

**Building a Strong Community
One Child at a Time**
A Project 20/20 Leadership Meeting
March 23, 2011
Burnham Brook, 7:30 a.m.



Welcome and Opening Comments

Talia Champlin opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the meeting agenda. The theme for the meeting was education and health with a focus also on youth. Talia reminded attendees that Project 20/20 facilitates these important conversations among leaders and community members to move Battle Creek toward excellence. The meeting presenters are the individuals doing the work and need our support. Talia then introduced Dr. Dennis Bona.

Presentations by Dr. Dennis Bona and Rico Bailey

Dr. Bona, a member of the Battle Creek Educators' Task Force (ETF) and President of Kellogg Community College, discussed the ETF's four major goals to educate children and move the community forward. The first goal is to make sure children are ready for school. That includes newborn home visits by family coaches, toddler play groups and aligned pre-school curriculums and assessments. The ETF is also working to make sure children achieve success by third grade. Providing parent support, ensuring every child is in school every day and building strong partnerships between schools, neighborhoods and resources will help children to achieve success. Another goal is a 100% high school graduation rate. Lastly, the ETF and partners want to make sure students are career, college and citizenship ready. Every high school student needs the opportunity to get a head start on their career through dual enrollment (attending both high school and taking college course concurrently). Also, it's important that every high school student have access to funding for post-secondary education and the ETF is working to make that come to fruition.

Rico Bailey, a sophomore at Western Michigan University and graduate of Battle Creek Central High School, spoke about his life and experience with various support systems in Battle Creek that helped him to succeed. He talked about young people and the need to support youth to build a strong community. A measure of community strength resides on the success of its children. He said youth have strong potential and leaders will have to do away with old ideas and be willing to reach out to youth to better engage them. Adults should take the opportunity to learn about what young people like, have conversations with them and truly connect with them in a genuine way. Young people also need to let adults in. Building better intergenerational relationships is important. Schools should hire teachers based on their interpersonal skills not what institution they received their degree. Teachers have to be able to connect with youth and mentor them. If we build stronger children then we won't have to repair broken adults.

Group Discussion and Input

Following the presentation, members were asked to participate in a small group discussion. The following three questions were posed: 1) What must we do to make sure all children have the opportunities and support necessary to achieve? 2) Think about your childhood, who believed in you? How can we make that possible for other youth? 3) What steps must we take to create conditions for a healthy community (not just physical health)?

A discussion question was assigned to each table (each question was discussed by 3 tables). An individual from each discussion table shared one key point with the group (however, many shared more than one). All additional ideas are located at the end of this document.

Key Points Reported by Each Group

- 1) What must we do to make sure all children have the opportunities and support necessary to achieve?
 - Structure in early childhood, education of adults and discussion among each other, having real connections/relationships with young people and young people need to understand the expectations/accountabilities/consequences of their actions
 - Connect adults with children and have those adults show that they care. Adults = all community (teachers, parents, church members, barbers, cashier)
 - Encourage mentoring and let volunteers know where opportunities exist
- 2) Think about your childhood, who believed in you? How can we make that possible for other youth?
 - Need to encourage child individually – can be any positive adult
 - Build relationships (mentor), step in – don't be afraid, be willing to work around any obstacle
 - Mixture of mentoring – ages need to step-up, families (blood and choice) that instill education values in kids, expectations for nurturing teachers about life issues
- 3) What steps must we take to create conditions for a healthy community (not just physical health)?
 - Everyone should recognize that they can make a difference and impact, take the opportunity and share successes
 - More options for after school activities, empower youth to create their own activities, more opportunities for sports, available/affordable options for students, better connections/relationships with youth (beyond family)
 - Teachers with a passion for teaching that connect with students and parent connectedness to their child's school is key. Build the passion and caring necessary

Closing Comments

Members were encouraged to attend upcoming Project 20/20 Community Forums (both at Burnham Brook) on April 19th from 4:30 – 6 p.m. and May 5th from 6 – 8 p.m. The April Forum will focus on “Education, Health & Neighborhood Initiatives to Advance Community Change” and the May Forum will focus on “Commitment to a Better Tomorrow: A Community Conversation on Race.” A 2011 meeting schedule is available at www.bcproject2020.com.

