

SPONSOR UPDATE

AUGUST 2016

**Peggy Young,
Director**

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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Buckeye Community Hope Foundation is building communities and rebuilding lives.

OUR VISION

The Education Division's vision is strong communities of healthy, well-educated students, and a future in which all students have access to a high quality public education. Ohio thrives as increasing numbers of schools graduate students equipped to assume a positive role in society.

Author, advocate to speak at BCHF annual All Schools Meeting

Attendees at Buckeye Community Hope Foundation's upcoming annual All Schools Meeting will have the unique opportunity to hear from keynote speaker Mychal Wynn.

Long before becoming an internationally-acclaimed consultant, motivational speaker and author of 28 books, Wynn was a child of poverty. Born in rural Alabama, given up for adoption and raised in urban poverty, Wynn attended low performing schools surrounded by the gangs, violence and desperation that continues to claim the lives of youth of color on Chicago's south side.



Wynn rose above this background with the encouragement of a father who affirmed, "You are going to college" and a mother who prayed daily for the protection of her son by his namesake, "Michael the Archangel." Wynn went on to become a first-generation college graduate, and a cum laude graduate of Boston's Northeastern University. His life's work is now dedicated to advocating for achievement among disadvantaged children and youth through high quality schools and systems of community support.

Wynn has taken experiences gained from more than three decades of teaching, parenting, research and educational consulting to develop a revolutionary College Planning Cohort™ Model that instills college and career aspirations in students from diverse backgrounds and

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UPCOMING EVENTS

2016-2017 All Schools Meeting

Don't miss BCHF's annual All Schools Meeting featuring nationally-recognized author and educator Mychal Wynn. The event will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2016 in Gahanna (a suburb of Columbus). Register by contacting Anita McCarty at amccarty@buckeyehope.org.

Special September Dropout Recovery Roundtable

BCHF will host a special 2016-2017 Dropout Recovery Roundtable meeting in Columbus on September 20, 5 to 7 p.m. This event will be an opportunity for school leaders and others involved in dropout recovery programs to interact with noted author Michael Wynn about issues specific to the dropout recovery population. Mark your calendars and plan to attend by emailing Anita McCarty at amccarty@buckeyehope.org. Please send names, school affiliations, and email addresses of all persons who will be attending. Please note that participation is limited to individuals employed by or associated with schools sponsored by BCHF.

All Schools Meeting — continued

generational poverty. Based on approaches supported by small group research, students have been guided through high school graduation, along postsecondary pathways toward their dreams and aspirations. The model encourages a form of community advocacy that has led youth to millions of dollars in scholarships and financial aid. Students have been recognized as Gates Millennium Scholars, Posse Foundation Scholars and Meyerhoff Scholars, and have earned generous need-based financial aid awards from some of the country's most selective institutions.

Wynn has also received international acclaim for his work in assisting schools in becoming "Conversational Communities" for conceptualizing strategies to close gaps, expand postsecondary pathways, reduce discipline infractions, build relationships, foster collaboration between schools and communities, and cultivate positive school cultures.

He currently serves as CEO of the Foundation for Ensuring Access and Equity, and as the Education Ministry Leader (together with his wife) at Turner Chapel AME Church in Marietta, Georgia. He presents staff/professional development trainings, conducts parenting workshops, delivers motivational presentations to students, and consults with all types of schools throughout the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean and Bermuda.

All hands on deck!

A special thank you to school leaders who provided professional and timely responses to the many requests made in July as a part of the compliance component of Buckeye Community Hope Foundation's (BCHF) sponsor performance assessment by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE).

As previously reported, state laws require all charter school sponsors to be assessed on performance in three key areas – school academic performance, quality authorizer practices and school/sponsor compliance – and rated by ODE. Statutory incentives are provided to highly rated sponsors and their sponsored schools, while penalties are in place for low-performing sponsors.

Sponsor ratings for both the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years will be released in October. School report card data will be used to calculate school academic performance component scores.



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OCQE HOSTS FREE REGIONAL BOARD TRAINING SESSIONS

The Ohio Coalition for Quality Education (OCQE) will host free board training sessions addressing a variety of relevant topics including board governance, legislative and regulatory updates, board legal requirements, board fiscal responsibilities and highlights of OCQE's charter advocacy activities.

The agenda also includes public records and open meeting laws - *required training for all board members* under legislation enacted earlier this year.

OCQE President Ron Adler, Attorney Amy Borman and Constellation Schools Chief Financial Officer Tom Babb will present and answer board members' questions.

Sessions are scheduled for Sept. 10 in Dayton, Sept. 24 in Columbus, Oct. 8 in Cleveland and Oct. 22 in Toledo. Register to attend online at: www.ocqe.org.



