. We are all very blessed to have her and to have your organization in our children's corner.”

Sincerely,

*Linda J. Heller*

*Concerned Black Parents*

*Bryn Mawr, PA*

**Call us today to schedule your training session available in both English and Spanish. Take advantage of our many resources by visiting our website at [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org).**

For more information, contact:

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The Education Trust works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, kindergarten through college, and forever closing the achievement gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from other youth. Our basic tenet is this—All children will learn at high levels when they are taught to high levels.

Around the country, many schools are boosting the academic performance of all students while accelerating the gains for poor and minority children, particularly in the elementary grades. These early results demonstrate what close observers have known for a long time—that dedicated educators can narrow, and ultimately, close these unacceptable gaps in achievement.