



NEWSLETTER

Context Matters

CONTEXT MATTERS. NOT ONLY IS IT ESSENTIAL TO UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT A STUDENT'S DECISION TO DROP OUT, BUT CONSIDERATION OF A COMMUNITY'S CONTEXT—ITS POPULATION, ECONOMY, POLITICS, NEEDS, ASSETS, AND VALUES—IS ALSO CRITICAL TO DESIGNING EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS THAT PREVENT DROPOUT AND PROMOTE STUDENT SUCCESS.

Nowhere is the understanding of context more essential than in a city, where challenges are complex and cut across sectors. Similarly complex is the nature of the resources available to address them. The UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative, an urban policy research center that focuses on Massachusetts' smaller industrial cities, affiliated with the National Dropout Prevention Center in 2008. It quickly became clear that one of the most significant contributions we could make to the projects on which we partnered—including a series of dropout prevention program assessments and reviews (PARs) in Massachusetts cities—was to apply our multidisciplinary approach to urban policy issues to an analysis of these cities' contexts. Each analysis considered resident and student demographics; economic opportunity; educational attainment;

the incidence and characteristics of crime, health, and risk behavior; civic infrastructure; culture; and history. Because we performed this analysis before the on-site PAR process began, we were able to assess and review dropout prevention programs with a better understanding of the challenges facing students, faculty, and staff. We also had a better sense of how to translate those challenges into opportunities for improved outcomes.

In Chelsea, the effect was a partnership with Roca, a nonprofit that works with disengaged youth in this city just outside Boston. This afforded us the unique opportunity to interview 15 high school students about their experiences. In Springfield, our research yielded interesting data on language and immigration—for example, we learned that the city has a unique and growing Somali population—that encouraged us to prioritize a meeting with the district's English Language Learner coordinator.

Urban educators have long understood that in-school outcomes are highly dependent upon the cities in which their students live. But until recently, few resources have been available to help educators connect with people and resources working in areas like public health, immigration, transportation, housing, and public safety. Thanks to interventions like the Harlem Children's Zone and federal initiatives like Promise Neighborhoods, evidence-based concepts like "silo-breaking" and "wraparound services" are not only becoming commonplace; they are also increasingly backed by funding and policy

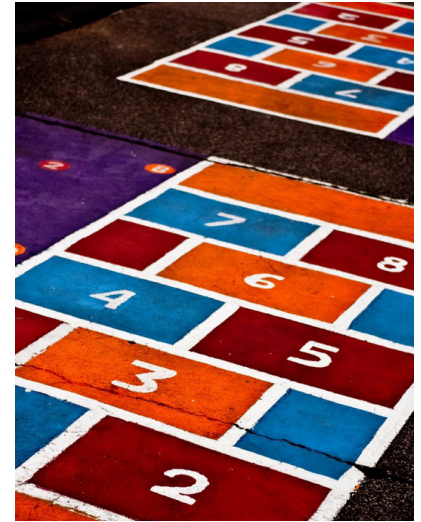


Photo by David Goehring, from flickr.com

to promote holistic solutions to our cities' challenges.

In this newsletter, we highlight strategies, policies, and resources for taking a holistic, citywide approach to solving a community's dropout challenges. This includes consideration of a few "hot topics" in urban policy that have major (though sometimes understated) implications for student success: immigration and language barriers, homelessness, income inequality, and walkability. We also share a few resources that will get you up to speed on where your community stands when it comes to these and other urban issues that affect—and reflect—the education outcomes you seek. After all, before cities can begin to look at their problems holistically, stakeholders from every sector and background need to feel empowered to participate in conversations relating to issues outside their expertise. This empowerment starts with shared access to objective information, and the resources we've provided here should make for a good start. Lastly, we would be remiss if we didn't direct you to one more resource for data, research, and insight into urban issues in your community—your local colleges and universities.

—Colleen Dawicki, MPP
Guest Editor



Katya Starostina and Robert Golder, graduate students in UMass Dartmouth's MPP program, and Michael P. McCarthy, an undergraduate English major, assisted Colleen Dawicki (right rear) in selecting, researching, and presenting the urban issues highlighted in this Newsletter.

An Urban Issues Case Study: The LAUSD Dropout Recovery Model

As the nation's second largest school district, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) was facing a crisis in its high school dropout rate. With 18 Fortune 500 companies headquartered within 50 miles of LAUSD, the district's graduation rate of 48% foreshadowed difficulty for the region's economic recovery and for the futures of LAUSD dropouts who faced struggles supporting themselves without diplomas.

