



## Graduate Greater Louisville: High School Dropout Solutions Summit One-year Post Summit Update July 30, 2009

One year ago, **Mayor Jerry E. Abramson and Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) Superintendent Dr. Sheldon Berman** jointly opened the **Graduate Greater Louisville High School Graduation Summit** with the vision of *“Every student in Louisville, Kentucky graduates high school with the knowledge, skills and motivation required to enter postsecondary education and obtain a high school degree.”* They also announced two bold goals:

- Reduce the dropout rate in the Jefferson County Public Schools by 50% in 10 years.
- Louisville will move into the top tier among 15 competitive cities in high school graduation in 10 years.

Since that time, many groups have contributed to progress toward the objectives set out as a result of the summit. Progress toward these objectives, outlined in four major areas, is as follows:

### **Student Supports**

- **Youth Vision:** Metro United Way (MUW) has led a participatory visioning process for youth that will be completed this fall. The vision will be used in establishing a YouthPrint.
- **YouthPrint:** This summer, Metro Louisville staff, with help from an Ash Institute Fellow from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, made progress on mapping and surveying youth providers and programs, developing an RFP for a market study of youth and their parents, and exploring how KidTrax could be used to augment an accountability framework. In August, a Youth Leadership Team (convened by JCPS, Metro United Way and the city) held their launch meeting to continue the work.
- **Adult and parent involvement:** JCPS has introduced a “Parent Portal” that will allow parents to follow their children’s progress across the school year. MUW’s Gheens’ Bridges to Tomorrow is working in four neighborhoods, one of which is an Annie E. Casey Making Connections neighborhood, to heighten the notion of parents as first teachers. This is done by stressing the importance of parents’ involvement in their children’s education.
- **Parent Leadership Institute:** A partnership between the Louisville Urban League, JCPS, the 15<sup>th</sup> District PTA and the JCPS Family Resource/Youth Service Centers held an eight session Parent Leadership Institute that trained 50 parents to become leaders in the PTA, serve on Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM) councils, or serve on committees of SBDMs.

### **Multiple Pathways/High School Redesign**

- **Early Identification:** JCPS is exploring a system that will develop individual student profiles electronically and identify prospective dropouts as early as 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

- **Reinvent High School Structure:** JCPS has made significant changes, which will fully take effect for the 2010-11 school year, toward improving three new R's – Relevance, Rigor and Relationships – for its high schools. Comprehensive high schools have been redesigned to provide smaller learning communities around Career Themes, Schools of Study, and nurturing Freshmen Academies. Going to a trimester schedule in most schools will give students the opportunity to immediately address needed remediation and give outstanding students the chance to accelerate content so they are appropriately challenged. JCPS expects to reduce 9<sup>th</sup> grade retention rates by 50% and increase graduation rates by 20% by 2015.
- **Adult Advocates:** Research points to students feeling disconnected with adults and other students in the school as one reason for non-completion. To combat this, JCPS will build highly supportive educational environments that help students understand the value in what they are learning, and rely on personalized strategies including enhanced advising and mentoring. This will mean utilizing small-group discussions with faculty advisors, recruiting mentors and providing more meaningful and authentic experiences to students through internships and cooperative experiences. The Louisville Education and Employment Partnership (LEEP) continues to be highly effective, with 97% of its 1,000 participants going on to college, career or the military. In the coming year, LEEP counselors will work with additional students on college and career planning in the Close the Deal schools. All students will have an up-to-date and viable Individual Learning Plan online, and will declare a Professional Career Pathway by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade.
- **Alternative Settings:** Further improvements are planned for alternative high schools and settings that are designed to eliminate expulsions and establish various types of alternatives to help students get back on track to graduate. By 2015, alternative settings will decrease their dropout rate by 33%, and regular schools will decrease their referral rate to alternative schools by 25%.

