

Appleseed This Week

eNewsletter - May 7, 2009



A non-profit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico, Appleseed is dedicated to building a society where opportunities are genuine, access to the law is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest.

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June 11, 2009

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Appleseed Reveals Opportunity Gaps, Resource Disparity within School Districts

The National Office of Appleseed, in partnership with Centers in Alabama and Chicago, is working to expose the disparity of educational resources between well-off and poor neighborhoods within a single public school district.

This perpetual imbalance, in which programs, facilities, and staff are allocated disproportionately to more affluent areas, means that those students most in need of educational support are repeatedly short-changed. The result is an opportunity gap in which students within the same school system receive vastly different educations.

It is commonly understood that disparities in educational quality exist on a broad geographic scale - for example, among cities and states - but this project uncovers a more local permutation of the problem. Appleseed will not compare the usual measure of dollars received, but instead will consider elements like teacher credentials, building conditions, and curricular offerings in order to gauge educational opportunity.

Appleseed was awarded an exploratory grant to investigate the extent of this problem and to determine how to ensure more equitable educational support district-wide. Some examples of intra-district resource disparity initially identified by Appleseed include:

- Availability of Advanced Placement courses;
- Quality of faculty, administrators, and staff;
- Library holdings and square footage;
- Implementation of pilot education programs;
- Number of books allocated per child, and
- Building and facility conditions.

its annual event in
New York City!

Engaging a Network for Change

Click on the link above for
details about time, location,
and program!

For further information
and/or to RSVP, email
[Nakia Kelly](#) or
call 202.347.7960.

Funded by a generous grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, this project has three objectives. First, Appleseed seeks to raise awareness of these disparities among schools boards, administrators, and parents. Second, by presenting this problem to the public, Appleseed will, in turn, motivate, mobilize, and support parent advocacy by providing a tool that allows any community to do its own equity assessment.

Finally, and importantly, Appleseed will urge school boards to pass a resource equity policy to ensure that all students within a school district are given an equal opportunity to develop and excel academically.

The preliminary study will be concluded in July, resulting in a report that will assess whether further Appleseed efforts in this program area are on target and can be replicated elsewhere in the network.

For more information on this education project and others, please contact Edwin Darden, Appleseed's Education Policy Director, at edarden@appleseednetwork.org.