

# CENTER FOR LAW AND EDUCATION

[www.cleweb.org](http://www.cleweb.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Paul Weckstein  
Co-Director  
(202) 986-3000  
[pweckstein@cleweb.org](mailto:pweckstein@cleweb.org)

## **American Bar Association Calls for Action on Right to High-Quality Education**

Washington, D.C., August 6, 2009: The American Bar Association – the primary organization of American lawyers, with over 400,000 members – is calling for action by school districts, states, and the federal government to secure the right of every child to a high-quality education. It also asks the nation’s attorneys and bar associations to assist in securing that right through improving law and policy, through representation of students and their families, and through community legal education to foster better understanding of existing laws related to rights to quality education.

The Center for Law and Education played a major leadership role in this multi-year effort. Paul Weckstein, co-director of the Center for Law and Education and member of the ABA’s Commission on Youth at Risk that sponsored the resolutions, was principal author of the recommendations approved by the ABA and of the submitted reports that accompany them. Weckstein said, “We are very excited about the ABA’s push for changes in education law, policy, and implementation and by its call upon the lawyers of the nation to join the effort to fulfill the right to quality education.”

At its annual meeting this week, the ABA adopted three sets of recommendations on the right to high-quality education. In introducing them, Laura Farber, the Commission’s chair, invoked the promise of equal educational opportunity in *Brown v. Board of Education* that remains to be fulfilled: “Children should have a right to a high quality education that will prepare them for productive work and for contributions to our communities and to our society. Many children still do not have that opportunity; many individuals, students, parents, and organizations...do not understand the laws in place and their ability to participate in decisions that affect their right to education.”

The first of the sets of recommendations and accompanying reports is aimed at ensuring *the right to a high-quality educational program*, provided to all, and calls for federal, state, and local action to spell out core elements of that right to quality education, to ensure that all schools provide those elements to every child, and to implement and enforce existing provisions of law targeted at enabling students and parents to effectuate their rights to quality education and to participate fully in decisions affecting them.

A second recommendation is aimed at securing *the right to remain in school*. It seeks to change the policies and conditions which often lead children to drop out of school. It also seeks to reduce the removal of students from instruction as a result of disciplinary exclusion or police and court referral in response to school-related behavior.

The third recommendation seeks to secure for all youth who have left or been excluded from school or are incarcerated *the right to resume their education* in a high-quality, age-appropriate program that enables them to graduate and prepare for higher education.

Weckstein emphasized that “A rights-based approach to school reform – by focusing on what students, their families, and communities can actually count on from their schools in the way of a high-quality education, and on what we need to *do* in order to achieve the results we want for kids – is crucial to making reforms real.” He noted: “In our ongoing work on these issues, including assistance with an educational quality bill of rights spelling out elements of a high-quality program, as called for by the ABA, in areas such as curriculum, instruction, and individual student attention, we at CLE are looking forward to collaborating with the ABA and others in our efforts to help educators, parents, students, communities and advocates make the right to high-quality education a reality.”

The ABA recommendations and their accompanying reports can be found at CLE’s website, [www.cleweb.org](http://www.cleweb.org).

**About the Center for Law and Education:**

CLE is a national organization with offices in Boston and Washington DC. It strives to make every child's right to high-quality public education a reality throughout the nation and to enable communities to improve their schools and address their own public education problems effectively. CLE works on school reform from a rights-based perspective through the development of federal law and policy and through implementation assistance to communities, schools, districts, and states.

###