

The Atlanta Alliance

Overview Brief for the Grad Nation Action Forum

September 2009

Collaborative Overview

Statement of Purpose

In line with the Obama Administration's focus on public-private partnerships, the Atlanta Alliance aims to demonstrate that Georgia is mobilizing across all sectors to collectively tackle the complexities of education reform and student success/readiness. We are connecting state leaders with a cross-sector collaborative to create a platform for executing a metro- and eventually statewide agenda. This will assist in securing short-term resources and establish the working group necessary to achieve long-term objectives.

The Atlanta Alliance has chosen to focus its efforts on the Metro Atlanta region. This region covers 13 counties and 17 school districts serving approximately 730,000 students. The region represents about half of the state of Georgia's population. Communities In Schools of Atlanta and Communities in Schools of Georgia have both received grants from America's Promise Alliance to hold Dropout Prevention Summits (in Atlanta and Georgia State respectively); however, our leadership felt that focusing solely on the Atlanta Public Schools was too narrow for the impact desired in Metro Atlanta, and that running duplicate summits for the metro region and state region would be inefficient. Therefore, we have decided to merge efforts and support one summit, to be held in the spring of 2010.

Through the leadership of United Way of Metro Atlanta, the Alliance will develop an action plan using the *Ready by 21* framework in partnership with the Forum for Youth Investment.

Structure & Governance

- The co-conveners of the Dropout Prevention Summit and Atlanta Alliance efforts are Communities In Schools of Atlanta, Communities In Schools of Georgia and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta.
- Leadership structure: Leadership is still being cultivated. (See Appendix A.) As noted, Communities In Schools of Georgia and Communities In Schools of Atlanta are co-leads for the upcoming Dropout Prevention summit. In late July, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta was asked by Communities in Schools of Atlanta to take leadership on convening the Alliance. Milton Little, United Way's CEO, has enlisted the support of Phil Jacobs, a well known and respected business leader. Phil brings strong influence and experience in the education arena and will champion the summit as well as the development of Metro Atlanta's Grad Nation action plan work over the next year.
- Meeting frequency: Meetings have occurred on an as-needed basis. A formal schedule will be set in late September, 2009.

About Our Work

What are we trying to accomplish?

- We seek to improve education and youth outcomes through cross-sector networks working together on a unified statewide education and positive youth development agenda.

What is the current status?

- There is unprecedented energy from the business, education, government and non-profit sectors around efforts to reform and strengthen educational supports for young people where they live, work and play.
- These efforts, however, are moving independently of one another, despite the fact that all conveners seek to help prepare young people prepared for college, work, and life. For example, there are at least eight unique education events scheduled between September 2009 and April 2010 to bring attention to the needs of young people and the role of the formal and informal education systems in meeting those needs. If we do nothing and these efforts are not coordinated, we'll create the perception and reality of fragmentation and we will see incremental results, at best.

The Atlanta Alliance's strategic goal:

- The Alliance will create a unified vision and action plan for improving outcomes for youth in Metro Atlanta by aligning and coordinating all of the key efforts underway and sectors involved in improving outcomes for youth. The plan will include:
 - Coordinating and aligning our work across sectors using the Ready by 21 framework.
 - Engaging the Governor for support of a unified message regarding shared education goals. Draft branding is being reviewed by his office the week of 9/31/09.
 - Convening a "Summit of the Summits" in the spring of 2010 to share and compare individual key network action plan in order to streamline and connect those plans and identify gaps.

Targeted Approach:

- **Expanding the definition of student success** to go beyond the "three R's" and include 21st century skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork.
- **Using research-based knowledge** about how students learn best and incorporating those strategies in the classroom and beyond.
- **Fostering collaboration** across all sectors: The involvement of community, business, civic and municipal leaders, parents and social service providers is vital to student success and pays economic, civic and social dividends to all.
- **Integrating various learning approaches** and places by engaging strategies that incorporate the arts, STEM, health and well being, service learning and apprenticeships, which provide students with opportunities for connecting their education with an aspiration for post-secondary education and with the adult world that they will enter.
- **Providing educators with new opportunities** for leadership and professional development: enhancing educators' skills enables better outcomes for students
- **Engaging the business community as active partners** by showing that high school graduation is just as much about work readiness as it is about college and life readiness.

