

# The Atlanta Lawyer

Vol. 6 No. 2

<http://www.atlantabar.org>

August 2008



Bar VP Scales New Heights - p. 8



Tax Attorney Invents The Purrrfect Toy - p. 9



Personal Vision: How To Make Your Vocation Your Vacation - p. 12



In Defense of Hats - p. 22

# Hitting the Mark: Georgia Appleseed's Parental Involvement Under No Child Left Behind Project

By Theresa Brower, M.S.W.

**Georgia Appleseed Parent Involvement Project Manager**

“The interesting thing about Georgia Appleseed is that while there are a lot of organizations which allow lawyers to provide services to individuals on a pro-bono basis, Georgia Appleseed takes a larger view and looks at policy issues in a broader perspective and allows us see where policy and law come together” observes **Rob Rhodes** of *Holland & Knight LLP* and a Georgia Appleseed Education Advisory Council (EAC) member.

A good example is Georgia Appleseed's Parental Involvement Under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Project. Education affects every community at every level. Through this targeted initiative, Georgia Appleseed seeks to be a catalyst to help community stakeholders, including policy makers, school leaders, and parents, more effectively use NCLB data to benefit their students and local schools and to promote parental involvement as a vital instrument to improve student achievement.

Signed into law in 2002, NCLB changed the education landscape, ushering in a substantially more expansive federal role in education at the state and local levels. The law established rigorous sets of student performance requirements as a foundation for holding states, districts, and schools accountable for the academic success of all students.

Although much of the media attention about NCLB focuses on state testing systems and adequate yearly progress (AYP), the legislation includes two critical roles for parents. One, parents must be informed of the academic progress of their children and the performance of their schools and two, parents need to be involved in meaningful ways as a partner

with school officials.

What does a meaningful parent partnership look like? How do law and policy inform effective practice? How do teachers, schools, and parents achieve effective engagement?

Such questions led to a landmark report on parental involvement under



**Senator Johnny Isakson**, panelist at GA Appleseed's "Parent Involvement Under NCLB" Knowledge Forum with GA Appleseed Executive Director **Sharon Hill**.

NCLB. Georgia Appleseed was one of six state centers participating in a national Appleseed study of issues and practices stemming from NCLB's parental involvement provisions. *Holland & Knight LLP*, through its education policy practice, provided extensive pro bono support to design the research study and protocols, conduct interviews with state, district, and school stakeholders, review the data, and prepare the findings. *DLA Piper*, and *PricewaterhouseCoopers LLC* also supplied volunteer and data support.

The resulting report, "It Takes a Parent: Transforming Education in the Wake of the No Child Left Behind Act" concluded that "the special power of parents to help lift their children to new academic heights is often overlooked."

The premise of NCLB's extensive focus on assessment and data holds that providing parents with information about student and school performance will

empower them as advocates to improve the educational outcomes of their children and of all children. The study concluded that in fact many parents find the information confusing and overwhelming and do not know what to do with it. **Tom Roman**, Director of Communities in Schools and an EAC member observed, "so much information is out there, it is difficult for school personnel to pore through it, let alone a parent." How to help address that reality set the stage for the Georgia Appleseed project.

Georgia Appleseed brought its core abilities to research, disseminate, and effect change to every aspect of its ongoing Parental Involvement Initiative. In response to the findings and recommendations of "It Takes a Parent," Georgia Appleseed embarked on several targeted strategies to provide training, enhance professional development, increase public awareness, engage pro bono expertise, and foster collaboration.

## Workshops

To transform the NCLB testing data from a confusing set of numbers into a powerful tool for change in the hands of parents and educators, Georgia Appleseed created an innovative workshop that explains parents' rights and responsibilities under NCLB, as well as how to access and interpret CRCT scores and other data. So far, over 800 parents, teachers, and graduation coaches have participated in 17 workshops throughout Georgia. The workshop was designed and facilitated by **Cathy Henson**, noted Georgia education leader and adjunct faculty in education law at GSU, and **Theresa Brower**, Georgia Appleseed Parent Involvement Project Manager. Participant feedback revealed that over 90% felt the workshops prepared them to be better advocates for their students. "This information was never explained to me before and now I understand the premise of NCLB and the necessity and value of

assessments.”

In order to increase its potential for systemic impact and make the information more readily available to a larger audience of parents and educators, Georgia Appleseed has begun work with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) to create a sixty-minute program based on the workshop content. It will be aired on GPB and accessible via [www.GaAppleseed.org](http://www.GaAppleseed.org). To assist parents further, a complimentary downloadable template will be available to track important information and NCLB data relevant to their student’s education.

### Education Leader Curricula

Another important strategy for widespread systemic impact is Georgia Appleseed’s collaboration with a leading school leadership institute to create instruction modules for school administrators and lead teachers designed to increase skills in engaging parents using NCLB data and provide a valuable professional foundation.

### Knowledge Forum

Georgia Appleseed formally launched “Parent Involvement under NCLB” with a Knowledge Forum in 2007 for education leaders and policy makers. Forum panelist **Senator Johnny Isakson (GA-R)**, an original author of NCLB, suggested that American public education suffers from “PDD”, parental deficit disorder, exhibited by a lack of knowledge by parents on how to be effectively involved. Ongoing and future efforts to maximize parent participation effectively under NCLB nationally and in Georgia were discussed. GaDOE **Deputy Supt. Dr. Diane Bradford** announced the opening of DOE’s Parent Outreach Division, as well as an “Ask DOE” service to enhance communication with Georgia parents. Other distinguished participants included **Governor Roy Barnes**, Co-Chair of the Aspen Institute Commission on NCLB, **Dr. Joyce Epstein**, a nationally recognized authority on parent involvement from Johns Hopkins University and PTA leader

**Laura Dobbs. Ed Darden**, Education Policy Director for national Appleseed, moderated.

### Leveling the Playing Field

The workshops, curricula development, and forum are pieces of an evolving and ongoing effort. **Sharon Hill**, GA Appleseed Executive Director and former juvenile judge, describes the prevailing motivation for this work. “We know that the best way to stem the flow in the ‘school failure to prison pipeline’ is by keeping children and youth in school under the guidance of engaged parents who understand how to work with teachers and school leaders to level the playing field, giving every child hope for, and the educational tools to build, a better future.”

To learn more, view the Knowledge Forum webcast and read “It Takes a Parent”, visit our website at [www.GaAppleseed.org/parents](http://www.GaAppleseed.org/parents) ■

## Facilities Management & Support Services

- Copy Center Management
- Mail Room Management
- Receptionist Services
- Court Filings / Courier
- Document Management
- Document Conversion & Archiving
- Fleet Copier Management



*The Legal Experts*

For Information, Please Contact:  
Don McCoy  
Regional Vice President of Sales  
Phone: 404-226-8050  
Fax: 404-582-8860  
[dmccoy@istmanagement.com](mailto:dmccoy@istmanagement.com)

[www.istmanagement.com](http://www.istmanagement.com)