

## Frequently Asked Questions about the *Dropout Prevention* Campaign

**Q. *What is the Dropout Prevention Campaign?***

**R.** The Dropout Prevention Campaign is a national initiative spearheaded by America's Promise Alliance to bring awareness to the nation's alarming high school dropout rate. Its goal is to reduce the number of teens who are dropping out and make sure our young people are leaving high school better prepared for college, work and life.

Through this campaign, the Alliance will sponsor more than 100 Dropout Prevention Summits over the next two years.

The lead sponsor for the Dropout Prevention Campaign is the State Farm Insurance Company. Other sponsors include AT&T, The Boeing Company, Ford Motor Company Fund, ING Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation, The Wal-Mart Foundation, Simon Foundation for Education, Chevron, Peter G. Peterson Foundation, Casey Family Programs, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Bank of America, The Annenberg Foundation, and Capital One.

**Q. *What will these summits look like?***

**R.** The summits will bring mayors and governors, business leaders, child advocates, school administrators, students and parents together to develop workable solutions and action plans for improving graduation rates and students' college readiness.

**Q. *I am interested in hosting a summit, how can I get funding?***

**R.** We do not accept unsolicited requests for summit funding/sponsorship.

**Q. *How can I find out when my city/state will have their summit?***

**R.** We encourage you to visit our [Web site](#) to view a calendar of summit dates. A more comprehensive list including contact information for summit conveners is forthcoming.

**Q. *What kind of support will the Alliance provide the cities and states hosting the summits?***

**R.** Every community has different challenges facing them and in turn will have a summit that reflects those needs. To make sure this happens these summits will be planned and executed by local leaders. However, we want to ensure they have the tools to make this happen so we will be providing funding, planning, logistical and communications support.

States will receive \$25,000 to host the summit and cities will receive \$10,000. In addition, we have provided summit leaders sample agendas and recommendations for speakers and topics and format as well as template materials for them to communicate with the media including a template media advisory and press release.

**Q. *This problem has been going on for years. What realistically can be done to turn the tide?***

**R.** There is no one solution –we need to roll up our sleeves and get all stakeholders involved in tailoring local solutions. An important factor to increasing graduation rates is to stop working in isolation and to start working together. That's why we are convening these

summits. We need to make schools more rigorous and relevant, offer students more targeted supports and align data systems and policies to help everyone be more accountable to making real progress.

We also need to raise our expectations for what students need to know and be able to do, as well as recruit and retain effective teachers so that students can reach international competitive standards.

**Q. What tools are available to help me address the dropout crisis in my community?**

R. The America's Promise Alliance recently commissioned [Grad Nation](#), a first-of-its-kind free online tool comprising the best evidence-based practices for keeping young people in school paired with suggestions for effectively preparing them for life after high school.

This guidebook provides a road map to help communities tackle the dropout crisis. It is designed to help communities develop tailored plans for keeping students on track to graduate from high school with tips on how to engage all sectors to solve the problem to establishing "early warning" systems, implementing effective school transformation strategies, and building proven "multiple pathways" to graduation. The guidebook is a natural outgrowth of our local summit work to ensure that solutions are developed to put our youth on a path to success.

Grad Nation also includes ready-to-print tools and links to additional online resources, in addition to research-based guidance. It provides information and tools for developing and implementing a customized program that's right for individual communities.

**Q. How can I get General Colin Powell and/or Mrs. Alma Powell to speak at our summit?**

R. It is far more important to have local community leaders attend these summits and be part of post-summit action planning. Due to the high number of events planned America's Promise Alliance staff and leadership are not able to attend every summit, but will work to provide support in planning and connections with Alliance partners to make them successful. America's Promise Alliance does not process or handle requests for General Colin Powell.

**Q. Where can I get information on identifying speakers for my summit?**

R. We have created a list of Alliance partners with expertise in dropout prevention as well as a listing of speakers from summits recently held around the country. This document is available on our [web site](#).

**Q. There have been several types of dropout prevention summits. How are these any different?**

R. There has been a lot of great work done to raise awareness about the problem. Our goal with these summits is to roll up our sleeves and get to work. There have been many past efforts to improve America's graduation rates, but most have been implemented independent of one another. None have engaged such a wide spectrum of organizations and leaders to develop solutions. This initiative will bring mayors and governors, business leaders, child advocates, school administrators, students and parents together to develop workable solutions and action plans to help make schools more rigorous and relevant, increase student supports and align data and policies to help everyone be more accountable for real progress—this has not been the case with previous efforts.