"The statistics we found were startling and disturbing to the entire district," said Dr. Debra Duardo, Executive Director, Student Health & Human Services. "One out of five youths between the ages of 16 and 24 years old were out of school and out of work in our city. Youths who aren't in school are more likely to be involved in the justice system as crime victims or

perpetrators. The Chamber of Commerce and local businesses also came to us, concerned about not having a labor pool. They were bringing people in from overseas to fill jobs because our youths didn't have the skills even for entry-level jobs."

Duardo and Sainz will be among those presenting a case study on LAUSD's Dropout Recovery Model on November 3rd during the 2014 annual NDPN national conference in Louisville, KY.

LAUSD serves over 640,000 students in grades K-12 attending 900 schools and 187 public charter schools in 31 cities and municipalities covering 720 square miles. The district's mission to provide high quality instruction morphed into tackling ongoing and larger challenges facing all large urban centers including population shifts; immigrant students with limited English language skills; and young people distracted by social ills such as gangs, pregnancy, foster care, hunger and homelessness, and other issues.

Disparaged by critics as having "dropout factories," LAUSD was making significant inroads while increasing graduation rates with its Diploma Project, a pilot program at six of the city's high and middle schools providing early intervention to reduce truancy and foster achievement in math and language arts and implementing a "bridge" program to assist entering high school students.

The Diploma Project was abandoned during the country's economic downturn of 2008-2009 when cities, municipalities, and school districts alike were forced to cut budgets and make bottom-line choices. "The recession hit us hard," said Duardo. "We had seen amazing results and graduation rates were improving, but funding for the project was eliminated along with the jobs of 7,000 LAUSD employees. It was frustrating...and morale was down, too."

Building upon lessons learned, bold leadership, and innovative

thinking, the LAUSD today is earning accolades for its latest dropout recovery model which brought together a coalition of LAUSD, its Pupil Services, LA Economic & Workforce Development, the LA School Police Department, counselors, and scores of community based organizations.

Called the City of Los Angeles Partnership, Duardo remains on the front lines of dropout prevention along with Superintendent John Deasy and Robert Sainz, Assistant General Manager of LA Economic & Workforce Development.

Although LAUSD's graduation rates have risen yearly since 2007 and are at 65% for 2012, the program itself was controversial and required compromise, budgetary sacrifice, and a new way of doing things. Enthusiasm for The Partnership's plan to reach out and reenroll LAUSD's dropouts was underwhelming, initially, according to Duardo. Prior to launching The Partnership, "we had to change the culture at some of our schools," Duardo said. "There were those who wanted to focus on the kids who are in school and motivated [instead of] worrying about the students who left."

The Partnership prepared for returning students with intervention services in truancy, curfews, and educational and psychological assessments for at-risk students. LAUSD has reenrolled close to 1,000 former dropouts through this program.

Although LAUSD's 65% graduation rate lags behind the state average and those of nine other urban districts in CA, the success of The Partnership has generated buzz in school corridors throughout the country. The query she receives most, Duardo said, is whether LAUSD's program can generate similar results in other school districts.

"Absolutely, our success can be replicated," said Duardo. "You need to have the right people moving it forward because you're always going to get "push-back" when implementing change. You need to rally your advocates and know how to work around the people who are in your way."

—Mark R. Cheatham
Editor



National
Dropout Prevention
Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

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Network Notes

Meet Our Guest Editor

■ Colleen Dawicki, MPP, is the Project Manager of the UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative and a National Dropout Prevention Center Research Fellow.



Her work focuses on the breadth of urban policy issues in smaller cities (pop. < 250,000), with particular attention to smaller industrial cities in Massachusetts that are collectively designated “Gateway Cities.” As the leader of a university research center, Colleen is particularly excited to note that this issue of the newsletter is largely student-driven, meaning that efforts to educate readers about urban policy issues in education are simultaneously efforts to educate students in the same.

To learn more about the work of the Urban Initiative, visit umassd.edu/urbaninitiative; follow us on Twitter (@UrbanUMassD); or like us on Facebook (facebook.com/urbaninitiative).

