



**National
Urban League**

To Be Equal #40

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National Urban League and One Solution Team Up to Urge the Nation to “Put Our Children 1st”

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“Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.” George Washington Carver

In recent weeks, the latest major steps towards realizing the Brown v. Board of Education guarantee that education “is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms” have been taken. First, on September 22, the National Urban League launched the second phase of our Put Our Children 1st campaign, which includes a series of television and radio public service announcements (PSAs) airing on TV One and Comcast, as well as on Radio One and Reach Media, including Tom Joyner, Rickey Smiley, Yolanda Adams and Russ Parr. These PSAs stress the importance of the equitable implementation of Common Core State Standards in helping to ensure that all children – no matter their race, where they live or their parents’ income – receive a high-quality education. Then last week, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights released updated guidelines to ensure that students have equal access to educational resources, such as academic and extracurricular programs, effective teaching, high quality technology and instructional materials and safe school facilities, “regardless of race, color, national origin or zip code.”

Despite its call for equity in education 60 years ago, full compliance with the letter and the law of the Brown decision remains a promise unkept. To fulfill that promise, more must be done to ensure that all districts are held to high standards, that those standards are consistent across the country, and that schools, teachers and students in all schools and neighborhoods have the necessary resources to succeed. That is a primary goal of Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

Common Core establishes clear, consistent guidelines for what every student should know and be able to do in math and English from kindergarten through the 12th grade. It does not dictate curriculum – or how to teach. School districts and teachers still have complete authority to create their own curricula. CCSS also empowers students by placing a greater emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving and expository writing that focus more on a child’s understanding of a subject rather than memorization or repetition.

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The National Urban League firmly believes that with equitable implementation, Common Core State Standards offer an unprecedented opportunity to help meet our national goal of preparing America's children for the 21st Century. By raising standards for everyone, Common Core can help bridge the education achievement gap and create a new reality in which all students are adequately prepared to excel. But equitable implementation – high-quality resources, teacher training and support in every school – is essential for its success.

That is why we have launched this second phase of our Put Our Children 1st campaign with a national media, digital and thought leadership effort in partnership with One Solution, the creative and branded entertainment arm of Radio One, Inc., touching more than 80% of African Americans through Radio One, TV One, Interactive One and Reach Media. All four PSAs included in the campaign demonstrate how young people can reach their goals and fulfill their potential when we put our children first with equal access to a high-quality education and resources.

Launched in April of this year, Put Our Children 1st: Common Core for Common Goals is a multi-state parent education campaign developed by the National Urban League and implemented locally through the Urban League affiliate network. The purpose of the campaign is to ensure that parents are fully aware of and understand the Common Core State Standards and what they mean for their children. Parent Circles have been convened by Urban League affiliates in Cleveland, Los Angeles, Nashville and Pittsburgh, and Citywide Parent Summits have been held by the Urban League of Greater Cleveland and the Urban League of Middle Tennessee, with upcoming events in Pittsburgh (October 17) and Los Angeles (November 1).

Achieving true equity and excellence in education involves all aspects of a child's education, from resources and teachers as called for by the Department of Education in its racial disparity guidance, to consistent educational standards as provided by the Common Core State Standards, which have currently been adopted by 43 states. The mission of Put Our Children 1st is to responsibly inform and educate parents about these standards and the potential they have to better prepare our children for college and jobs. No large-scale change is ever easy, but missteps and underinvestment in implementation cannot be used to attack the merits of the standards and what they are meant to accomplish.

It's time to put down the politics and Put Our Children 1st.

For more information visit, www.PutOurChildren1st.org

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