STAND UP
WWW.STANDUP.ORG

Contact:
Sean Walsh
Phone: 1-866-303-7457
standup@gmmb.com

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National Campaign to Address America's Education Crisis

National coalition calls on all Americans to STAND UP for excellent high schools that prepare every student for success.

[SANTA MONICA, CA] – Amid mounting national concern over the state of America's high schools, more than 50 education organizations, districts, and schools across the country have joined together to create STAND UP, a community-based national campaign demanding change for great high schools that educate all students well. The coalition includes educators, community activists, and parents in urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods who are already working hard to improve the nation's high schools.

The campaign was mentioned on *The Oprah Winfrey Show* today as part of a two-day report: "American Schools in Crisis," on which Bill and Melinda Gates, the founders and co-chairs of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, were featured. *The Oprah Winfrey Show* teamed up with *Time* magazine, which devoted its April 17th cover story, "Dropout Nation," to the problems in U.S. high schools.

As a new *Time/The Oprah Winfrey Show* poll reveals, ordinary Americans are increasingly troubled by the state of the nation's high schools. Nine in 10 adults in the survey called the dropout rate a serious problem. Today, about one in three high school students do not graduate with their class. Those who do graduate need more education than their grandparents just to maintain the same standard of living, yet only one in three ninth graders actually leave high school in four years ready for the rigors of college and the working world. The problem is not limited to big cities: It affects young people in every community – the suburbs, rural areas, and small towns.

Robert L. Hughes, president of New Visions for Public Schools, a STAND UP coalition member that works in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education to develop successful public high schools, said, "A strong education is a civil right that we must extend to every student. It is important that we stand up to make that right a reality in classrooms across America. Unless we help every child succeed, be they in rural schools in Kansas or suburban schools in Maryland or urban schools in New York City, we cannot succeed as a nation. The goal of this campaign is to mobilize communities across the country to stand up to help their high schools provide students with an education that prepares them for college, work, and citizenship."

STAND UP will build on the growing momentum around high school reform to engage parents, teachers, principals, community leaders, concerned citizens, business leaders, policymakers, and philanthropists in all 50 states.

The STAND UP coalition includes a diverse network of public school districts; nonprofit organizations that create or support networks of new schools; developers of alternative high schools and early college high schools; model schools; and many others. They include the New York City Department of Education; Chicago Public Schools; the National Council of La Raza; the Colorado Children's Campaign; Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP); the Texas High School Project; and St. HOPE Public Schools in Sacramento, California.

"We have supported many schools and school districts in their efforts to redesign and create new high schools that ensure all young people graduate prepared for college and success," said Tom Vander Ark, executive director of education for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which is supporting the STAND UP campaign. "But it will take more than these efforts to get the job done. STAND UP seeks to provide all Americans – parents, teachers, community leaders, and others – with information they need to take action so our high schools prepare all young people and our country for a strong future."

To help mobilize Americans to demand change, STAND UP has launched a Web site, www.standup.org, which provides valuable information, guidance and tools for parents, guardians and concerned citizens to support students and excellent high schools in every community.

The Web site also provides information about the state of the nation's high schools and offers specific ways for people to become a part of the solution. Visitors to the Web site can:

- Send an email urging governors to support high schools that serve all students well;
- Download a parent toolkit, which provides information and tips about how to make a difference in a teenager's education;
- Download a community action toolkit, which provides information and guidance on how to mobilize a community for change; and
- Purchase a unique, wearable STAND UP medallion to show support for the hopes and dreams of the nation's young people. (Proceeds from the sales of the medallion will go to a new fund, the STAND UP Scholarship Fund.)

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STAND UP is a national, multi-year community-based campaign for excellent high schools that prepare all students for future success. Comprised of more than 50 organizations throughout the country, the effort is committed to enlisting the support of the American people in tackling America's education crisis. The multi-pronged effort will include print and television advertising, a Web site with resources for parents and concerned citizens to become engaged in education improvement efforts, and local

campaign events around the country. STAND UP is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other national organizations.

Public Interest, www.publicinterest.tv, the not-for-profit creator of powerful messaging for good causes, conceived and executed STAND UP to provide America with a platform to STAND UP and demand that kids in this country get the education they deserve. With headquarters in Santa Monica and newly opened offices in Washington, DC, the Emmy Award-winning Public Interest works with a wide variety of nonprofit organizations, including MTV, the National AIDS Fund, the Allstate Foundation, Rock the Vote, the Partnership for a Drug Free America, Teach for America and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Public Interest will unveil creative elements that will be delivered to the American public in phases over the next year and beyond.