Mark Cheatham Joins the NDPC/N

■ The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network (NDPC/N) is pleased to welcome Mark Cheatham as our Director of Public Information. Mark will provide editorial oversight for the NDPC/N *Newsletter*, *Journal of At-Risk Issues*, and *ENGAGE*. Mark will also contribute his expertise in marketing and public relations to NDPC/N’s national dropout prevention programs and partnerships.



Prior to joining NDPC/N, Mark was a communications executive for a major West Coast gas and electricity utility. In addition to being a former newspaper reporter, he worked in the pharmaceutical and entertainment industries and in developing PR agency campaigns for consumer products and critical health issues including prenatal care, immunization, and childhood education.

Welcome New NDPN Board Members and Officers

■ The NDPN Board of Directors sustains the organization’s national scope and mission, representing 17 states and the District of Columbia. NDPN officers are: **Chair Raymond J. McNulty**, Dean of the School of Education at Southern New Hampshire University, Manchester, NH; **Vice Chair Bob Collins**, President CareerTechEducation Associates, Peoria, AZ; **Recording Secretary Debra Duardo**, Executive Director, Student Health & Human Services, LAUSD, Los Angeles, CA. New members: **Kirsten Baesler**, Superintendent of Public Instruction, North Dakota, Bismarck, ND; **Elayne Bennett**, President and Founder, Best Friends Foundation, Washington, DC; **Denise Juneau**, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Montana, Helena, MT; **John Murray**, Chairman and CEO, AdvancePath Academics, Inc., Williamsburg, VA; **Chris Nicastro**, Commissioner of Education, Missouri, Jefferson City, MO; **Ted Riley**, attorney and partner, Riley, Pope & Laney, Columbia, SC; **Valerie Truesdale**, Chief Learning Services Officer & Chief Information Officer, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte, NC; and **Shawn Wilson**, Multicultural Community Engagement Manager, Ford Motor Company Fund, Dearborn, MI.

Introducing the 2014 Riley Award Recipient

■ Dr. Roy Jones, founder of the Call Me MISTER program, received the National Dropout Prevention Center’s 2014 Governor and Mrs. Richard W.



Riley Award of Excellence in Dropout Prevention. Dr. Jones launched the first chapter of Call Me MISTER at Clemson 10 years ago. Designed to bring more African American men into teaching at the elementary school level, Call Me MISTER now has chapters in eight other states. For the complete story visit dropoutprevention.org/awards. For more information on Call Me MISTER, email MISTER@clemson.edu

Solutions to the Dropout Crisis

■ The second Tuesday of each month, link to www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast at 3:30 PM ET for a free, hour-long professional development video webcast. **September 9** – Mark Wilson and how schools can become places where teachers want to teach and students want to learn! **October 14** – Debra Duardo, Robert Sainz, and LAUSD’s innovative Dropout Recovery Model!



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Features: Administrators’ Track • Featured Presentation by the City of Los Angeles & the Los Angeles Unified School District

Register or find out more at www.dropoutprevention.org/conferences

Supporting Homeless Students

by Michael P. McCarthy

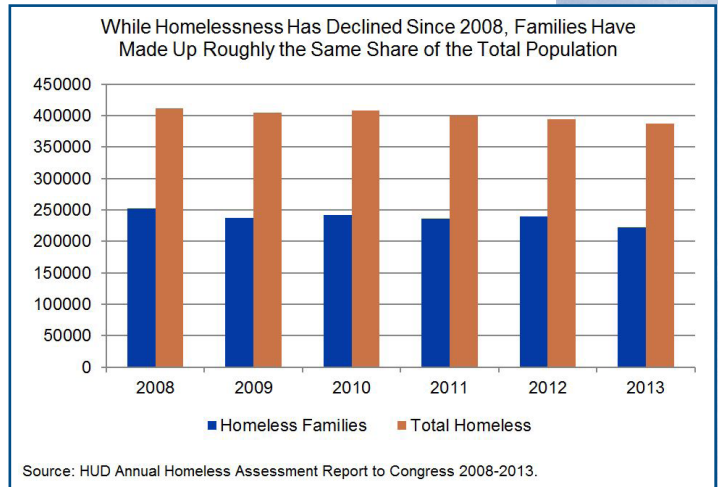
Frequently, American homelessness is portrayed as an issue facing single men and women who live on the streets of our cities. However, homeless families with children are the fastest growing section of our country's homeless population. Currently, children account for nearly one quarter of the homeless population in the United States, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's *2013 Annual Homeless Assessment Report*.