Members were asked to complete a survey, make a donation, become a fan of Project 20/20 on Facebook or follow our tweets, visit the Project 20/20 website at www.bcproject2020.com and invite others to join us.

Additional Ideas from Small Group Discussion

- 1) What must we do to make sure all children have the opportunities and support necessary to achieve?
 - Parents/adults take time to learn with kids
 - Parent involved/active role in education
 - Let teens know its ok to take help
 - It starts at home
 - Teacher that know how to teach, want to teach
 - Face-to-face connections with kids/teens
 - Have teacher training where young people come in and train teachers how to connect with them
 - College teaching course on interpersonal communication
 - Family coaching for teens too
 - Let students know that you will be there consistently and then do it
 - Make homework fun
 - Mentors are important
 - Make it cool/fun to be a mentor
 - Cultural shift: It's not ok to not succeed in education
 - Give children opportunities to speak their mind in an appropriate way
 - The community (barber, cashier, teacher) must encourage education
 - Support parenting/successful parenting
 - Listen to and learn from youth
 - Be informed about what ALL non-profits are doing
 - Know what is available in the community
 - Look at the non-traditional. Not all students fit into that norm of academics
 - There needs to be more communication about what needs to be done/how to help so that those willing know where to go

- 2) Think about your childhood, who believed in you? How can we make that possible for other youth?
 - Who believed in you?
 - Grand-dad, grandfather, grandmother, teachers, mom, church family, siblings
 - Why they were so important?
 - Told to “never say can’t”, filled in the gap to keep thing going and somewhat smooth, made me feel like education was important and always got her out of bed and to school! (didn’t like/appreciate it back then but does now), whole community helped raise children, built self-esteem at school
 - How can we make it possible for other youth?
 - New Level Sports
 - Church/church family
 - Group to belong/fit-in (band, sports)
 - Encourage to find out what you’re talented at (sports, art, music). We all need opportunities to try new things
 - Teachers that will support each child individually to find out what they’re good at and encourage them

- Put a time limit on screen time (TV, computer, games) for children so that they have a balance and are encourage to find out who they truly are
- Scouting – do Cub Scouts exist? Indian Guide Program
- Need adult volunteers
- Parents – 2 parents in home
- Need more attention for at-risk youth in school. More after-school opportunities
- Extended family despite “broken” home...God parents, family friends, peers
- Need to back it up with time
- Employers willing to go extra mile
- When do we ask our youth their input as to what they need?
- Don't just meet them ½ way – push them to the limit
- Looking for teachers who have “been in the youth’s shoes” before
- Mentors that are older and younger
- People who believe in you – TRUST
- Out of comfort zone
- Believe in yourself
- Responsibility – life skills
- Seek out to help
- Parent not friend
- Technology – within reason
- Support commitment to right causes

3) What steps must we take to create conditions for a healthy community (not just physical health)??

- All adults (everyone) responsible to raise kids
- I.D. vehicles/leaders/organizations, etc. to create them
- Evaluate programs – do not duplicate
- Neighborhoods SAFE
- Support adults as well as children – mental health
- Continue grassroots connecting – people get involved
- Connect existing resources
- Raise awareness of what is going on
- Council on mentoring – organizations come together
- Come Together → Beatles
- Each of us begin to talk with others
- Engage students in volunteer work
- Funding to create jobs/skill sets for young people
- Summer learning opportunities
- Making learning resources more available to parents
- What after 21st Century? Extend grant or other options?
- Sound quality education
- Ready 3-4 year olds for Pre-K and K
- Mentor some child – every adult
- Increase student exposure to volunteering
- Identify the problem the child is facing and address through resources

- Increase students having breakfast (healthy) before school begins so they are ready to learn. Many have free breakfast but don't eat.
- Teach kids and adults the value of being on time
- More exposure to careers, people, opportunities
- Adults that are sincere, really want to help, tutors