### **Beyond High School**

- **Alignment with College and Workforce Needs:** *Retooling Career and Technical Education*, a recent report by JCPS's School-to-Career Task Force, found that "all too often, there has been no link between career and technical programs and academic programs, leaving the career and technical program to stand as a separate entity within the high school," nor has the curriculum "reflected the most current needs of the industry or workforce." In addition to some of the changes mentioned above, the report called for creating a vertically-connected curriculum, integrating academics, career and technical education, providing for program entry at multiple grades, and providing advisement and support for postsecondary and career opportunities. In addition, Jefferson Technical and Community College's (JCTC) efforts have centered on a pilot program with two JCPS High Schools (Doss and Iroquois) to improve college readiness for high school students in mathematics through incorporating on-line math instruction in the high school setting. Additionally, JCTC is working to align dual credit course offerings with the themes of the restructured high schools.
- **College-going Culture and College Counseling:** A December 2008 white paper by College Summit cities research that shows students who work hard in school see themselves as making these efforts because of payoff in college or careers after high school. The report concludes: "in order to raise graduation rates, schools need to stop seeing high school graduation as their ultimate goal and start seeing themselves as launch pads for college and career success."
  - To this end, JCTC is working to improve a college-going culture by awarding college credentials to graduating high school seniors who have completed the necessary courses

- through dual credit to receive a certificate that is embedded within a degree program. These efforts, which are going on in Bullitt and Carroll Counties, could later be applied to Jefferson County. In Carroll County, JCTC awarded over 50 college certificate credentials to graduating high school seniors this year. In Bullitt County in collaboration with the Bullitt County High Schools, JCTC has established a “12 X 12” program, which sets a goal of 12 college credits by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- JCPS has 92 articulation agreements with local colleges and universities that resulted in 19,000 dual credit hours logged for students over the past year.
  - In addition, Mayor Abramson piloted Close the Deal at Valley High School, helping increase the number of seniors who applied to college from about 20 in the 2007-08 year to well over 100 in the 2008-09 year. Most instrumental were the high school counselors, senior faculty advisors, and members of the HIRE Forum, who represented college admission staffs from over 30 area institutions. With funding from a WIRED65 grant, over the next year Close the Deal will serve 3 JCPS high schools – and up to seven schools from other areas of Kentucky and Indiana – with low college-going rates.
  - CBO’s and business are part of the response too. Junior Achievement’s Real Jobs, Real World uses volunteers as “real-world career guides” to take 9<sup>th</sup> grade students through a career-exploration process that extends from high school, to post-secondary education, to employment. The program supports the state-mandated Career Cruising program. As part of a \$25M grant to JCPS, the GE Foundation, the philanthropic organization of the General Electric Company, is not only helping the district raise student achievement in mathematics and science, but also to increase the number of JCPS graduates enrolling in college.
- **College Readiness and College Knowledge:** Over the next year, two newly-funded WIRED65 programs will increase institutional capacity to ready students for college and give them a “road map” on how to get into, pay for and succeed in college. Know How 2 Go marketing campaigns in Kentucky and Indiana will promote the websites and four Regional Forums (two in Kentucky and 2 in Indiana) will increase the knowledge of those who work directly with students on how to improve counseling, career advisement, college knowledge and college readiness among students.

### **Legislative and Policy Changes**

- **Increasing compulsory school age:** Proposed multiple times in past years, increasing the compulsory age for school attendance in Kentucky from 16 to 18 years of age made it through the House Education Committee for the first time during the 2009 legislative session. Because of its \$15M price tag – and the state’s severe budget deficit – Governor Steve Beshear was unable to support the legislation during this session.
- **Senate Bill 1:** A recommendation of the summit was to align Kentucky’s accountability system with No Child Left Behind, creating fewer, deeper standards, and aligning with higher education requirements. Kentucky’s SB-1 restructures the state’s school accountability assessment system and calls for alignment among systems.
- **Truants:** As a result of the summit, JCPS leaders informally reviewed the ability of law enforcement officers to pick up truants; the current statute will have to be changed to allow this action. However, a Truancy Summit was held with local judicial and law enforcement systems representatives to identify other ways to reduce truancy.