

**Title:** City/school district collaboration on dropout prevention

**Date:** January 2009

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**Question:** What are some examples of municipal/school district collaborations around the issue of dropout prevention?

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**Response:**

Increasingly, mayors, school superintendents, police chiefs, workforce development professionals and human services officials are collaborating to increase graduation rates and improve job readiness. They recognize that reducing dropout rates improves their cities' economy, safety and quality of life. While every local policy environment is unique, there are now several resources and reports that mayors can tap to develop their own strategies. The examples below list: resources for general city/school collaboration; reports on collaboration on dropout prevention (including case studies); and specific leadership strategies for mayor's offices (these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive).

#### General city/school collaboration

The Mayors' Education Policy Advisors Network

[http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program\\_areas/education\\_v2/3525.aspx](http://www.nlc.org/iyef/program_areas/education_v2/3525.aspx)

The Education Policy Advisors' Network (EPAN) is a national network of senior municipal officials who are working with their mayors on key issues related to education reform and school improvement. These officials assist in implementing strategies to help their local school districts improve the quality of public education and confront the critical issues affecting student achievement. Presently, EPAN includes mayors' senior policy advisors from approximately sixty-five U.S. cities. EPAN provides members with access to the network's collective expertise and to technical support from education reform organizations such as the Annenberg Institute.

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families

<http://www.nlc.org/iyef/yefmission.aspx>

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF) is a special entity within the National League of Cities that helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth, and families in their communities. As a national resource to cities and towns across America, the Institute provides guidance and assistance to municipal officials, compiles and disseminates information on promising strategies and best practices, builds networks of local officials working on similar issues, and conducts research on the key challenges facing municipalities.

*Mayoral leadership and involvement in education: An action guide for success (2006)*

The United States Conference of Mayors

<http://www.usmayors.org/74thWinterMeeting/edguide2006.pdf>

The purpose of this Action Guide is to help mayors understand the range of education issues and problems you may find yourself facing; provide ideas and strategies for potential involvement in

education; convey specific information about school finance, management and education reform issues; and give mayors advice on what to do and what not to do when becoming engaged. Throughout this Action Guide, four central themes of mayoral leadership and involvement in education are emphasized: advocacy, capacity, implementation, and sustainability. The Action Guide is intended to provide useful information to mayors no matter what role they currently have or are considering in education.

### Collaboration on dropout prevention: Case studies

*Best practices on at-risk youth and high school dropout prevention* (2008)

The United States Conference of Mayors

<http://www.usmayors.org/bestpractices/>

This publication examines successful approaches mayors, school superintendents, police chiefs, workforce development professionals, and human services officials are implementing across the country to promote high school retention, increase graduation rates, and improve job readiness; as well as successful efforts to proactively prevent gang development and combat gang violence in our cities.

*Beyond city limits: cross-system collaboration to reengage disconnected youth* (2007)

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families

[http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/986F4B75DF524770A398BF1459940D57/07\\_YEF\\_CaseStudies.pdf](http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/986F4B75DF524770A398BF1459940D57/07_YEF_CaseStudies.pdf)

This report highlights eight cities—Albany, NY, Baltimore, Boston, Corpus Christi, TX, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco and San Jose—in which municipal leaders are collaborating across public systems on behalf of disconnected youth. The report describes leadership efforts that have been important in each of these cities and summarizes several key ingredients for success: the importance of mayoral leadership, the need for an effective coordinating body, and accountability structures and the use of data to ensure results.

*Whatever it takes: How twelve communities are reconnecting out-of-school youth* (2006)

This American Youth Policy Forum

<http://www.aypf.org/publications/WhateverItTakes.htm>

This report provides background on the high school dropout problem and describes in depth what twelve communities are doing to reconnect dropouts to education and employment training. It also includes descriptions of major national program models serving out-of-school youth. Individual case studies highlight promising approaches in the following communities:

- Dayton, OH
- Louisville, KY
- Austin, TX
- Salt Lake City, UT
- Portland, OR
- Oakland, CA
- Trenton, NJ
- Camden, NJ
- Baltimore, MD
- Tucson, AZ
- Milwaukee, WI
- Philadelphia, PA

In particular, the Baltimore and Philadelphia case studies document mayoral commitment to out-of-school youth and mayoral and school district leadership supporting city-wide youth service planning.