While the stability of the school day is instrumental in educating homeless children and helping them along the path out of homelessness, what happens after school and in the summer? Throughout the country, nonprofit organizations are stepping up to fill this gap in the lives of homeless children.

Founded in 2004, School on Wheels Massachusetts (SOWMA) is modeled after the successful School on Wheels Los Angeles, which began in 1993 and quickly rose to national attention. They offer tutoring services to homeless children from kindergarten through grade 12 outside of the school day at multiple program

sites across four cities in the state. SOWMA partners with local office supply company W.B. Mason to provide each of their students with a backpack of school supplies each year. Each SOWMA tutor is trained to provide one-on-one assistance to the same student once a week throughout the school year. This approach provides students with stable and consistent adult role models, helping them reach their full potential in the classroom. SOWMA also works with parents in homeless families, facilitating parent-teacher conferences and guiding parents on how they can expand their role in their children's education. High school students interested in pursuing a postsecondary education can find assistance through SOWMA High School Plus program. Through this program, SOWMA guides and supports students throughout their pursuit of college degrees.

Fifth Third Bank of Florida started the Summer of Dreams program in



Orange County in 2011. The Summer of Dreams provides a safe, fun, and educational atmosphere to over 1,000 children by building a network of community funders that includes the Orlando After School All-Stars, various Fortune 500 companies, the Boys and Girls Club of Central Florida, and many other private donors. Children are provided with breakfast and lunch, and even given weekend meal packs. Throughout the week, students engage in educational activities, field trips, arts

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Safe Routes to School

by Marcia Picard

Walk to school? Why when I was a child, I walked to school, through rain...and snow...uphill...both ways. Okay, so maybe not so much that last part, but I did walk to school as more than 50% of children did back then. And today? Less than 15% of children walk to school. Why? Today there is more school busing, more adults driving their children to school on their way to work, and the number one reason children do not walk to school—a perception by parents that it is simply not safe for them to do so.

We've all heard the stories. Way back when, children played outdoors after school with neighborhood

children they all knew, then scurried home when the street lights came on to enjoy a sit-down dinner with the whole family. Today's families often don't even know their neighbors, and far fewer children play outdoors after school. Today's children are more apt to come home to video games or the TV. The result of this prevalent inactivity, not to mention questionable diets laden with sugar-sweetened beverages and an overabundance of fast food, is a generation of youngsters who, for the first time in history, experts say, will end up with a shorter life span than the generation that preceded them. Pretty scary, huh? We in Fall River thought so too and decided to do something about it.

Fall River, MA, is an old mill city of approximately 90,000 residents, including 10,000 children enrolled in its public schools. Like every other city in Massachusetts, student achievement on annual standardized tests has become synonymous with the perceived effectiveness of school staff. Unfortunately, this major emphasis on test scores also means that opportunities for physical activity—like physical education classes and recess periods—are often circumvented to provide more “time on learning” when in fact, hundreds of studies have shown that daily physical activity is most definitely linked to academic success.

(Continued on page 6)

A National Problem With Local Solutions: How Income Inequality Impacts Urban Neighborhoods

by Michael P. McCarthy

Economists and sociologists have long theorized about social mechanisms that trap low-income families in poverty for generations. For the first time, a report released by the Pew Charitable Trusts offers empirical evidence to support these claims. Authored by NYU sociologist Patrick Sharkey and UC Berkeley economist Bryan Graham, *Mobility in the Metropolis: How Communities Factor Into Economic Mobility* examines neighborhood economic segregation (the extent to which people from varying income levels live apart from one another) and its impact on economic mobility of residents in 34 of the most populous U.S. metro areas.

Using longitudinal data sets, the study measured individuals' lifelong family income from birth to adulthood. The data allowed Sharkey and Graham to conclude that high levels of economic segregation translate to low levels of individual economic mobility. Cities with economically integrated neighborhoods offer their residents more opportunities to climb the economic ladder.

How does this relate to the children in our cities' schools? In economically segregated cities, children find

themselves in a multigenerational cycle of poverty that can limit access to amenities and services that provide enrichment as well as higher performing schools that tend to cluster around affluent neighborhoods in segregated cities.

Being raised in a high-poverty neighborhood not only limits access to quality services and schooling, but it has also been shown to decrease a child's potential to complete high school. A study published in the *American Sociological Review* in October 2011 showed that black children living in low-income neighborhoods have only a 76% graduation rate, and for whites the rate is 87%. Whites and blacks living elsewhere saw graduation rates of 95% and 96%, respectively.

