

**New Directions in Educating
Our Children & Our Community**
A Project 20/20 Leadership Meeting
January 27, 2010
WMU Kendall Center, 7:30 a.m.



Welcome and Opening Comments

Talia Champlin opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda. The topic for the meeting was “New Directions in Educating Our Children & Our Community.” Talia introduced Dale Kimball, the Executive Director of the Battle Creek Educators’ Task Force (BCETF) and Pete Christ, a member of the BCETF.

Dale Kimball & Pete Christ – Battle Creek Educators’ Task Force

Dale Kimball gave an overview of the Battle Creek Educators’ Task Force. The BCETF consists of representatives of each of the four Battle Creek area public schools (Battle Creek, Harper Creek, Lakeview and Pennfield), Calhoun Intermediate Schools District, Miller College, Kellogg Community College, Battle Creek Area Catholic and Christian Schools and of the community. Formed in 1984, the BCETF strives to operate in a manner that would permit its members to attain many of the benefits that would be available to them if operating as a single district, while retaining the benefits that members derive from current district identities. The Task Force members have worked on many successful collaborations including the Battle Creek Math and Science Center, the alignment of an elementary curriculum, business operation collaboration, a common report card for grades K-6, among others.

Pete Christ informed attendees that one of the BCETF’s goals is to graduate 100% of Battle Creek students from high school with the character, skills and abilities to be successful at the next step of choice in their lives...be it college, the military, vocational training, or immediate job placement. Since 1980, there has been a growing trend requiring schools, instead of parents, to take on the primary responsibility for the behavioral aspects of a child’s life, without any increase in funding or professional development to handle this additional responsibility. This burden has impacted the schools’ ability to achieve the necessary results.

The BCETF recognizes that something needs to be done to improve education results, specifically high school graduation rates. Currently, Battle Creek only graduates about 70% of its students. The Battle Creek Community Compact seeks to change that statistic and the future of our children. BCETF members believe that a collaborative model will more effectively accomplish our goals than a competitive model. The Compact must be owned not only by each superintendant but also by school board members, parents, organizations, community members and businesses. Pete said “If we are to be successful as a community in reaching our goal of 100% graduation, we either all win together or we all lose together.” We must put children in the center of our goal.

Group Discussion and Input

Following the presentation, members were asked to consider the following question: **What does our community need to do to make this concept (the Compact) work?**

An individual from each table shared the top 1-2 key points with the group. Please note, the record of all notes is at the end of this document.

Summary of Key Points Reported by Each Group

- Expand life skills education within classroom and equip teachers to graduate students with the skills and “tools for success”
- Systemic change in the way education is delivered
- Need to have an attitude shift at all school systems, move away from competition
- Get kids excited at early grades to “be like the older kids”
- Genuine and greater cooperation among districts
- Youth need to be motivated through programs like Youth Build that incorporate education, work and other skills
- It is bigger than “just the schools” – we have the supports, use and coordinate them (use United Way Campaign as the example)
- Address high rate of teen pregnancy (1st, 2nd, 3rd)
- Stabilize lives of families in turmoil – inculcate an ethos of educational importance
- Listen to students, empower and embrace them – give them a platform “for the children by the children”, don’t blame them for faults of past generations
- Figure out how organizations can more effectively help schools and students
- Library and resources within are underutilized by families (great source), daycare takes parents out of education for the kids
- Improve 0-5 preparation – safe environment, coaching/mentoring opportunities
- Collaborative efforts on leadership positions – look at new model of educational development i.e. K-14 example of BCPS/KCC having one leader
- Don’t fear consolidation or collaboration
- Raise expectations, create measurable and clear goals and report outcomes

Members were then asked to sign the Battle Creek Community Compact and answer the question “How do you think you or your organization can help to move this forward?” Some members shared their thoughts on the Compact and how they can help.

