



Paving Pathways to Educational Success

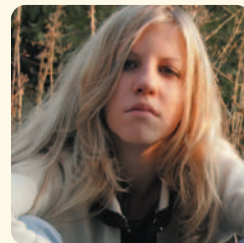
Where Are We Now?

An Update to the Community

November 2007



FIRST SEMESTER				
	GRADE	ABSENT	TARDY	CITIZENSHIP
1ST 8 WEEKS	D	11	3	
2ND 8 WEEKS	C	9	4	
EXAM	F	11	8	
SEMESTER 97	D			
SECOND SEMESTER				
	GRADE	ABSENT	TARDY	CITIZENSHIP
1ST 8 WEEKS	A			
2ND 8 WEEKS	A			
EXAM	A			
SEMESTER 97	A			



## OVERVIEW

In October 2006, a collaborative of cross-sector leaders launched Project U-Turn, a citywide campaign to bring much-needed attention to Philadelphia's dropout crisis and to build the collective will to resolve it.

In addition to increasing public awareness of the issue in a variety of ways, Project U-Turn's work has resulted in significant successes such as the creation of more than 1,400 slots in new and expanded educational programs; a new system for reengaging dropouts, truants and youth returning from juvenile justice placements; policies shifting to better support the educational needs of youth most at risk of dropping out; and more than \$10 million dollars raised to respond to the dropout crisis in our city.

Despite this demonstrable progress, the past year's work has also highlighted how much more there is yet to do; particularly with regard to reconnecting out-of-school youth to high-quality educational programming. The voices of hundreds of youth who have called the Project U-Turn Hotline since it started a year ago deliver a strong collective message: *we want to complete our educations*. Across the city, however, there is not enough capacity in appropriate educational settings to meet their particular educational needs.

### Since October 2006:

- 1,554 youth hotline calls
- 1,400 new education program slots
- 3 new accelerated high school programs
- New system for reconnecting dropouts to educational options
- 5 major policy initiatives advanced
- \$10 million raised to address the issue



## GOALS AND PROGRESS

A year ago, members of the Project U-Turn Collaborative committed to measurable goals in four specific areas – garnering strong public support to address this issue, expanding the number and variety of education options available, reaching the hardest to serve youth, and ultimately reducing the dropout rate – by which their work would be measured and for which they would be held accountable. One year later, significant progress has been made toward attaining each of these goals as documented in this brief report.

### 1. EXPAND RESOURCES AND BUILD PUBLIC WILL

The research report, *Unfulfilled Promise*, presented for the first time a clear understanding of who drops out of school in Philadelphia and when and why they drop out. Through the work of Project U-Turn and its research, Philadelphians came to understand that the dropout crisis is a multi-dimensional issue that would require a multi-faceted, cross-sector response.

To mount this response, the Collaborative pledged to **leverage and integrate resources across sectors, develop and advocate for a shared policy agenda, and increase stakeholder involvement in out-of-school youth issues. Specifically, over the next year, at least \$2 million in new and existing resources were to be leveraged towards the Project U-Turn agenda, and three key policy targets were to be achieved.** Project U-Turn significantly exceeded its fundraising goal and has made considerable progress in the policy arena.

Media coverage of Project U-Turn's launch last October was extensive and went a long way toward building awareness of and interest in solving the dropout crisis in Philadelphia. With this new attention and focus, the Collaborative grew to more than 50 organizations, testified at two City Council hearings focusing on education and the drop-out issue, supported a work team at the Division of Social Services focusing on better supporting the educational attainment of the youth they serve, and ensured that disconnected students were considered in the District's broader high school reform agenda.

#### Results since October 2006:

- **More than \$10 million in new investments** have been raised from government and foundations to expand activities that will serve to improve educational options for struggling students and out-of-school youth.
- The Department of Human Services' most recent budget request includes an **Education Support Center** to address the needs of youth in public care systems.
- The School District has specifically incorporated **reengagement and reenrollment strategies** into its high school reform agenda, with planning underway to open a **reengagement center** for youth seeking to return to education.
- The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has established a **statewide network of local partnerships** modeled on the strategic framework that guides the work of the Project U-Turn Collaborative. Furthermore, the Commonwealth is supporting an **analysis of the fiscal consequences of dropping out** of high school, including lost revenues and costs to state and local governments associated with inadequate education.

