

Beyond the Bully Pulpit

The Mayor's Role in Dropout Prevention

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Solutions
to the Dropout Crisis

The Promise of Change

Election Night Hope



What It Means to Be Mayor

- Leader
- Action Agenda-Setter
- Advocate for Improved Quality of Life—
Including City Youth





Based on what we know of risk factors, it's no surprise that the dropout crisis is more acute in cities.

- National Graduation Rate: 70.6%
- Graduation Rate in US Cities: 60.9%
- 2,000 of the nation's 20,000 high schools produce nearly half of all dropouts



The Impact of Dropping Out on Communities

- Lower tax receipts
- Greater expenses for social programs
- Greater reliance on government healthcare
- Greater use of public services, such as food stamps and housing



The Impact of Dropping Out on Cities

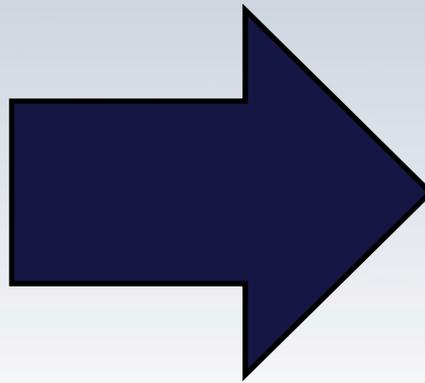
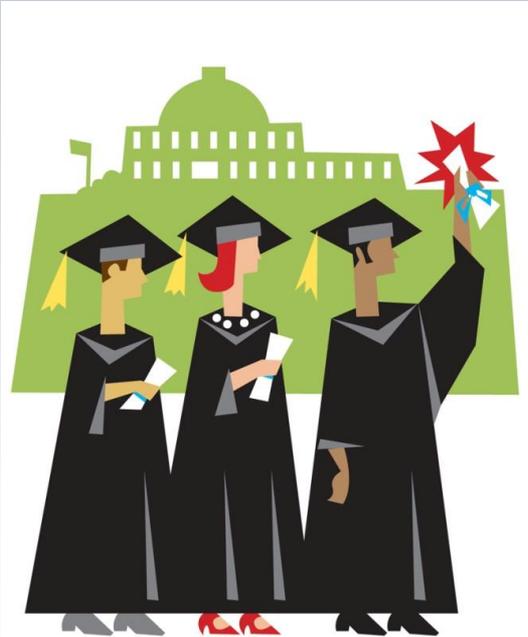
- Local economies suffer as lower levels of educational attainment make it difficult to attract new business investment.
- Greater reliance on public health and housing services
- Less civic activity
- Greater likelihood of crime



Successful Students

make

Successful Cities



Improvements in education that reduce dropout rates make cities safer, economically healthy, vibrant, and sustainable.



The Case for Mayoral Intervention

- The dropout problem belongs to the whole community, not just the school district.
- Economic development and workforce issues begin with education.
- The Mayor is already charged with advancing the community's quality of life for all its residents.
- There is a cost to inaction.



- The mayor can create a unified community value for education.
- A city's reputation is dependent on the school district's quality.
- City and regional planning is made stronger.
- The buck stops on the mayor's desk.
- A mayor's efforts to reduce dropout rates, if done honestly and in good faith, can only be positive.



The Case for Mayoral Intervention

- The Mayor has a unique set of tools that can be used in the effort
 - City resources
 - The ability to leverage community/private sector resources
 - The authority to organize the efforts of others



How Mayors Can Make a Difference

- Strong Mayoral System
 - Mayor Tom Menino (Boston, MA)
 - Mayor Richard Daley (Chicago, IL)
 - Mayor Michael Bloomberg (New York, NY)
- Systems With Less Direct Mayoral Authority
 - Mayor Francis Slay (St. Louis, MO)
 - Mayor Manuel Diaz (Miami, FL)
- Systems With Limited Statutory Mayor Authority
 - Mayor Frank Cownie (Des Moines, IA)
 - Mayor Donald Plusquellic (Akron, OH)



How Mayors Can Make a Difference

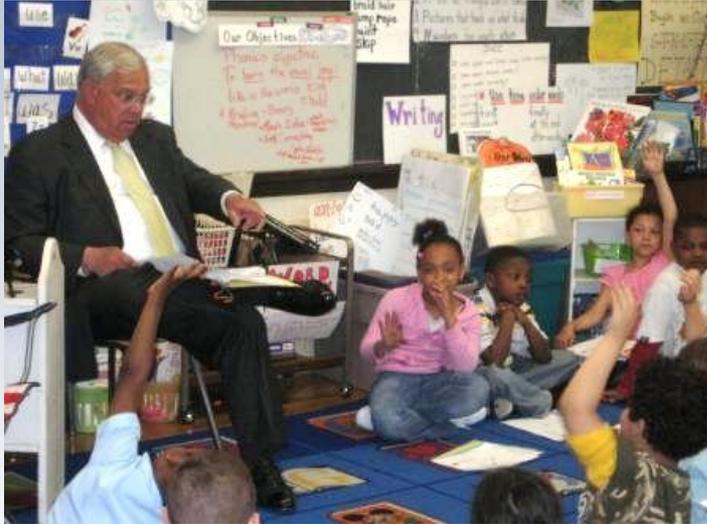
- Mayor Michael Nutter (Philadelphia, PA)
 - Comprehensive approach to solving the problem of high dropout rates:



- Project U-Turn
- Work Ready Philadelphia
- PhillyGoes2College
- The Mayor's Office of Education



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit



- Providing Leadership
- Building Collaboration
- Establishing the Framework
- Developing the Strategies
- Implementing the Plan
- Measuring the Results
- Sustaining the Progress



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

1. Providing Leadership

- Assess the extent of the problem
- Assess the community and political context
- Assess personal strengths and abilities
- We willing to call in chits
- Establish the vision
- Articulate the vision
- Make it personal



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

2. Building Collaboration

- Local schools and school leadership
- Other elected officials
- The media
- Youth



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

2. Building Collaboration

•Community & Civic Leaders



- Individual business leaders
- Business organizations
- Neighborhood leaders
- Clergy and faith-based organizations
- Cultural Groups
- Institutions of higher education
- Minority groups and organizations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Workforce development entities
- Youth organizations
- Community-based/Non-profit organizations
- Health and human service organizations
- Public safety officials
- Juvenile justice representatives



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

3. Establishing the Framework

- Use outside resources to research and frame the local dropout problem
- Identify core metrics to be measured and focus on long-term results
- Make a commitment of city dollars and resources
- Make the Mayor's Office the central point of activity
- Visit the schools



- Ripen the issue
- Enhance communication on all aspects of the issue
- Commit to written plans and timetables
- Pay attention to community demographics, student mobility and needs of students in underrepresented groups
- Conduct town-hall-style community meetings



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

- The Role of Mayors



- Lead the process that identifies the strategies of the plan and who will be responsible for implementation
- Work with schools to support implementation efforts
- Remove impediments that prevent students from staying in school or hinder partners from helping students stay in school
- Identify specific actions the mayor can take as a part of the plan, including mayoral initiatives



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

- School-Community Partnerships
 - Mayors can establish specific, defined roles for business leaders
 - Mayors can recruit corporate partners for schools
 - Mayors can recruit mentors
 - Mayors can recruit business leaders to assist in devising career/tech. ed. curricula
 - Mayors have the capacity to bring a number of community organizations together in collaboratives.



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

- Safe Learning Environments
 - “School Violence does not exist-violence is community violence”
 - On-site; School Resource Officers
 - Travel to and from school



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

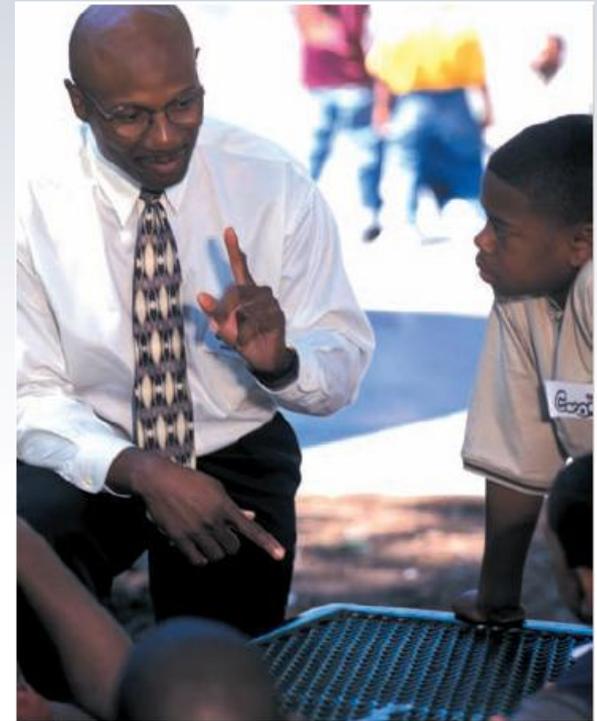
- Family Engagement
 - “Children are the stars; parents make them shine”
- Public Relations Campaign
- First Day Programs, Nashville, Charleston, etc.
- Parent/Family Education



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

- Mentoring/Tutoring
 - The Mayor's role in recruitment of volunteers and employers
 - Setting a personal example



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

- Service Learning

- Requires a true cooperative partnership between schools and community
- Arranging for *meaningful* placements



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

- Alternative Schooling



- Offer support for programs that are sometimes politically unpopular
- Help to develop a portfolio of alternatives for at-risk students



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies

•After-School Opportunities

- Serves dual-purpose of advancing academic achievement and keeping young people occupied during non-school time
- Includes summer programming, helping urban students retain what they've learned
- Mayor can recruit businesses to sponsor such programs
- Can also access/utilize city resources
- Opportunity exists to meet other social/health needs
- Transportation issue must be solved



