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For Immediate Release

How to turn around a low performing school --- Engage! All Families

(Atlanta GA – January 10, 2006) How did Stonewall Jackson High School one of the lowest performing schools in Virginia, turn the corner and become Time Magazine’s School of the Year? How did SAT scores increase by 61%, parent satisfaction levels climb by 25%, and disparity between minority and non-minority scores improve by 18%? The answer is shockingly simple: family engagement.

Dr. Steve Constantino was the catalyst behind the success and awards while serving as principal from 1995 until 2003. Academic scholars and researchers have proclaimed the virtues of family engagement and realize its effects of increased academic learning and achievement for all students but never outlined an action plan. “The problem with researchers is that they tell you what to do, but not how to do it,” states Dr. Constantino. What makes Family Friendly Schools unique is that Dr. Constantino, founder, has developed a program that turns forty-years of research into practical, measured, hand-on applications that advocate higher levers of academic achievement.

My experience as a parent and educator is that schools are unwelcoming and intimidating. As an educator those issues became paramount because without parent trust and cooperation the students lose,” states Dr. Constantino. His first step towards Family Engagement at Stonewall Jackson High School was removing everything that prevented interaction between faculty and families including the icon of administrative offices; the front desk. “I hated that thing and it kept parents at bay,” adds Constantino. His second step, and the turning point in his career, was winning a grant to introduce “homework hotline” a voicemail system that enhanced communication between teachers and families. He also instituted home visits, outreach community programs and was one of the first principals to insist on a free busing program for all students regardless of where they lived to participate in the schools IB program. (Can we spell IB out?)

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Today, Dr. Constantino wants schools around the world to embrace the philosophy of family engagement which is C3; a cohesively, connected culture to advance relationships between school leaders, staff and families, resulting in academic excellence among all students. Family Friendly Schools utilizes C3, the five action steps that support it, and extensive public research to assess current conditions within districts to develop customized Family Engagement strategies.

To facilitate these processes Dr. Constantino and his team of experienced engagement specialists now provide The Engage! All Families Institute, a customized district event, and a regional event, The Engage! All Families Conference, The Family Friendly Schools Master Seminar series focuses on critical issues facing today's educators and EdCoach™ is offered as an executive coaching seminar for senior administrators. All of these programs meet the state and federal guidelines enacted by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

To learn more about the conferences and consulting available from Family Friendly Schools, gain media access to a keynote conference, receive a copy of his book, *Engaging All Family*, published in 2003, or if you would like to interview Dr. Constantino, visit on the web at www.familyfriendlyschools.com or call Brent Sapp, president of Family Friendly Schools at 800.890.7794.

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