

CENTER FOR LAW AND EDUCATION

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Executive Summary of the Parent Education Initiative

The Center for Law and Education, a long-time advocate for the basic right of every student to a high quality education, particularly in low-income communities, seeks a second year grant to develop a stronger framework for school-level accountability in educating all students to challenging standards. Our multi-year Parent Education Initiative will achieve this goal by introducing primarily low-income families, whose children attend seriously underperforming public schools in Boston, to the core elements of a quality education and by assisting them in developing collaboratively with teachers and administrators improved accountability policies that ensure each child receives high quality teaching and instruction. We expect that these schools will, in turn, more effectively work with the parents, and will better understand the quality education elements, the policies, and practices key to effective implementation.

CLE believes that schools must be accountable, particularly to the families they serve, for providing the elements of a high-quality education that enable students to achieve. Typically there is no effective intervention when students – especially poor and minority students, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities – are denied quality education. And without effective intervention, there is no expectation that the laws will be implemented and enforced or that all students will receive the benefits of best practice. This need not be the case.

CLE has adopted a rights-based approach to school reform that is joined with a vision of authentic, high quality teaching and learning that goes beyond school accountability for “results” [usually based on standardized test scores]. CLE seeks school-level accountability to parents for providing their individual children with the elements of quality education (accelerated and enriched curriculum, effective instructional methods, qualified teachers, timely and effective individual assistance) that will enable them to achieve. (The right to quality education is defined as the right to those elements that are at the core school-level requirements of Title I/No Child Left Behind Act). CLE will continue to use its Educational Quality Bill of Rights (EQBR), a tool that tracks these quality elements, as a framework for connecting a powerful sense of what good education looks like with reform structures and school policies.

The Project supported by a district-wide collaboration of CBOs, parent leaders, and school-based staff, will be working at multiple (6) school sites with families, administrators and teachers. At each site CLE will use the school-level parent planning and participation levers of Title I/NCLB as vehicles for low-income parents becoming real partners in their children’s education. These provisions require Title I schools to develop *jointly* with parents plans that describe *how* parents will be involved in program planning, review and improvement, and *how* the school will provide the above mentioned key components of a high quality education to enable all students to achieve at high levels. Building parent capacity and implementation of these provisions will enhance the level and intensity of parent engagement in school reform. After parents, administrators, teachers and other members of the school community work collaboratively on developing each of the elements of a strong parent involvement policy, the next step is to use the EQBR to assess collaboratively and develop, as needed, the key components for every child to receive a high-quality education under Title I. Implementation of the parent participation provisions of Title I, or what CLE calls the “other accountability system,” will help make schools directly accountable to parents for providing a high quality education to their children.