

“Lawyers Circle” Champions Student Success **Council for Educational Change Group Gives More Than \$450,000**

Members of the newly formed Council for Educational Change *Lawyers Circle* have generously donated funds--totaling more than **\$450,000**--to the Council, Florida's Educational Think Tank. There are presently eight firms who comprise this cadre. Their contributions support the Council's mission and work to increase student achievement.

The Council is a 501(C)(3) educational improvement organization which develops school-based leadership—principals, AP's and teachers. Ten years of Council research and experience confirm the critical role of school leadership in impacting student success. Started in 2003, the Council is the successor organization to the \$100 million South Florida Annenberg Challenge.

The *Lawyers Circle* is the brainchild of Council Board Member and Educational Advancement Chair, Sue Miller: “Investing in education is investing in our children's and community's future,” Mrs. Miller said. “Council programs offer an accountable platform and meaningful opportunities to do just that. We are very appreciative that leaders in Florida's legal profession have committed to the *Lawyers Circle*. The *Circle* creates a new group of involved and dedicated champions for our students.”

Council *Lawyers Circle* Members

- Akerman Senterfitt PA
- Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod
- Ferrell Law PA
- Greenberg Traurig
- Gunster Yoakley & Stewart, PA
- Hanzman Gilbert LLP
- Podhurst/Orseck
- Steve Uhlfelder & Associates



CESAR ALVAREZ
Greenberg Traurig CEO
Lawyers Circle member

The international law firm Greenberg Traurig was the first to contribute and kick-off the Council's Lawyers Circle. The Miami firm and its team are actively involved in community and educational improvement.

Cesar L. Alvarez, CEO of Greenberg Traurig, said, "We are pleased to be a founding member of the Council for Educational Change's Lawyers Circle. Greenberg Traurig welcomes the opportunity to assist students and educators throughout Florida through Council programs that prepare successful school leaders to prepare successful students. The Lawyers Circle reflects the firm's culture of collaboration, creating a team of committed law firms working together on strategic education improvement. Education is the key to giving each child a fair shot at the American Dream and a prosperous future for our community as a whole. We look forward to seeing additional firms as members."

Steve Uhlfelder of Steve Uhlfelder and Associates in Tallahassee is a member of the *Lawyers Circle* and an active Council Board Member. He was also a member of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge Board. “I know first hand that we are improving education,” said Steve Uhlfelder. “And our Council evaluations bear this out, including student gains and more parent involvement to name just a few significant strides. The Council excels at developing and empowering school leadership. When you do that, students benefit. This bottom-line focus is very attractive to community and corporate sector partners. The *Lawyers Circle* is a great example of the Council's innovative approach to partnership.”

Council For Educational Change Board...Florida's Educational Think Tank

Steven J. Saiontz, Chair Dr. Elaine Liftin, *President and Executive Director*

Founder, Leonard Miller

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3265 Meridian Parkway Suite 130 Weston, FL 33331 phone: 954.727.9909 fax: 954.727-0990 www.changeeducation.org

COUNCIL FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE MEDIA ADVISORY
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Some Council highlights, since 2003:

- programs benefited more than one million Florida students--significant free and reduced lunch population
- developed the leadership skills of more than 4,157 principals and AP's, and 9,057 teachers
- program work independently evaluated
- 88% of contributions go to direct support of school programs and educators, exceeding industry standard
- expanded Think Tank function, partnering with Florida TaxWatch on the *Preeminent Principal Program* to explore ways to recognize and reward high-performing principals
- selected to receive Florida Department of Education Commissioner's Business Recognition Award, April 10; nominated by Miami-Dade Schools and Supt. Dr. Rudy Crew

Some Council programs/tools/activities:

PASS (Partnership to Advance School Success)®: statewide; CEO, principal, and education coach work to raise student achievement; 3 years; \$100,000 from CEO; legislative funding; 72 models; partnered by Florida Council of 100; Raymond James Financial—statewide sponsor; subject of a recent book, *“Pass It On...Make a Difference: PASS – A Successful Business and Education Partnership Model”*

Executive PASS®: Miami-Dade, Hillsborough, Orange; business leader and principal team; PASS similar; 41 models

Municipal PASS®: PASS, with support of mayors in recruiting CEO's and supporting teams: Rick Baker--St. Petersburg, Manny Diaz--Miami-Dade; Julio Robaina--Hialeah

Teachers and Teaching Initiative: funded by Wachovia Foundation; retains and develops new and beginning teachers—98% retention rate of novice teachers, exceeding state and national averages

Florida Leadership Academy®: statewide learning week for school teams--principal, AP, teacher leader--to develop instructional leadership and create team leadership plans for site implementation

Assistant Principal Leadership Forum: statewide leadership development for aspiring principals

Leonard Miller Principal Leadership Award: \$10,000 personal use award for high-performing principal

SPSnapshot™: student performance data analysis tool for teachers and staff to tailor/improve instruction

The Council's Board is comprised entirely of Florida business leaders. It was founded by the late Leonard Miller who was the Annenberg Challenge Chair. The Miller family continues his educational improvement legacy and is actively involved in the Council's work and mission. Today, the Council is chaired by Mr. Miller's son-in-law, Steve Saiontz, Partner, Banyan Partners; Mr. Miller's wife Sue, philanthropist, Council Board Member and Educational Advancement Chair; son Jeffrey, President of Weeks Gas, Council Board Member and PASS CEO at Holmes and Hialeah Elementaries; son Stuart Miller, President and CEO of Lennar, and daughter Leslie Saiontz, both of whom support the Council through the Lennar Foundation. Dr. Elaine Liftin is the Council President and Executive Director. She also led the Florida Annenberg Challenge.

Interested in joining the Lawyers Circle? Please Call Dawn Wilson, VP Educational Advancement, 954.727.9909.

Please visit the Council website for more information about our work: www.changeeducation.org.

Profile: GREENBERG TRAUIG
Lawyers Circle Firm

The Miami-based office of Greenberg Traurig was the first firm to sign on to the Lawyers Circle with a generous gift. Greenberg Traurig is an international law firm with 1,750 lawyers and 29 offices. It has strong roots in Florida.

The Miami office advises local, national and international companies in numerous sectors, including aviation, entertainment, financial institutions, health care, real estate, international trade and customs, manufacturing, retail and technology.

Firm members hold leadership positions or are actively involved in community and service organizations such as Miami Dade College, the University of Miami, United Way of Miami-Dade, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, and the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center.