"Because of Project U-Turn, we know more than we ever have about who drops out and why. As a result, Philadelphia is now positioned to be a national leader in addressing this insidious problem."

—Feather Houstoun, President,  
William Penn Foundation



## 2. INCREASE THE QUANTITY OF HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION OPTIONS

In a world of standards, accountability and growing pressures to increase both the quality and the quantity of high school graduates, the one-size-fits-all approach to education no longer meets the needs of the economy nor the needs of our diverse student population. In short, our students need a wider array of high-quality options that lead to a high school diploma. To that end, the Collaborative will monitor the number of high-quality opportunities in alternative diploma-track programs and work with the School District to increase the number of high-quality alternative education opportunities for struggling students and out-of-school youth to at least 5,000, up from the current 2,800, by the 2008-09 school year. Despite the lack of consistent and reliable funding mechanisms that support high-quality alternative education options, the Collaborative was successful in establishing 480 new diploma-granting slots, 425 opportunities in educational support programs, and 540 new opportunities to move toward a GED.

### Results since October 2006:

- The School District is establishing **3 new accelerated high school programs**. There are 100 new seats at the new Southern Accelerated Learning Academy, another 100 seats at a second new accelerated high school in Kensington, and 100 new seats reserved for youth returning from juvenile placements in a program which will combine accelerated learning models with career and technical training.
- Community College of Philadelphia and the School District **continued the successful replication of Gateway to College**, which began with 40 students in the Fall of 2006 and has since enrolled 180 new students through four cohorts.
- An expansion of the E<sup>3</sup> Center initiative – the city’s one-stop system for reconnecting out-of-school and formerly adjudicated youth – has yielded **540 new seats for GED preparation programs**.
- Federal funds were secured for the design and implementation of 425 seats in three different supportive learning programs, including:
  - 75 seats in the new “Bridge to Education” program for high school age students reading below a 6th grade level;
  - 200 seats in the new Learning-to-Work program, which will integrate college and career awareness into high school curricula to increase relevance for students; and
  - 150 seats for occupational skills training at Edison High School reserved for members of the city’s E<sup>3</sup> Centers.



“A little more than a year ago I was a high school dropout. Then I got a postcard from Project U-Turn and attended the Expo. Now I’m in my second year of Gateway to College.”

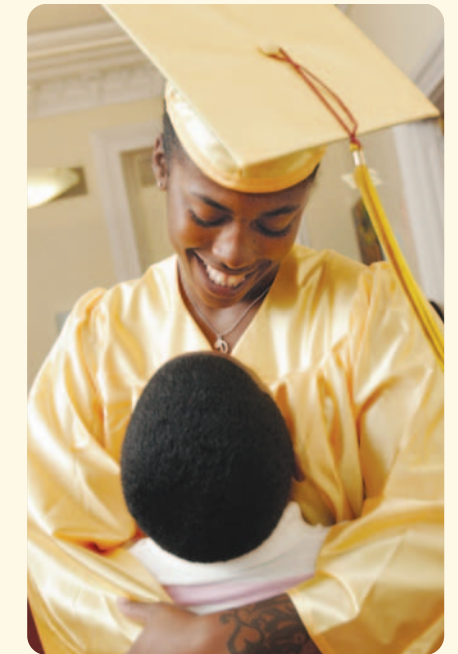
—John, age 20

## 3. EDUCATE THE HARDEST-TO-SERVE YOUTH

*Unfulfilled Promise* showed that while most Philadelphia dropouts have no interaction with major social service agencies, youth who have life circumstances that lead to interaction with these agencies (e.g. those returning from delinquent placement; in foster care or pregnant and/or parenting) have a significantly higher risk of dropping out. In response to these data, the Collaborative committed to pay particular attention to those youth at highest risk of dropping out, reducing the number of these hardest-to-serve youth who drop out by at least 10% over the next two years. The efforts to achieve this goal are both policy-oriented and programmatic since in many instances barriers to high school completion are the unintentional outcomes of existing policies or practices. Further research has been commissioned to better understand when and how to target interventions for these populations.