One of the most basic ways to counteract the effects of economic inequality is to expand access to high-quality early childhood education programs. Such programs have consistently demonstrated impacts on low-income students' literacy, IQs, high school achievement, and even employment in adulthood.

Launching this year, the Obama administration's Promise Zones

initiative is designed to address the needs of high-poverty neighborhoods and their residents. Five areas have been designated to pilot the initiative: San Antonio, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Southeastern Kentucky, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. The initiative will provide each zone with tax credits, expected to reduce poverty by fostering local economic growth and private investment. Additionally, federal workers will be dispatched to help local stakeholders secure funding for social development programs aimed at reducing crime and dropout rates. Rather than a one-size-fits-all solution, this coordinated effort sees the federal government taking a hands-off approach, letting local organizations and governments implement relief programs tailored to the nuances of their regions.

"A child's ZIP Code should never determine her destiny," says the White House, "but today, the neighborhood she grows up in impacts her odds of graduating high school, her health outcomes, and her lifetime economic opportunities."

—Michael P. McCarthy
Undergraduate Research Assistant
UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative

Supporting Homeless Students (Continued from page 4)

projects, and athletics. At the end of the summer, students are provided with a back-to-school backpack filled with school supplies for the year. In 2012, the Summer of Dreams enriched the summer of 1,203 children at 36 sites throughout three counties of central Florida. They also offer one-on-one financial counseling for parents.

Started in the summer of 2013 by Georgetown medical student Paul Elsbernd and his colleagues, the HoyaMed Summer Sports Camp provides homeless children in Washington, DC, with a free summer athletic program. Campers are identified by staff at the Hoya Clinic, a free

health care center run by Georgetown Medical students at the DC General Homeless Shelter. From late July into August, campers between 8 and 12 years old spend weekday mornings at the camp, trying out different sports from soccer to track and field activities to Frisbee. The camp relies entirely on donations. The facilities of RFK Stadium were offered free of charge by EventsDC; Georgetown University provided equipment, meals, and tee shirts to campers; and private donors stepped up to fill the gaps. Elsbernd and his collaborators provide a healthy and structured summer activity for those children most in need of a stable, constructive

environment, which homeless children lack most in the summer when school is out.

The programs profiled here are just a few examples of ways nonprofit organizations across the country are working to enrich and extend stability in the lives of homeless children outside the classroom. These programs all represent successful partnerships between members of the community, the private sector, and local school systems to provide a fuller scope of services to homeless children.

—Michael P. McCarthy
Undergraduate Research Assistant
UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative

Resource Review

A starting point for seeking information about your city and its population is the U.S. Census Bureau. Best known for its Population and Housing Census (www.census.gov/2010census/) that is conducted every 10 years, the Bureau also produces many other surveys at more frequent intervals. Sources of data that you may find of particular interest include the annual American Community Survey; the most recent data from the ACS is found at the Census Bureau's American FactFinder site (<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>).

Sometimes visualizing, rather than verbalizing, a problem helps you to address challenges and identify solutions in a uniquely effective way. Mapping tools can start this process. Two good Web sites where you can learn about and make use of mapping tools are Policymap and Community Commons.

Policymap (www.policymap.com) is a GIS mapping and data site. Policymap makes use of over 15,000 indicators for mapping and analysis. You can incorporate your data and leverage it against available indicators and data on demographics, school performance scores, unemployment and crime statistics, among others.

Community Commons (www.communitycommons.org) provides maps and data reports that can be shared and saved using data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control, WalkScore, and

others. For an example of their report-building feature, see the "Vulnerable Populations Footprint" tool at <http://assessment.communitycommons.org/Footprint/>. Type in the name of your city, and see what happens.

Indicator projects are Web sites that meet the information needs of citizens and help inform sound decision making by leaders in cities as disparate as Chattanooga, Camden, and Cleveland. The UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative's own SouthCoast Urban Indicators Project (<http://southcoastindicators.org>) was developed to inform residents of urban southeastern Massachusetts about the role of urban policy issues in their lives. Content on our education pages point to related indicators in the areas of health, safety, and economy to illustrate the linkages between issues like low educational attainment and high unemployment. Many cities and regions now have indicator projects, which you can find via web search or through the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicator Partnership (www.neighborhoodindicators.org).