*Turning it around: A collective effort to understand and resolve Philadelphia's dropout crisis* (2006)  
Philadelphia Youth Transitions Collaborative

[http://www.williampenncollaborative.org/usr\\_doc/Turning\\_it\\_around\\_\(Project\\_U-Turn\).pdf](http://www.williampenncollaborative.org/usr_doc/Turning_it_around_(Project_U-Turn).pdf)

The Philadelphia Youth Transitions Collaborative, comprised of representatives from the School District of Philadelphia, city government, community organizations, and champions of youths and parents, has been working for the last 18 months to set the stage for reform. The Collaborative has prepared this report as an advocacy agenda; developed and analyzed data presented in other reports; identified cross-system strategies designed to increase graduation rates; sought the voices and views of young people; and begun planning a citywide campaign to meet the needs of potential and actual dropouts. This report contains detailed recommendations for elected officials on creating a citywide action agenda.

### Leadership strategies for mayors

*Leadership keys for mayors & other municipal leaders: What can mayors do to expand alternatives for high school?* (2008)

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

[http://www.doleta.gov/Youth\\_services/pdf/LEADKEYSMayors041408.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/Youth_services/pdf/LEADKEYSMayors041408.pdf)

Mayors and other municipal leaders are well-positioned to support and help expand alternatives for high school. Mayors have implemented an array of strategies that vary depending upon unique characteristics of the local policy environment. Effective local policies take into account such factors as the formal and informal roles of the mayor, school board, and school superintendent, and the relationship between the state education agency and the school district, among others. In any policy environment, well-informed municipal leaders will be able to identify strategies likely to succeed in their cities, counties, and towns.

*Grad nation: A guidebook to help communities tackle the dropout crisis* (2008)

America's Promise Alliance

<http://www.americaspromise.org/APAPage.aspx?id=11796>

Grad Nation is a new 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. It is a guidebook that 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 grade from high school and prepare for college, work and life. 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.

*Setting the stage for new high schools: Municipal leadership in supporting high school alternatives* (2007)

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

[http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/8D1C9C4738C7419DAE8060B73828827D/IYEF\\_Setting\\_the\\_Stage.pdf](http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/8D1C9C4738C7419DAE8060B73828827D/IYEF_Setting_the_Stage.pdf)

This report outlines seven key policy conditions that facilitate the expansion of alternatives and options for dropouts and other students who struggle in traditional high school settings, as well as promising collaborations among mayors, school district officials, and alternative high schools program innovators. The report showcases city leadership in Atlanta, Boston, Corpus Christi, Hartford, Phoenix, San Jose, and Seattle and concludes with recommendations for mayors and program innovators.

*Engaging cities: How municipal leaders can mobilize communities to improve public schools* (2006)  
The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University  
[http://www.annenberginstitute.org/Products/Engaging\\_Cities.php](http://www.annenberginstitute.org/Products/Engaging_Cities.php)

This report published in cooperation with the YEF Institute and its Mayors' Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) looks at five cities where mayors have engaged the public and built civic capacity around education reform, using the leverage of their offices in strategic ways. The stories of Denver, Akron, Long Beach, Nashville, and New York identify and describe practical, high-yield strategies and solutions mayors are using and resources they have found or created.

*Connecting vulnerable youth: A municipal leaders guide* (2003)

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families

[http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/DF82FDBFFE7F4A8E97D46A4F797125A6/IYEF\\_DY\\_Vulnerable\\_Youth.pdf](http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/DF82FDBFFE7F4A8E97D46A4F797125A6/IYEF_DY_Vulnerable_Youth.pdf)

The YEF Institute, in cooperation with the Academy for Educational Development's Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, produced this publication to provide an in-depth look into the roles municipal leaders play in the lives of disconnected youth and to give an overview of effective approaches and promising strategies. The report poses seven questions that municipal officials can ask in their communities to jumpstart local initiatives and offers promising examples from Albany, NY, Baltimore, MD, and Sylacauga, AL.

## Methods

The information summarized here was located by searching Google and ProQuest electronic databases using the following set of keywords: "Dropout prevention" and "city" (or "municipal") and "school district." We also searched on the following websites: The National Dropout Prevention Center; National League of Cities; The United States Conference of Mayors; The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-06-CO-0014, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.