Key initiatives and programs include:

- **Summer Learning Programming** –In Georgia, enrollment numbers for high school freshman and sophomore students decreases three times more during or immediately following the summer than during the school year, between October and March, indicating that break time is high risk for some youth. Therefore, schools and youth programs in the Metro Atlanta area are beginning to focus on key summer learning opportunities, which:
 - Include opportunities for struggling students beyond summer school requirements
 - Engage students in new ways, such as project-based learning and apprenticeships
 - Focus on the whole child (e.g. nutrition, physical fitness, leadership)

- Respond to a growing interest by schools to make effective use of both private and Title 1 funding
- Focus on key transitions: kindergarten, 6th and 9th grades
- Provide opportunities for business involvement

Three Examples of Metro Atlanta-Based Summer Programs:

- Public School Based: 150- 200 middle school students, per program. Participants include rising 6th graders as an introduction to middle school, and other youth who just need a fun and safe place to go while their parents work. Partners include schools, parents, Boys & Girls Clubs, Afterschool All Stars, Camp Fire, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Salvation Army, United Way, Annie E. Casey, Whitehead Foundation, Department of Human Services Afterschool Services, TANF, DOE 21st CCLC.
 - Challenges and Champions is a 3-week summer learning program for rising 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students on the campus of Emory University. Challenges and Champions employs research-based methods of instruction and the curriculum is based on principles of early adolescent development with an integrated learning approach. Students, of which one-third are homeless and another third are low-income, engage in activities and lessons designed to improve academic, social and fitness skills and teachers and program staff work to help youth view themselves as college-going students. Partners include Emory University, Atlanta Public Schools, DeKalb County Schools, Atlanta Urban Ministries, Atlanta Community Food Bank, Center for Pan Asian Community Services Inc, and parents.
 - Keeping Pace is a 4-week summer program for 20 rising 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. This model is where a high poverty neighborhood meets a highly visible private school. Young people from Peoplestown in downtown Atlanta are transported to an innovative, interactive summer learning experience. Students work on robotics, photography, computers, drama and visual arts and even learn to swim and play lacrosse. Partners include private donors, Pace Academy, United Way of Metro Atlanta and Peoplestown Revitalization Corporation.
- **Graduation Coaches** – In 2006, Governor Perdue introduced Georgia’s High School Graduation Coach Initiative that placed Graduation Coaches in 369 high schools across the state. Graduation Coaches, trained and supported through Communities In Schools of Georgia, identify students at risk of dropping out and provide “whatever it takes” to help those youth become successful graduates. In 2007, recognizing that the dropout problem often starts before high school, funding was expanded to provide Graduation Coaches for all middle schools in the state. Also in 2007, business leaders across the state were recruited to serve as volunteer “Community Coaches” to assist the Graduation Coaches by enlisting community support, volunteers, and real-world job shadowing and internship opportunities. Since the start of the Graduation Coach Initiative, the state’s graduation rate has risen from 71% to 78%. However, state revenues declines have placed this initiative at a potential risk for funding decreases.
 - **Professional Development for Youth Workers Engaged in Out-of-School Programming** – Under the leadership of the Georgia Afterschool Investment Council (GAIC), Georgia was the first state in the nation to implement a national professional development training model known as the Afterschool Academies. The Academies is a multi-day national training designed by many experts across the county, in the field of education, positive youth development and multiple intelligences. Georgia has successfully implemented its own version of a 2½ day institute three times over the past year, training over 300 teachers and afterschool providers. Most notable is the outgrowth of new initiatives as a direct result of these Institutes.

- On the request of the Institutes’ participants, two regional peer-to-peer networks have developed, allowing for on-going professional development and sharing of best practices.
- More school districts are requesting that their certified teaching staff participate in the Institutes and on one occasion, a district requested in-service training specifically for their staff on the topics of positive youth development and implementing “homework time” afterschool style.

Partners include GAIC, Department of Human Services, Governor’s Office of Children and Families, United Way of Metro Atlanta, Atlanta Youth Falcons Foundation, Zeist Foundation, Emory University, UGA Fanning Institute and multiple private investors.

- **STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math)** – With a 5-year, \$22 million grant from the GE Foundation, Atlanta Public Schools’ Superintendent Dr. Beverly Hall has begun rolling out a new initiative to improve the quality of the school district’s instruction in math and science and ensure that K-12 students acquire the math and science skills needed for life, college and the global marketplace. Additionally, through a multi-state National Science Foundation grant, Georgia will be taking the National Partnership for Afterschool Science (NPASS2) to scale. A pool of leaders and trainers in out-of-school time will be selected to participate and lead a new informal STEM project with their afterschool and summer learning programs. The primary goals of this initiative will be to assist out-of-school workers in aligning and offering more hands on science activities so Georgia’s youth are more exposed to science and motivated to view science as a career.

