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In his acceptance speech in Grant Park on November 4th, President-elect Barack Obama cautioned the country not to equate an election itself with change, but rather “the chance for us to make that change.” As the President is set to infuse public education with one of the largest single allocations in history, our nation’s new Education Secretary prepares to [manage the distribution of a \\$100-plus billion](#) budget that includes, as of this printing, \$54 billion in state fiscal stabilization and a \$5 billion incentive fund to reward progress.

Meanwhile, we all have the chance to make changes at the state and local level that will transform public schooling. Along with local and district-level actions, state-wide efforts that bring together families, community members, educators and policymakers to overcome inequity and raise graduation rates are critically needed. This issue spotlights several examples. As always, we want to hear from you! Send in stories and examples from your communities to gradforall@idra.org.

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Schools and Communities in Action

“Show me a successful school district, and I’ll show you a community that wraps its arms around its schools, partnering with them for the success of all students.” - Anne Foster, national Executive Director of Parents for Public Schools, Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal, February 9, 2009.

Mississippi Model. Parents for Public Schools (PPS), which recently selected Anne W. Foster as its new Executive Director, is developing a statewide network in Mississippi that it hopes can become a model for parent engagement in other states. According to the Southern Education Foundation, per-pupil spending in Mississippi, as in other southern states, lags behind national averages, and it [remains the only Southern state without state-supported pre-kindergarten](#). Research compiled by Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy in partnership with IDRA shows that in Mississippi just one in two African American and Latino students graduate on time with a diploma. Through the *Schoolhouse to Statehouse* initiative, PPS provides training and tools to help parents become more powerful advocates for their children. Its aim is to “mobilize parents and their supporters to work to achieve equitable distribution of resources to support public education and access to opportunities for all students.” To learn more about PPS’ emerging model, visit “[We’re Everywhere](#)” or visit [Parent Press](#). Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, serves on the national board of Parents for Public Schools--visit “Toolbox” (below) for a link to a podcast conversation with him on “The Power of Parent Leadership.” Looking to learn more about community organizing to improve public education in Mississippi? Visit [Southern Echo](#), a leadership development, education and training organization, strengthening grassroots leadership in the African-American community in rural Mississippi and the region.



Kentucky Can-Do Spirit. “Top 20 by 2020” is a statewide campaign in Kentucky led by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence to “propel Kentucky to rank in the top 20 states for student achievement by 2020.” Launched at Liberty Elementary School in Lexington, the campaign aims to expand quality preschool; provide highly qualified and well-supported teachers for every student; eliminate achievement gaps; improve high schools; increase college-going and completion rates; and improve math, science and technology achievement at all levels. To learn more about how the campaign is designed to catalyze action around key educational indicators, visit [Top 20 by 2020](#).

A True Test for Texas. Texas has an opportunity that doesn’t come along every day. Granted, it was wrapped in a [court ruling](#) that the state falls short in its obligation to effectively educate secondary level English language learners. Texas recently won the chance to postpone the overhaul

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