All hands on deck — continued

Documentation provided earlier this year by BCHF for the quality authorizer practices components filled nine four-inch binders for the 2014-2015 assessment and 16 for 2015-2016.

Although H.B. 2, which mandated changes to Ohio's sponsor performance assessment, was approved by the Ohio General Assembly on October 7, a draft compliance monitoring tool was not provided by ODE until mid-May – more than seven months after passage of the bill. The final document was not released until June 30 – nearly nine months after the legislation was approved and five months after the bill was enacted.

On July 6, ODE hosted a webinar to review the compliance monitoring tool and process; however, participants were not permitted to ask questions during the session. Answers to questions submitted to ODE in writing were not provided until a week later, leaving only 13 business days for sponsors to comply.

BCHF was required to assess and report on verification of more than 300 compliance items for each sponsored school – more than 5,000 “tasks” were uploaded in ODE's Epicenter data system. That's 5,000 “tasks,” not pages! In some cases, individual tasks required documents of up to 100 pages, including some previously submitted to ODE.

The BCHF Education Division team appreciates the necessary assistance in gathering and reporting all the required documentation and information provided by school leaders – on short notice and during the one month of the year that generally allows for a slow down in their busy schedules. July is typically a time for overseeing facility improvements, brainstorming new ideas, planning new initiatives, engaging in professional development and, perhaps, enjoying bit of personal down time.

A special thanks, too, to dropout recovery school leaders who were required to again complete and submit applications to receive the DORP school designation required to be assessed using the new DORP school report card – regardless of previous DORP designations and the fact that school sponsor contracts clearly reflect the DORP designation.

A very special thank you to school leaders for their support and assistance in providing documentation for the compliance component of the sponsor performance assessment!

VISION SCREENING EQUIPMENT, TRAINING AVAILABLE

The Ohio departments of Education and Health are making vision screening kits available on loan to schools.

Kits include materials for screening set up and testing of distance visual acuity, stereopsis, ocular muscle balance and color vision.

Access links to request equipment and to sign up for screening training at: <https://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/July-18-2016/Vision-screening-equipment-now-available-for-loan>.



More schools to close under new charter laws

As a result of charter school “reform” legislation (H.B. 2) enacted earlier this year, 20 schools closed their doors at the end of the 2015-2016 school year.

Two changes are likely driving the increased number of closures: a provision of state law that prohibits charter schools subject to non-renewal of their sponsor contracts for failure to meet academic expectations from seeking a new sponsor; and, holding sponsors accountable for school academic performance with no “safe harbor” from negative consequences as Ohio transitions to new standards, assessments and report cards.

“We’ve got some sponsors that are very good at turning around schools and (ODE) has created such a fear factor that sponsors are hesitant for their own existence to help and improve schools,” explained Ron Adler, president of the Ohio Coalition for Quality Education (OCQE), in an interview with Gongwer News Service.

According to Gongwer, ten of the schools applied to the Ohio Department of Education’s Office of School Sponsorship, but their applications were denied. Although the department is required to undergo the same sponsor performance assessment as all other sponsors, it is not subject to penalties – including revocation of sponsorship authority – for poor performance.

None of the schools were closed under Ohio’s automatic closure laws (for poor academic performance) because “safe harbor” provides protection to charter schools (as well as traditional public schools and districts, teachers and students — but not sponsors) from negative consequences through the 2016-2017 school year.

Join the conversation on Ohio’s ESSA plan

Under the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Ohio will create a plan for how local, state and federal programs are aligned to help all students achieve success. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will seek input from all stakeholders at a series of meetings to be held throughout the state.

ODE will also host a series of webinars covering ESSA focus areas. Participants can learn more about specific topics and share their thoughts through a variety of options.

Look for additional information on ODE’s website at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Every-Student-Succeeds-Act-ESSA>.



NEW “SUCCESS IN SIX” ENHANCES DIGITAL LEARNING SKILLS

A new *Success in Six* resource is a self-paced online learning program that shows the latest ways to use digital resources to support one-on-one learning, blended learning, personalized learning, differentiation and a host of other student needs. INFOhio, Ohio’s PreK-12 Digital Library, offers the program at no charge to all Ohio teachers, librarians, tech coordinators and administrators.

Educators can complete one or all of the modules in any order:

- ◆ *Develop Your Research Toolkit*
- ◆ *Learn to Search Effectively*
- ◆ *Discover High-Quality STEM Resources*
- ◆ *Engage Your Students with Reading Resources*
- ◆ *Find Free Content for Your Blended or Flipped Classroom*
- ◆ *Explore INFOhio’s Differentiation Tools*

An overview is provided for each module with guidance to sites and tools to explore more deeply. Activities to help educators practice their new skills are also provided.