Resources Needed to Bring Our Work to Scale

- Informational Resources:
 - Communications materials and strategies to increase awareness around the importance of summer learning.
 - Clear documentation of how Title 1 Funds can support out-of-school time and summer learning programs. While The Finance Project completed a report in 2002, updated and easy to understand briefs would be helpful to our work.
 - Review of public policies that limit or expand opportunities to increase student persistence, graduation rates and college going rates, e.g. school responses to absenteeism; zero-tolerance laws; use of alternative schools
- Other Resources: During summer periods, identify resources to further expose young people to academic environments with high expectations – high performing high schools, universities and technical institutions. Resources include:
 - Additional certified teachers
 - Quality improvement initiatives for existing summer programs
 - More partnership with the schools and their facilities
 - College students and access to college campuses
 - Volunteers
 - Business leaders and faculty to offer apprenticeships, conduct orientation to the world of business, job shadowing, etc.

Questions & Challenges for Consideration

1. Our Atlanta Alliance plan is initially focusing on increasing the supply, quality and participation in summer learning initiatives. We have the following questions:
 - a. Who has developed effective methods to raise awareness about the importance of learning throughout the summer?
 - b. How have you demonstrated the benefits (e.g. academic achievement, other) for both struggling and non-struggling students, and how has summer learning been tied to preventing dropping out, specifically?
 - c. How have you succinctly made this topic relevant to:
 - i. Business Leaders – so they connect it to the drop out rate and their workforce needs
 - ii. Parents – so they see their role as key to their child’s education and are strong advocates
 - iii. Schools – so it’s viewed as a key to achievement vs. punitive remediation
 - d. What messaging has been or would be effective to these different audiences?
2. What is an effective method of focus to deploy summer learning programming (targeting schools, populations, neighborhoods, specific young people, etc.)? What populations would best be served? What is an effective means to define priorities and execute strategy?
3. Aside from increases in funding, what public policies or legislation have you effected to support your efforts to increase summer learning opportunities and/or high school graduation?

Appendix A: Atlanta Alliance’s Member List

Conveners: Patricia Pflum, Communities In Schools of Atlanta;
Lauren Lamb, United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta

Member Organizations:

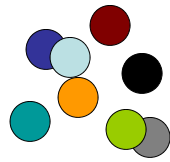
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Atlanta Civic Site – Annie E. Casey
Atlanta Public Schools
Atlanta Youth Falcons Foundation
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Atlanta
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta
Communities In Schools of Atlanta
Communities In Schools of Georgia
Department of Human Services, Afterschool Services
Georgia Afterschool Investment Council
Georgia Chamber of Commerce
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
Georgia PTA
Georgia State School Board (Brad Bryant – District 4)
Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce
Phil Jacobs, former president of Bell South – local champion
Office of the Governor
State Farm- Atlanta
Voices for Georgia’s Children

Where We Are and Where We Could Be



Current Scenario

Competing Summits



- Compressed Timing?
- Overlapping Topics?
- Same/Similar Attendees?
- Awareness Return?
- Perpetuating Fragmentation?

Vs.

Proposed Scenario

Sequenced Summits



- Unified Communications
- Content Coordination
- Stakeholder Customization
- Unified Awareness Opportunities

Where We Could Be



Unified Messaging Example – *Graduation readiness is a complex challenge that involves many stakeholders and requires unique solutions across a broad continuum. The goal of this statewide campaign is to bring awareness to all stakeholders and begin to work together.*

Sponsor	Audience and Date	Topics
 Leadership Atlanta	Business – April 2010	Education Summit and Impact on Tomorrow's Business
 Georgia Chamber	Business – Oct. 2, 09	Alternative Schools, Choice and Charter Schools; ROI
 Superintendents' Annual Meeting	Superintendents – Oct. 21, 09	Local Policies and Strategies at a School Level
 Metro Atlanta Chamber	Business – Nov. 13, 09	Teacher Retention; Performance Based Pay; Research Results
 National PTA Convention	Parents, Teachers, Schools – Nov. 6 – 8, 09	Emerging Minority Leaders - Parent Engagement
 Communities in Schools	Non Profit Partners, Schools, Practitioners – Nov. 09	Delivering for Young People, Mentoring, Parent Engagement
 Georgia School Board	State Education Leaders – Dec. 09	Statewide Policies and Strategies
 Mayoral Summit	City Leaders, School Partners, Advocates – Jan. 22, 2010	Out of School Time; Expanded Hours; Policy



Bringing Everyone Together to Set a Common Vision, an Action Plan and Building a Sustainable Collaborative