### Results since October 2006:

- The Reintegration Initiative (a collaboration led by DHS and Juvenile Probation) in collaboration with the School District **improved educational services for youthful offenders** by strengthening curriculum alignment, credit transfer, and career and technical education programming at the six facilities serving the majority of Philadelphia youth committed to delinquent placement.
- The School District agreed to **align maternity leave policies for parenting teens** with the state’s guidelines and timelines for receiving child care subsidies.
- The City’s Department of Human Services (DHS) **increased the number of community-based E<sup>3</sup> Centers**, extending their education, employment and empowerment services to out-of-school and adjudicated youth in Logan-Olney and South Philadelphia.
- Funding has been secured to design and open a **new high school specifically designed for youth returning from juvenile justice placement sites** that will combine the curriculum of an accelerated high school with career and technical education (CTE) programming.
- The PA Department of Public Welfare and Office of Early Childhood are working with the Philadelphia School District to **increase child care opportunities for parenting teens**.



“I want to go to school, but we’re on a waiting list for child care.”

—Sabina, age 18



"Our experience in working with over-age and under-credited students who enroll here with less than a 6th grade reading level is that they have an extremely difficult time completing the work required in an accelerated high school. The new Bridge program will give us a way to serve these youth and prepare them to complete their high school education."

—Marcus Delgado, Principal, Fairhill Community School

#### 4. REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DROPOUTS AND INCREASE GRADUATION RATES

Ultimately, Project U-Turn's highest priority is to increase the number of Philadelphia high school graduates who are ready for college and careers. **The Collaborative will study the composition of graduating classes and take steps to ensure significant progress for students from all backgrounds and at various stages of credit acquisition. Specifically, in support of the SRC's Declaration of Education, the Collaborative aims to reduce the number of dropouts by 25%, or more than 2,000 students, by the 2010-11 school year.** Efforts to increase graduation rates require retention and intervention strategies that prevent dropping out as well as efforts to reconnect dropouts to appropriate educational options. While it is too soon to measure impact on graduation rates, progress toward this goal has been made through providing support to youth who wish to reenroll, by securing funds to create more slots in educational options, and by researching and disseminating best practices in the field of alternative education. The challenge has been working to reconnect youth to education while simultaneously designing and implementing new programs to accommodate their diverse educational needs.

##### Results since October 2006:

- The Collaborative **designed strategies to reconnect out-of-school youth** to education and supports, which include: establishing a Project U-Turn youth hotline; developing an intake system for out-of-school youth; and, with the School District, planning a permanent Re-Engagement Center for former dropouts seeking to return to education. Since its establishment, the Project U-Turn Hotline has received calls from 1,554 youth who wanted to learn more about educational program options available to them and, to receive assistance with the enrollment process. To date, **158** youth were reconnected to an array of educational pathways:

**140** connected to high school diploma programs:

- Educational Options Program (47)
- Accelerated schools (35)
- Traditional high schools (22)
- Home schools/virtual charter schools (10)
- Job Corps (9)
- Gateway to College (6)
- Adult high school diploma programs (6)
- YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School (3)
- Young Adult Diploma Program at IAC (3)

**18** to GED programs

- The Collaborative **strengthened alternative education options** by reviewing and making recommendations for improving the School District's Educational Options program, by funding an evaluation of the District's Accelerated High Schools to further improve their performance, and by securing funds to design and pilot new educational programs such as the Bridge (a program for youth reading below a 6th grade level) and the Learning to Work model that provides career and college connections to high school. In addition, the Collaborative has reestablished a peer-learning network for alternative education providers to share best practices and strengthen the field's body of knowledge.
- The Collaborative **secured funding to establish new programs and services for struggling students and out-of-school youth**, including: dropout prevention specialists in seven high schools; occupational skills credentialing modules to be offered through the E<sup>3</sup> Centers; Bridge/Transitions programs designed to help students acquire skills and credits needed to reenter the formal education system; and competency-based curriculum modules that allow youth to gain credit based on demonstrated competencies.