Closing Comments

Members were encouraged to attend the next Project 20/20 event on February 16th from 7 – 8:30 p.m. at the Burnham Brook Community Center. The topic for the community forum will be the same with a few variations – the Battle Creek Educators’ Task Force and the Battle Creek Community Compact. Members were also informed of the National Center for Food Protection and the International Food Protection Training Institute open house reception on February 4th from 4 – 6 p.m. at 49 W. Michigan Ave, Ste. 300 (use Comerica Bank entrance)

Members were asked to complete a survey, make a donation, visit the Project 20/20 website at www.BCProject2020.com and invite others to join us.

The next Leadership meeting will take place on March 24, 2010 at 7:30 a.m.

Compilation of All Notes Taken from Table Top Note Pads

- Update teaching systems
- Understand the gaps children experience that prevent them from achieving success
- Schools need a way to defend themselves against negative decisions by others
- Shift at school board, parents, administrators
- Start with parents – take responsibility that children should be ready for school every day
- There needs to be a value perceived by parents/community that children graduating has value vs. obligation
- How does the Legacy Scholarship play into this?
- Change starts with “me”
- Bring back important people in our lives/community who made it fun and challenging
- Go back and do things that DID work
- Business community/media/events can help ignite children
- Improve relationships between educators and parents
- Expectations – stop accepting that everyone won’t graduate
- Our actions follow our words
- Tell school boards and administrators to take risks and we will support them
- Find a way to prevent lowering of standards to raise other standards
- Elimination of district boundaries
- Minimize agendas – it is contrary to collaboration, mentality of serving the greater good and children
- Draw on strengths of school district
- The support of 100% graduation rate is needed without taxes; too much cost/disagree with premise; too much asking schools to raise kids; incentivize families
- Wrong end of problem – need families to stress importance of educating; must convince kids of importance of education and are motivated to learn
- Fines for cursing and sagging pants – kids held accountable
- You’re as strong as your weakest link (competing districts)
- We are responsible for educating ALL youth not just those in your own district
- We need to value kids
- We all need to work together – schools, court system, community
- Focus on parents and parental skills – socio-economic, culture, respect, lack of parental engagement, respect parents (stop usurping parents)
- Try something outside the box
- We are not training our kids to be managers of homes
- Don’t need every student to be college prep – need everyday skills (life skills)
- Concerted effort of recommitment – get rid of fragmentation
- Focus on 1-2 goals and do those well
- Create understanding in the whole community about what the compact is
- Define 100% - what does that mean? Ready to learn at kindergarten, early childhood (design specific programs)
- Bring the strong BC organizations together
- Recreate our understanding of the needs of the 21st century student – this student comes prepared

- High school education is the minimum for success today (post secondary is to be job ready)
- Address silos of families – look at all kids
- Everyone must see this as important
- Trust the research – know immediate results will not happen, look at long-term
- Use SMART goal framework: Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely
- Insure children get the right start in early education
- Parental involvement – care vs. don't care, make them accountable
- Post high school – everyone needs this
- Examples and role models – bring people back to talk to young people, especially teachers, inform students about employment opportunities
- Relationship building with youth of the community i.e. a student think tank
- Reduce the number of school districts and/or break down the separation of racial and socio-economics
- Get buy-in from organizations, community and businesses to see this as a common vision in their individual work
- Build desire to students to graduate
- Organizations need to support parents and kids – what do schools need?
- Organizations need to work at schools (after school?) to help with their areas of expertise
- Organizations need to know more about school goals and timing of them to better integrate affective skills/knowledge
- Organizations need to work with parents more – find new ways
- Need a more effective model for parent engagement in schools
- New models of engagement for males in schools/their educational process
- Mentorships – every child should have an adult from the community in their school life K-8 (partnerships with businesses)
- Organizations need to look for intersections of their work with others on affective part of kids' lives
- Politics hold us back between districts, education is undervalued – improve marketing, sports policy and fanaticism drives policy, less investment in the arts
- Consolidation of schools – too much emphasis on sports
- Coaching/mentoring for parents – what questions to ask?
- Gain a better understanding of challenges from a child's perspective
- Teach parent partnerships/relationships – need to be cultivated
- Make Boards of Education accountable along with administration, Educators' Task Force and other initiatives
- Intentional community dialogue around the goal of 100% graduation and how to get there
- Support and expand the Legacy Scholarship Program – establishes certainty of opportunity