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Parents for Public Schools to Convene National Leadership Conference

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Parents for Public Schools (PPS), a national organization of community-based chapters, will hold its biannual Leadership Conference on April 23-25, 2010, in Columbia, Missouri, on the campus of the University of Missouri. The theme of the conference is "Back to the Future." PPS parents and education experts from across the country will study and discuss how past parent engagement successes in schools can be adapted today to improve public education for all children. Most sessions are open to the public.

"We are very excited to bring together the informed, energized parents that make up PPS chapters across the country," said Anne Foster, PPS National Executive Director.

The PPS Leadership Conference will kick off with a dinner and keynote address on Friday evening, April 23, in the Reynolds Alumni Center. On Saturday, concurrent sessions in Townsend Hall will offer workshops to build the skills parents and community partners need to become fully engaged allies in public school improvement as well as local, state, and national education policy. The conference is hosted by the PPS Columbia chapter.

The keynote speaker is Deborah Meier, currently on the faculty of New York University's Steinhardt School of Education. Meier is a board member and director of New Ventures at Mission Hill, a pilot school in Boston, director and advisor to Forum for Democracy and Education, and serves on the board of the Coalition of Essential Schools and the advisory board for PPS.

In praising the PPS mission and the conference goal of bringing parents to the education decision-making table, Meier said, "Figuring out how families and schools build trust is the number one issue for democracy; while blind trust is unwise, maybe blind respect can help build the kind of wary trust all students, teachers, parents and citizens need to make the future stronger than the past."

Deborah Meier is the author of *The Power of Their Ideas, Lessons to America from a Small School in Harlem, Will Standards Save Public Education, In Schools We Trust, Keeping School* (with Ted and Nancy Sizer), *Many Children Left Behind*, and other books and articles that enhance democracy and equity in public education.

Other sessions will address a variety of education issues from the parent's perspective and offer opportunities to network with members from across the nation who are passionate about public education.

The conference is sponsored in part by the College of Education at the University of Missouri.

PPS is a national non-profit organization of community-based chapters working with public school parents and other supporters to improve and strengthen local public schools. Founded in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1989, there are 14 PPS chapters in 10 states. PPS believes that parents play an indispensable role in building quality schools and that strong public schools are essential to a strong American democracy.

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