#### LOOKING AHEAD

Few cities in the United States are tackling the drop out crisis as intensely and comprehensively as Philadelphia. The research in *Unfulfilled Promise* is the national "gold standard" on how to calculate and understand the full dimensions of the issue. Philadelphia has been able to build a cross-sector collaborative in which no single system alone shoulders the blame for the problem, and all systems and sectors of the city are accountable for finding solutions.

Yet, while the city should take great pride in the accomplishments of the past year, much more needs to be done. The good news of the past year is that, when given the opportunity, 1,500 youth actively sought to return to education; the bad news is that open and appropriate placements were available for only 10% of them. And while significant resources have been raised, and public will to address the drop out crisis has increased, Philadelphia is still a long way from creating the portfolio of educational options and sustainable funding mechanisms needed. That is why the Collaborative invites everyone to join its efforts to continue to change policies, realign funding priorities and design new educational options. With the progress to date, Philadelphia has already made a positive U-turn and is on the road to becoming the first major city in the country to resolve its dropout crisis.

##### U-Turn Collaborative Priorities for 2007-08

- Develop sustainable funding to increase appropriate educational option "slots" in the School District for struggling students and high school dropouts
- Identify and replicate best practices for school-based prevention and intervention services
- Continue building an effective system to reenroll out-of-school youth, including the establishment of a School District Re-Engagement Center
- Expand cross-system data sharing
- Identify and annually report key data on school completion and re-enrollment
- Enlist youth, families and communities in the U-Turn campaign, through neighborhood-based meetings, web-based tools and expanded outreach



"I was 17 and found out I only had one credit. My only option was to go to Fairhill [an accelerated high school]. I promised my grandmother I would get my high school diploma." —Joaquín, age 18



## PROJECT U-TURN COLLABORATIVE

### Steering Committee:

Cartographic Modeling Lab,  
University of Pennsylvania  
Center for Literacy  
Center for Social Organization of  
Schools at The Johns Hopkins University  
City of Philadelphia, Managing Director's Office  
and Department of Human Services  
Congreso de Latinos Unidos  
Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project  
Nu Sigma Youth Services / Philadelphia  
Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network  
Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth  
Philadelphia Education Fund  
Philadelphia Juvenile Probation Department  
Philadelphia Reintegration Initiative  
Philadelphia Youth Network (*managing partner*)  
School District of Philadelphia  
United Way of Southeastern PA  
William Penn Foundation

### Participating Members:

Cardinal Bevilacqua Community Center  
Catholic Human Services – Archdiocese of  
Philadelphia  
Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania  
Ceiba  
Communities in Schools Philadelphia  
Community College of Philadelphia  
Community Education Partners  
Delaware Valley Grantmakers  
District 1199 C  
Education Law Center  
ENPYCE  
Fairhill Community School  
Foundations, Inc./KidZone  
Free Library of Philadelphia  
GALAEI  
Greater Philadelphia Federation of Settlements  
Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition  
Indo-Chinese American Council  
Juvenile Law Center  
Lutheran Settlement House  
Maternity Care Coalition  
National Center for Adult Literacy  
North Light Community Center  
Opportunities Industrialization Centers  
of America  
Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
Pennsylvania School for the Deaf  
Philadelphia Academies, Inc.  
Philadelphia Children's Commission  
Philadelphia Health Management Corporation  
(the Bridge)  
Philadelphia Housing Authority  
Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization  
Center  
Philadelphia Safe and Sound  
Point Breeze Performing Arts Center  
Public/Private Ventures  
Resources for Human Development  
Salvation Army of Greater Philadelphia  
SEAMAAC  
Support Center for Child Advocates  
Temple University  
To Our Children's Future with Health  
United Communities Southeast Philadelphia  
YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School  
Youth Empowerment Services



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[www.projectUturn.net](http://www.projectUturn.net)

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