**Q. Can a local summit really turn around a dropout rate?**

- R. Summits that are well-planned and well-timed can be an effective strategy/tool to bring new urgency, partners and resources to bear. We've seen from our 100 Best Communities competition that when communities work together, they can make a real difference in their graduation rates. For example, Somerville, MA worked as a community and succeeded in reducing its dropout rate by 50% over a two-year period.
- Q. How can I find out what other conveners did in their summits, is there a listing of best practices?**
- R. We will post a number of agendas, summit ideas and other suggestions on our Web site at [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org).
- Q. Where can I get more information about state or local policies that will help reduce the dropout rate and prepare students for college, work and life?**
- R. We encourage you to review the "Ending the Silent Epidemic 10 Point Plan". The 10 Point Plan provides a set of policy recommendations to help increase the graduation rate and is supported by more than 100 national organizations. The American Diploma Project also recommends a set of state policies to help young people be college and work ready. More information about these references can be found on our Web site in the [Summit Toolbox](#), note that you'll need to register your email to access our resources section. For information about federal and state policies impacting young people visit First Focus at [www.FirstFocus.net](http://www.FirstFocus.net) and the Alliance For Excellent Education at [www.all4ed.org](http://www.all4ed.org)

#### Cities in Crisis Report/Research

- Q. The data for the Crisis in Cities 2009 Report represents the class of 2005. Isn't this data rather out of date?**
- R. This is the most recent data that has been analyzed. We know that the national trend in graduation rates during this decade has shown slow but steady improvement (on the order of a fraction of a percentage point each year). Given that broad trend, we would not expect that the average district's graduation rate would have changed dramatically between 2005 and 2008. The report's findings do show that larger gains are possible. Even so, the largest gains found among the nation's leading big-city districts were about 2 percentage points per year.
- Q. Cities have stated that they have different data portraying a better picture than you are presenting. Why the inconsistency in data?**
- R. Until we have accountability in data gathering and reporting, we are going to see some disparities. That's why we were so pleased that former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced at our Dropout Prevention Campaign launch last year that there will be national reporting standards by the 2012 school year. She instituted those regulations this past October.

By leveling the playing field this way, we will be better able to identify where the problem is greatest and develop programs and take targeted action to support those communities.

Cities in Crisis 2009 relied on the U.S. Department of Education's Common Core of Data (CCD) as the primary source of data. This is the most heavily used data source by independent researchers studying high school graduation rates. The CCD is a census of public sector local education agencies (districts) and schools for the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and several other non-state jurisdictions. The CCD data collection is intended to capture all settings in which a free public education is provided at the elementary and secondary levels. Annual surveys of basic demographic and educational information at the state, district, and school levels are submitted by staff of the respective state education agencies.

The CCD's inclusiveness and the systematic nature of the data is a key feature and helps us to really compare graduation rates across multiple cities in a more uniform way. This consistency is also a strength of the report's calculation method, which was developed by the researcher of our report, called the Cumulative Promotion Index (CPI). The CPI uses a single formula with this single database (CCD) to calculate grad rates. This is in direct contrast to states, whom currently and in the past have employed a variety of different methods and formulas to calculate their respective rates. As noted earlier, recent regulatory changes should bring greater consistency to state-reported rates over the next few years.

***Q: This is the second year you've done this report? What's different this year?***

**R.** While our cities are still in crisis when it comes to too many students not graduating from high school, the new ten-year trend analysis we included in this year's report shows some signs of hope. Although only about half (53%) of all young people in the nation's 50 largest cities are graduating from high school on time, 31 of the 50 largest cities increased graduation rates between 1995-2005.

This report also includes a new section on economic conditions for individuals with varying educational levels in these cities. We not only look at the poverty, income and employment levels for high school dropouts, but we compare and contrast them with those individuals who have a diploma or college degree. As is to be expected, dropouts are at a serious disadvantage.

***Q. How do I find my local/state/national graduation rate?***

**R.** We recommend that you log onto the [Research Center](#) Web site of the Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. There you can search for information by school and Congressional district, or get specific state and/or city information. The [Alliance for Excellent Education Promoting Power Index](#) also maintains promoting-power information searchable by individual high school.