



## Metropolitan Family Service

1808 SE Belmont Street  
Portland, OR 97214  
503.232.0007  
Fax: 503.232.9178

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Contact: Pat Kaczmarek,  
Marketing & Communications Manager  
Metropolitan Family Service  
503.232.0007, ext. 170  
[patk@metfamily.org](mailto:patk@metfamily.org)  
[www.metfamily.org](http://www.metfamily.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

### **Changing Demographics Affect School Redesign**

Portland, Oregon – July 11, 2011. Metropolitan Family Service is encouraging citizens to examine shifting demographics in order for our students, our schools and our entire community to succeed. An innovative discussion model is engaging local topic experts with community members to provoke interactive conversation that stimulate social change. Through its **agog** discussion series, local nonprofit Metropolitan Family Service is convening important discussions focused on Oregon's changing demographics and implications for our future. Oregon's expanding aging, ethnic and economic demographics are transforming our state and directly affect the community support that this organization provides.

At a recent **agog** event at the SE Portland home of Eileen Brady, guests explored how demographics affect the elements of high school system design: achievement gaps, opportunity gaps, and the necessity of community partnerships in understanding and meeting the needs of different school communities and creating educational equity.

Charles Rynerson, a topic expert at the **agog** event, is a research faculty member of the Population Research Center in the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University. He provided insight into Census Bureau projections. In 2010, 19% of students under 18 were living in poverty. By the year 2030, nearly 30% of students are expected to identify as Hispanic and non-English speakers at home. Already, there are numerous languages spoken in our school communities – exceeding 20 in some schools. These changes will impact our educational delivery systems.

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WHILE ENHANCING  
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Participants acknowledged some of the challenges that keep students from being engaged in school. In Portland public schools, only 49% of students in poverty have had access to a complete advanced program (International Baccalaureate or Advance Placement). One high school has no such offerings. With one counselor per 300 students, kids facing challenges at school may not receive the support they need to be successful.

Portland School Board Director Trudy Sargent, a conversation leader at the event, indicated that the Portland Public Schools High Schools System Design Initiative addresses the issue of inequitable access to educational programs. The plan moves toward closing the racial, ethnic and class-based achievement gap, and will provide a base core curriculum at each high school.

Another topic expert at the **agog** discussion, **Sarah Singer**, project director of the high school system design initiative, will be monitoring progress of key project work. The goal is to ensure that all students have equal access to educational programs that include the arts, advanced and support classes and career development.

The discussion inspired a list of actions to aid success of the high school redesign initiative. Recommendations included: changing the way we look at demographic data to reveal a more accurate assessment of community needs; rewarding students for strong attendance or proficiency in core classes; and connecting real world experience to learning to make learning more relevant and increase engagement. The event challenged participants to take action to further the community efforts to improve Portland high schools.

For more information on this event, or other **agog** events, contact Monica Wirtz, special events coordinator at Metropolitan Family Service, 503.232.0007 ext. 120.

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**Background information:** About Metropolitan Family Service: For more than 60 years, Metropolitan Family Service has been building healthy communities to support children, families, and older adults. We provide services at 88 sites, including 55



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schools. Metropolitan Family Service makes connections that strengthen the lives of 33,000 individuals and families each year.

For more information, contact Pat Kaczmarek, Marketing and Communications Manager, at 503.232.0007 ext.170. You can visit our website at [www.metfamily.org](http://www.metfamily.org).

Photo Caption:

Eileen Brady, center, welcomed topic experts and citizens to her SE Portland home for an **agog** discussion event organized by Metropolitan Family Service. From left, Sarah Singer, July Strand, Eileen Brady, Trudy Sargent, Charles Rynerson.



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