Finally, many blogs provide new perspectives and additional food for thought on the connections within communities that impact various issues. One example is the Atlantic Cities blog (www.theatlanticcities.com). Its compelling motto is: "Place Matters." Useful information is posted in eight categories across which terrific cross-sector linkages are made. For example, a January 10, 2014,

story covers the Los Angeles Public Library's move to offer high school diplomas.

Additional Resources

Your Federal Reserve District:

In New England, we look to the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston (www.bostonfed.org) as a good source of information, policy solutions, and technical and financial support. Find your district at www.federalreserve.gov/otherfrb.htm.

Local Nonprofits:

You may want to understand the landscape of nonprofits and foundations in your city to determine opportunities for partnership. Use the National Center for Charitable Statistics (<http://nccs.urban.org>) to determine which organizations are working in which sectors within and around your city.

Foundations:

The Foundation Center advances knowledge about philanthropy (FoundationCenter.org). This site allows you to customize searches for funding sources that support your interest area or community. It also provides free and paid training for those who seek funding, and sponsors educational programs about the funding research process, proposal writing, grant makers, non-profit management, and sustainability.

—Robert Golder, MPP '14
Graduate Research Assistant
UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative

Safe Routes to School (Continued from page 4)

So what are we doing to counter this? We're returning to the "way back when" of walking to school.

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program sponsors two state-wide Walk-to-School Days a year in which all Fall River schools participate. That's good, but as we all know, walking to school twice a year does not a fit child make. Clearly we need to do more, and are. We are beginning to develop Walking School Buses, a fitness initiative that is turning out to have bonus benefits.

Walking School Buses are similar to the student patrols of yesteryear, where children walked to school from

reasonable distances, picking up others all along the way—except today's student walkers are guided by adult volunteers. Initially, our efforts focused on the physical benefits of walking, citing documented evidence that shows daily walkers tend to be far more attentive and ready to learn. But it's the District's recently placed emphasis on chronic absenteeism and tardiness that has turned out to be a much better attention-getter. Accordingly, we have begun to map out potential walking routes that pass by homes of elementary children who are chronically absent or late. The hope is that a passing "walking bus" will be a very convenient

way for a parent who is running late or tending to an ailing sibling, let's say, to get their child to school on time—safely—without ever having to leave the house.

Although our Fall River Walking School Buses are just beginning to roll, we do know of other communities where Walking School Buses have indeed helped lower absenteeism and tardiness rates so now we are enthusiastically on board for the attendance—and fitness—ride too!

—Marcia Picard
Fall River School Wellness Coordinator
Fall River Partners for a
Healthier Community

Cities, Immigration, and Dropout Among English Language Learners

by Katya Starostina

Historically, cities have attracted immigrants coming in search of economic opportunities. As a result, urban school districts, defined as enrolling over 50% of students from an area of over 100,000 residents, have large numbers of students of limited English proficiency. Nationwide, students receiving language support in school comprise as much as 21% of all enrolled students in urban school districts (compared to 10% of all public school students). Immigrant children represent the fastest-growing population of public school students in the U.S. (McKeon, 2005). Twenty-six percent of all newcomer immigrant children are not fluent in English when they first enroll in school (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008). The U.S. Department of Education categorizes English language learners (ELLs) as students who are being served in programs of language assistance such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and bilingual education.

ELLs face great challenges in public schools. Two thirds come from low-income families and 48% in elementary grades have parents who lack high school diplomas (Capps et al., 2005). There is wide disparity in reading scores between non-ELLs and ELLs: in 2011, the achievement gap was 36 points at the fourth-grade level and 44 points at the eighth-grade level (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). ELLs drop out at a rate of up to four times that of the native English-speaking students (McKeon, 2005). Of those who do graduate, many complete a below

standard curriculum. ELLs graduate with fewer credits in core academic courses and lower GPAs than native English speakers (Nord et al., 2011).

ELLs are often concentrated in underserved and underresourced urban public schools. Many of these schools cannot fund language assistance services for ELLs or professional development for teachers, leaving too many ELLs without help. Of the 41% of teachers nationwide with ELLs in their classrooms, only about 2.5% actually possesses a degree in ESL or bilingual education (McKeon, 2005). Many urban schools and districts lack even basic translation services to facilitate communication between teachers, students, and families. In New Bedford, MA, the Immigrant Assistance Center offers a program to address this issue. A Multilingual International Guidance Outreach Service (AMIGOS) provides translation and interpretation services for school staff, students, and families based on a wraparound model that links students with outside services and involves families.

