

Synopsis of *A Gathering of Good* Dinner & Discussion

Topic: The Emerging Workforce

May 13, 2009

***No other investment yields as great a return as the investment in education.
An educated workforce is the foundation of every community and the future of every economy.***

-Brad Henry

What we know:

- Education starts at home. Today's family structure is very different than it was 20-30 years ago, with more single parent households.
- Kids need consistent, supportive relationships with adults.
- Oregon faces substantial gaps when it comes to basic skills, especially prose and literacy. Many kids are not graduating with the skills they need to pursue post-secondary education.
- There is a critical need for increased parental involvement in their child's education.

Observations and ideas generated from the discussion:

- Keep kids in school. Help them find something in school they love, whether arts, journalism or other activity that engages their interest.
- Genuine connection to a teacher is essential for success. Mentoring, whether volunteer or via business, is key.
- One group suggested coupling alternative delivery models of education with ways to increase in-person social interaction, such as on-line plus in-person learning cohorts. This might allow for more equalization of learning across income levels, different learning styles, and also for students to progress at their own pace. Kids are creating their own academic design.
- Raise educational standards and expectations higher systemically and for each student.
- Expose kids to occupations, beginning in 8th grade, through career fairs held at the school or via field trips to different businesses.
- Provide experience for students, especially between the 8th and 12th grades, when they are in need of more career development and at highest risk for dropping out.
- Increase accountability: teacher performance, individual school performance, students to themselves, teachers and principals to students, and the educational system to students, ensuring they have the skills they need to enter college.
- Pay teachers as high-paid professionals for the very challenging, skilled jobs they have. Business may be able to contribute more to this effort.
- Support a comprehensive school model to provide students with a strong foundation and reduce the number of specialty schools.
- Reduce the cost of higher education that is currently preventing so many from continuing their schooling.

Notable models:

- De La Salle High School (Portland). Students have longer school days and more structure. Result: many previously underperforming students are now raising their achievement to record levels and are planning on pursuing higher education.
- Connected by 25, sponsored by the City of Portland, supplies jobs for students while they are transitioning from 8th to 9th grades. This program provides work experience for many students in need of this type of orientation into the world of work.

Thinking outside the box



Participants from one of the discussion groups proposed the following: Guarantee every student at least two years of college or technical or trade school after high school. Set up the promise that everyone receives post-secondary education and deliver on the promise. Or adopt the Australian model to fund post-secondary education for every student: offer interest-free loans that are repaid by a personal income tax when students are working after graduation.

Metropolitan Family Service Promotes Student Success:

Metropolitan Family Service (MFS) programs set kids up for success, improving graduation rates and building skills necessary for work. MFS serves children at nearly 60 elementary, middle and high schools in high poverty neighborhoods. Our after school programs partner with local businesses to offer quality classes that enhance children's education. These businesses contribute instructors, volunteers, and programming funds. MFS recruits and trains older adult volunteers to serve as tutors and mentors to children who are struggling in school. Examples of MFS student services:

- Direct case management and peer group support to middle and high school students at risk of academic failure, often due to factors outside of school that affect their ability to manage expectations in the school environment.
- After school programs offer a myriad of classes that keep kids interested in school, build academic skills, and encourage artistic expression and healthy choices.
- New Program: As a partner in Ninth Grade Counts, MFS will provide academic support and career and college exposure for targeted high school students as they move toward graduation and into higher education, training and jobs.
- Expanding Service: MFS will begin an after school program at Gresham-Barlow High School in fall 2009..

Measurable success in MFS programs:

- Students made gains in meeting state reading standards. In fact, more than 86% met or exceeded state standards in reading. Last year more than 7,000 children were enrolled in Metropolitan Family Service after school programs, which offer a wide variety of arts education opportunities.
- Students who regularly attend MFS after school programs scored higher on state tests than those who are not enrolled, and significantly increased their math and reading scores.
- Teachers reported that 77% of enrolled students had more positive attitudes; 76% improved their academic performance; 73% participated more in class.
- Other successes: improved attendance, self-confidence, assertiveness, conflict resolution, teamwork mentality, life-planning skills.

Action steps to continue the conversation:

- Talk to your friends, family, and co-workers about your AGOG Dinner & Discussion experience.
- Advocate for increased accountability from your students, their teachers and administrators, your school board.

- Incorporate student internships and job shadowing into your workplace.
- Volunteer in your neighborhood school. Help a child learn to read. Offer yourself or your staff to be a guest speaker. Tutor or mentor a student. Offer to help plan a career day at a middle or high school.
- Host an AGOG Dinner & Discussion at your home.
- Support Metropolitan Family Service after school, child and family programming by attending the ***A Gathering of Good*** benefit for Metropolitan Family Service on Saturday evening, **October 24, 2009** at the Portland Hilton Grand Ballroom.



Metropolitan
Family Service

We invite you to continue this conversation on our facebook page. Go to <http://www.facebook.com>. Click the “Groups” tab, then type ***A Gathering of Good*** in the search box. In order to participate, you will need to join facebook. If you attended the dinner discussion, you received an email invitation to join facebook.

Because together, we can do more.