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

4. Developing the Strategies



- Career and Technical Education

- Natural area of mayoral involvement given their role in community economic development
- Connect the business community to the schools in pursuit of relevant learning opportunities
- Ensure the school department has a seat at the table for the business community
- Recruiting business leaders and their staff to mentor students in career pathways
- Calling on the business sector to provide youth employment and internships



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

5. Implementing the Plan

- Communicate
- Be flexible
- Be creative
- Be transparent
- Anticipate challenges
- Stay within defined roles
- Focus on equity and fairness



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

6. Measuring Results

7. Sustaining the progress



How Mayors Can Make a Difference ... Beyond Using the Bully Pulpit

Removing Impediments

- Lack of access to early care and education
- Lack of safety near schools
- Lack of access to health and social services
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of teacher quality and retention



Examples of Mayoral Action

Expectation Graduation

Houston, TX

Mayor Bill White

- Every school year begins with a “Reach Out to Dropouts Walk”
- Potential dropouts offered advice, counseling, and resources
- Aggressive retrieval program sends positive message
- All ninth graders challenges to sign a commitment card to stay in school



The Minneapolis Promise, Minneapolis, MN

Mayor R.T. Rybak

- Message to students: “If you go to school, if you work hard, if you develop a life plan, and if you graduate, we will support you.”
- Elimination of barriers to postsecondary education and job readiness
- Includes summer youth employment and training; creation of College and Career Centers; provides tuition and fee payments for eligible students
- Similar programs to provide college access across country



Truancy Reduction and Prevention Program, Trenton, NJ Mayor Douglas Palmer

- Locates and identifies truants and at-risk youth
- Maintains a separate and distinct program to conduct behavioral, health, and family assessments identifying the true causes of truancy and/or delinquency
- Views truancy as a symptom of other issues that are to be addressed



How Can You Get Your Mayor Involved?

- Research the local dropout situation
 - Be informed if you plan on being an advocate for action in your community.
 - Know the data, the trends, and strategies that are already in place



How Can You Get Your Mayor Involved?

- Communicate with your Mayor
 - The Mayor works for you.
 - Once armed with the facts, don't be shy about asking the mayor to play a role.
 - Encourage friends, neighbors, and others to communicate the same message.
 - To most elected officials, a half dozen or so requests on an issue represents a “landslide in public opinion.”



How Can You Get Your Mayor Involved?

- Help ripen the issue
 - Mayors cannot be blamed for prioritizing those issues most important to a community and not taking the political risk of taking on issues where there is little obvious political return.
 - Publicly lending your voice through forums, citizen input, letters to the editor, and other means, helps prepare and create the climate for others (including the Mayor) to take action.



How Can You Get Your Mayor Involved?

- Be an activist yourself
 - Dropout prevention is not just the responsibility of elected officials and school officials
 - Roll up your sleeves and get involved
 - Read to a preschool child
 - Mentor a student
 - Volunteer in an after-school program
 - Too often, the missing ingredient in a child's life is a caring adult
 - By stepping up and committing to action, you set the example for the mayor and others



Advice for School Leaders in Engaging Mayors

- Recognize the dropout challenge as a community issue and ask for assistance
 - With good data collection, and without making excuses, school leaders can solicit a community's assistance through a partnership with the Mayor's Office if they are willing to cede some authority and work collaboratively.
 - While school leaders often mistakenly believe that they are responsible for all educational outcomes, communities are often conditioned to mistakenly believe that educational outcomes are the domain of the school district alone.



Advice for School Leaders in Engaging Mayors

- Communicate

- Meet directly with the Mayor and resist the temptation to focus solely on requests for additional resources.
- Establish a trusting relationship.
- Collaboration on data collection and dissemination by school leaders will allow the Mayor to make public commitments based on facts rather than speculation.



Advice for School Leaders in Engaging Mayors

- Be collaborative
 - Just as school leaders do not always deserve the “blame” often laid at their feet, mayors are no different than others in their desire not to feel “dragged” or coerced into supporting an issue.
 - Attempts to “position” the mayor into action will almost always fail.



Advice for School Leaders in Engaging Mayors

- Be cognizant of the Mayor's political needs
 - This is not to suggest that mayors should be supported in efforts to politicize educational issues.
 - For mayors to be effective allies, recognize the local political climate and be public in your support of the mayor's involvement.
 - Due to the complexity, unpredictability, and uncertainty of the dropout issue and the difficulty in achieving short-term results, be ready to speak and act favorably when others question the mayor's involvement.



Concluding Thoughts...

- Comprehensive Dropout Prevention requires active engagement from a community's leadership.
- From the symbolic to the practical, authentic actions undertaken by mayors and civic leaders will make a difference.
- Mayors need community support to take on an issue that doesn't always produce political rewards.



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