



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Jeff Agnew**  
**Blakey & Agnew**  
**(202) 828-9100**  
**(703) 203-8720 - Cell**

## **City Official, Parents Shocked by Lack of Notification About School Restructuring Process**

*Parents Gather in Baltimore to Learn Their Rights under NCLB*

**WASHINGTON, DC (June 7, 2005)** — After realizing how little they had been told about federally mandated changes in their children's schools, Baltimore City Council President Sheila Dixon and about 60 concerned parents Saturday demanded more information about the restructuring process underway in Baltimore city schools. Dixon was a co-sponsor of the conference designed to inform parents of Baltimore public school children about the city's school restructuring process. Currently 32 schools in Baltimore are implementing restructuring plans and more than 30 others have submitted restructuring plans for the upcoming school year.

"The conference opened my eyes to many of the problems in our city school system. Parents need to be better informed and we must remain involved in the process," said Gayl Brooks, a parent of a fourth-grader in the Baltimore Public School System.

The conference, held at Johns Hopkins University, was co-sponsored by Council President Dixon, the Center for Fathers, Families and Workforce Development (CFWD) and Parent Power Works. One panelist summed up the conference by saying "the feeling in the room was one of determination and inspiration."

"Our particular interest is in helping parents learn the fundamentals of school accountability and understand they have certain rights under the federal No Child Left Behind law," said Barbara Davidson, head of Parent Power Works. "Particularly now, as Baltimore has 62 schools that are either in the planning or implementation stage of restructuring, parents need timely, consistent and straightforward information about what that means for them and what their options are if schools fail to perform."

This conference also launched Council President Dixon's "Family and Community Engagement Campaign." This citywide campaign will combine family and community efforts to engage and empower parents and guardians in their children's education.

Following the conference, Council President Dixon said, "There are 182 public schools in the city of Baltimore. Thirty-four percent of them are either in the planning or implementation phases of restructuring, and 40% have no organized parent-teacher organization. Make no mistake, this is a time of crisis. Parental involvement is vital to a successful education environment in our city. I'm proud the City Council co-sponsored this important and timely conference and it's my hope that Baltimore City Public School System will take notice."

Davidson expressed hope that city school officials will note parents demand for inclusion and information. Plans are to host a similar forum for parents, educators and concerned citizens, inviting Baltimore City Public School System representatives to participate.

“As a community-based organization that works with families throughout Baltimore, we feel it is imperative that we educate the parents so that they can best support their child’s education needs,” said Johnny Rice II, chief operating officer of CFWD and director of the Men’s Services Responsible Fatherhood Program.

Parent Power Works is a project of StandardsWork, a nonprofit educational consultancy that since 1992 has worked with school systems across the country to improve student performance. The Parent Power Works project is designed to provide the tools needed for parents of children in low-performing schools across Maryland and the District of Columbia to make informed assessments about the quality of their child's education and take whatever actions are necessary to secure the best education for their child. Parent Power Works strives to identify and train partners in all communities where there is a concentration of schools identified as "needing improvement." The state list of needing improvement schools in Maryland can be found at [www.bethepower.org](http://www.bethepower.org).

Photographs of the conference are available upon request.

# # #