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Title:

**BEYOND PARTNERSHIP: INDEPENDENT CITIZEN ACTIVISM ADVOCATING  
URBAN SCHOOL REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES**

**I will assert that for parents and communities interested in achieving substantial educational improvement for working class, poor, and minority children, a more aggressive, political, and independent style of parent participation in education is needed.**

**The research described points to the conclusion that when families and communities organize to hold poorly performing schools accountable, schools make positive changes in policy, practice, and resources.**

**Progress toward reform in urban schools has been disappointing. The huge gaps in academic achievement between middle class and affluent children and children of working-class, poor, and minority families remain. Disappointing also is the slow adoption of comprehensive school-family-community partnerships in American urban schools.**

**The partnership theme and current approaches to school reform are simply not enough for those who believe that schools need to be pressed much harder to begin to provide an effective education for the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century for those students currently left behind.**

**A new strategy of renewed citizen activism organized is needed.**

**The studies show that grassroots civic action directed at school reform has emerged in a significant way in many of our cities in the last half-decade, after many years of quiescence.**

**The paper will include: a) the reasons for this reemergence; b) criteria that define activist groups c) the indicators of success used in the studies; d) two examples, one in Boston, the other in Texas; and some results in these early studies.**

**Moving beyond partnership does not mean abandoning the partnership efforts of teachers, school administrators, and parents working together in schools, but I conclude that more, independent and aggressive efforts, using the tools of community organizing, is our best hope of making a reality of making good on our national promise of democracy and of schools realizing the dream of social and academic success for all children.**