



## ADVANCING EDUCATION AND PROTECTING VULNERABLE YOUTH

Appleseed is a Network of 18 public interest justice Centers in the United States and Mexico. The Network focuses on a variety of social, economic, and legal justice issues, bringing a non-partisan evidence-based approach to evaluating problems. Appleseed, working with stakeholders across the spectrum, uses its findings to propose and advocate practical, achievable solutions. This document summarizes Appleseed's primary work in this area.

### OVERVIEW OF TOPIC AREA

An overwhelming body of research makes it clear that the most reliable and cost-effective strategy for expanding access to educational opportunity in the 21st century is racial and socioeconomic integration. Inside of our schools, an overzealous embrace of zero-tolerance policies by school administrators has often led students in violation of even minor school rules to find themselves not in the principal's office, but in a police precinct. Appleseed believes that public institutions should set the stage for genuine opportunity for all, and when schools systematically purge great numbers of students from their rolls, or entirely exclude some based on race or socioeconomic status, something is wrong.



### COLLABORATIVE NETWORK ACTIVITIES

The Appleseed Network Education and Youth Working Group is currently working with the firm of Arnall Golden Gregory to conduct a thorough review of all work that has taken place throughout the Network in the past several years to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline. Once that review is complete, the work will be analyzed to identify best practices and projects that can most effectively be replicated across state lines.

### SELECT CURRENT PROJECTS

#### DESEGREGATING SCHOOLS

New York Appleseed advocated to push one of the wealthiest community school districts in New York City to create its own school integration plan. That plan was approved by the mayor and chancellor of schools and will be implemented in the next school year.

#### ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING IN SCHOOLS

Connecticut Appleseed recently released a report entitled "Cyberbullying and Social Media Abuse: Successful Management in Connecticut School Districts" to showcase innovative implementation of Connecticut's anti-cyberbullying legislation. This report features educators' strategies to successfully respond to newer technologies and social media and thereby maximize the ability of public school children to learn. Copies were distributed to every school district superintendent and board of education member in the state.

#### ADVOCATING FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL SAFETY MEASURES

In the wake of the tragic school shootings in Santa Fe and Parkland, Texas Appleseed learned that schools were reverting to zero tolerance policies with regards to school discipline. In response, they published a report titled "Collateral Consequences" and have worked with policymakers and local school leaders to ensure research-based responses to school safety are prioritized instead.

## PROVIDING MEDICAID SERVICES TO FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

Sarah Helvey, Child Welfare Program Director at Nebraska Appleseed, testified as part of a panel for a U.S. Senate briefing on requiring states to provide Medicaid services to former foster youth up to age 26 when they move to another state. Following the briefing, language that Sarah helped draft was included in the Opioid legislation that was passed by Congress.

## PROTECTING YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Kansas Appleseed, along with several other partners, recently filed a lawsuit on behalf of the approximately 7,600 children who are currently or will be placed in the state's foster care system. The lawsuit alleges that Kansas state officials have long failed to protect children in state custody from harm by depriving them of critical mental health assessments and services and subjecting them to extreme housing instability.

## SELECT PRIOR WORK

### 2017

The Louisiana Association of Public Charter Schools (LAPCS) and Louisiana Appleseed unveiled another joint publication, the Louisiana Charter School Leader Legal Handbook. The new handbook covers basic legal requirements that may be of interest and use to charter school leaders. Since then, Louisiana Appleseed has hosted a training session and CLE for attorneys and school leaders, and LAPCS has been distributing the School Leader handbooks to schools throughout the state of Louisiana.

### 2016

Georgia Appleseed concluded a long-standing project focused on building a better future for foster children in the state. The project had various elements including: providing for a child to remain in his/her school of origin despite changes in placement; assuring, if a change in schools is in the best interest of the child, that the transition is as timely and seamless as possible; improving access to effective services and supports (such as tutoring, credit recovery, and special education) to ensure successful completion of high school; and post secondary tuition assistance and other support to help a child succeed in college.

### 2015

Texas Appleseed led efforts to decriminalize school truancy. Students no longer face the threat of jail time for missing school, and civil cases against truants in Texas have dropped more than 90 percent.

### 2014

South Carolina Appleseed filed an amicus brief with the state Supreme Court in the Abbeville v. Harrell school equity funding case asking that weight be given based on the school's poverty rates when determining funding allocations for school districts.

### 2014

New York Appleseed's groundbreaking Within Our Reach series called on the DOE to adopt an unambiguous policy statement recognizing the importance of diverse learning environments with specific accountability standards on progress towards diversity goals.

### 2011

Georgia Appleseed drafted a report, "Effective School Discipline: Keeping Kids in Class", which shows wide variability in student discipline among Georgia's 180 school districts. In some districts, out-of-school suspension (OSS) is imposed on more than twenty percent of the school population annually. The study revealed successful alternatives that maintain order and a safe environment while keeping kids in class.

### 2011

New Mexico Appleseed helped enact America's first "Breakfast after the Bell" law, which reduces the stigma felt by poor children who were singled out for free school breakfast before the day began. This program serves 116,000 students in high-poverty elementary schools, affording them the nutrition they need to start the day ready to learn.