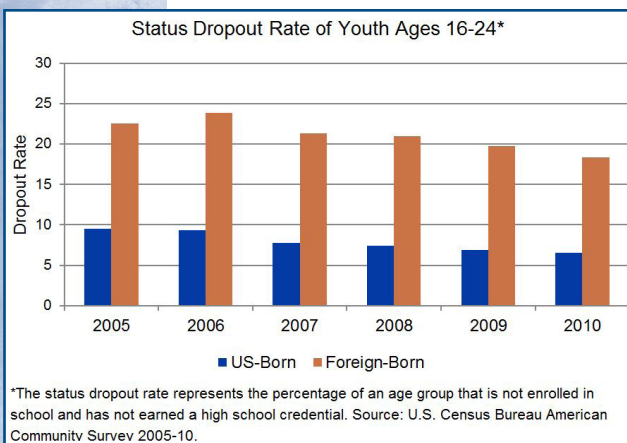
When developing strategies to promote student success, policymakers should consider the disadvantages ELLs face and focus on creating services to support them. Research shows that teachers need extensive professional development to be able to address the unique needs of ELLs. Emphasis should be placed on data-driven instruction to ensure English language development and ELL achievement (Parrish et al., 2006). Studies show that ELLs are more likely to succeed with a best-practices curriculum that incorporates higher order thinking and is aligned with state standards. ELL students get ahead with consistent language support across grade levels, as opposed to too many different approaches (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). Finally, supplementary services such as extended school days or year-round classes are needed to keep ELLs from falling behind in core subjects required for graduation.

Urban school districts encounter numerous obstacles in meeting students' needs. Factors that present academic risks for ELL students are among the most critical. Unless these are addressed, student success will be undermined. Failure to provide the necessary language assistance services, to train and certify ESL and bilingual teachers, and to implement an ESL curriculum based on state standards will lead to higher dropout rates in urban school districts.

—Katya Starostina, MPP '14
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UMass Dartmouth Urban Initiative

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Viewpoint

The economic downturn hit cities particularly hard. In the face of sharply reduced revenue, cuts to programs and personnel have affected both schools and wraparound services supporting high-risk students. The silver lining is that the “new normal” of needing to do more with less has sparked innovative thinking about solutions to poverty, homelessness, and dropout through an approach called collective impact. Whereas collaboration tends to focus on a single program or initiative, collective impact centers instead on sustained change across a system. Much of this work is place-based, focusing impact on neighborhoods or cities in a way that integrates diffuse sectors.

Communities In Schools (www.communitiesinschools.org, an NDPC model program), for example, links high-need students and their families with out-of-school resources that mitigate the influence of these needs on academic engagement and success. Their work has not only boosted graduation rates, but also has improved

students’ math and reading scores. Another example, Greater Cincinnati’s Strive Partnership (www.strivetogether.org), establishes a common set of goals for participating cradle-to-career organizations and schools. Strive promotes an intensive approach to using and sharing data. In just five years, their use of the collective impact model has yielded results like an 11 % increase in high school graduation and a 10 % increase in college enrollment.

Foundations are increasingly providing cross-sector networks across the country with resources to effect measurable change through the collective impact approach. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (investing in collective impact in Grand Rapids, MI), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (promoting collective impact in public health), and the network of foundations behind Living Cities and its Integration Initiative at work in five cities are examples. In Massachusetts, the public sector has joined forces with private funders in the Federal Reserve Bank of

Boston’s Working Cities Challenge, a competitive grant program for smaller industrial cities that has just awarded funds and in-depth coaching aimed at helping those networks improve outcomes for low-income residents. The City of Lawrence, which won the largest grant of \$700,000, will use these resources to improve student outcomes by increasing access to economic opportunities for families.

We applaud this shift among grant-makers, many of whom have made education a target of their support. We also urge adoption of the collective impact approach in the public sector, particularly at the municipal level where dollars are ever scarcer and organizational cultures rarely facilitate working across sectors and issues. It is important to emphasize that collective impact is not just a funding model; it is a way of thinking and doing that is essential to the success of our students—and by extension, our cities.

—Colleen Dawicki, MPP