



December 22, 2008

Mr. Ian Bassin
Education Policy Working Group
Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Project

Dear Ian,

The attached letter expresses our support of President-elect Obama's goal to restore the promise of America's public education. We applaud the direction he is headed and respectfully request that his plan also include strategies to improve school culture and student pro-social behavior. It will help address serious problems in our schools and, at the same time, ensure success in all other areas.

An executive summary of the major points in the attached letter is as follows:

- We have serious culture-climate problems in schools:
 - Each day, 60,000 students avoid going to school out of fear of getting beat up
 - 50% of HS and 25% of middle school students say drugs are used or sold at their school
 - 50% of HS students admit to cheating
 - Every 26-seconds a young person drops out of school
- Comprehensive character education addresses these tough challenges and more, creating an environment where students flourish:
 - Academic achievement improves
 - The achievement gap narrows
 - Disciplinary problems are reduced
 - Attendance rates improve
 - Vandalism and harassment declines
- Including intentional character development in your broader education strategy will help ensure success in all other important goals and objectives
- Stressing character education in schools also supports the President-elect's broader vision to restore America's moral standing
- And, it is the right thing to do

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input on your important work. I urge you to thoroughly review the attached recommendation. I think you'll agree that it has great promise to make a genuine difference and help our new President achieve success at this defining moment in our history.

Sincerely,

Joseph W. Mazzola
Executive Director