Three contact hours may be earned for completion of each module. In addition, INFOhio partners NWOET and ideastream offer *Success in Six* for graduate credit.

Access *Success in Six* online at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Media/Ed-Connection/June-21-2016/Become-a-digital-learning-expert-with-the-new-Succ>.

A lasting memory

Each school year, including 2015-2016, a formal “Hero Dance” is held for Constellation Schools: Old Brooklyn Community Middle School students. Students enjoy the opportunity to dress in their finest and dance the night away with their heroes.

Principal Cherie Kaiser describes it as a “very special night.”

Raffle tickets for a variety of prizes are sold to students, who have been particularly eager to win the opportunity to shadow the principal, and assistant principal, for the day.

Last year’s student winners – fourth-grader Kallie Yeager and third-grader Joey Chech -- joined Principal Kaiser in walk-throughs and filled out reflection sheets as they visited classrooms. Buckeye Community Hope Foundation Regional Representative Joe Calinger spent time with the students and explained the role of a charter school sponsor.

The students’ biggest surprise from the experience was that principals never stop working all day!



Dropout Prevention and Recovery Committee meetings continue

As previously reported, legislation enacted earlier this year (H.B. 2) created a committee charged with defining “quality” for dropout recovery schools and studying the efficacy of a completion- or competency-based funding structure.

At the committee’s second meeting, dropout recovery school leaders recommended that quality be based on more than academic performance and graduation rates.

Committee member Sen. Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering), who also serves as chair of the Senate Education Committee, agreed. “As we build an accountability system, yes we look at graduation, we look at performance, etc., but I think one of the types of things we might want to be looking at as we evaluate is the culture, what do they create in that school,” she said.

According to Lehner, academic performance and graduation rates could be improved by providing students with a sense of belonging, resources and access to emergency or critical needs. She believes it’s important to determine which schools are making a real difference

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UPDATE: 2016 OHIO REPORT CARDS

School report cards are designed to help give parents and communities an annual update on the variety of components that together show how well students are learning, growing and achieving. A new resource explaining each of the six grade card components is now available for parents and other stakeholders. Access the two-page handout at: <http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/ReportCardpostcard.pdf.aspx>.

NEW KRA FAMILY RESOURCES AVAILABLE

The Ohio Department of Education's Office of Early Learning and School Readiness recently posted new resources for schools to share with parents and families about the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA). Access the *Welcome to Kindergarten-KRA Family Resource* document and other KRA resources online at: <http://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Early-Learning-Program-Updates/June-2016/KRA-Family-Resources>.

Dropout recovery — continued

in students' lives despite low overall academic performance and which are simply failing to meet students' needs.

"There seems to be a prevalence of these schools that are just not graduating very many kids," she said. "It is hard. We certainly can't hold them to the same standard we do our traditional high schools but there have to be some standards and accountability and there has to be some level where we say this school is not accomplishing enough of what they need to be accomplishing to remain a public entity."

The discussion continued at the committee's third meeting, held one week later. Committee members acknowledged the statutory deadline (August 1) for making its recommendations, but agreed that given the importance and complexity of the issues, more time is needed.

"I think there is an acknowledgement here that although we have covered some good ground here in the last few meetings, that there is a lot of work to be done," said Buddy Harris, director of ODE's Office of Innovation, who is leading the panel's work. "I mean, there is no question about it, and with the nature and complexity of the issues that some of these schools are facing, it's worthwhile for us to consider ... to take a little time to do that."

Oooooops – our mistake!

Included in the graduation photo spread in the July issue of the *BCHF Sponsor Update* was a photo actually taken at the Focus

Academy's Senior Celebration. Students from Focus Learning Academy Southeastern and Southwest, and Focus North High School, donned caps and gowns for the schools' tenth graduation at the end of the 2015-2016 school year. The three schools graduated 135 students,



all of whom are "golden stars" – individuals with a spark that ignites a desire to succeed. One student, Bradley Ramsey, stood out in his ability to overcome significant challenges to earn his diploma. Bradley and the other graduates were celebrated during Focus' traditional graduation ceremony.

**ACCORDING TO THE
2016 KIDS COUNT
Data Book ...**

**31% of Ohio's children
live in families that lack
secure employment**

**14% of Ohio's children
live in high-poverty
areas**

Ohio experienced a:

- ◆ **36% drop in its teen
birth rate**
- ◆ **38% drop in drug &
alcohol use by teens**
- ◆ **29% decrease in the
percentage of teens not
graduating on time**



**KIDS COUNT Data Book:
Teens making better choices**

According to the 2016 KIDS COUNT Data Book recently released by The Annie E. Casey Foundation, a record number of Generation Z teens are making better choices that could positively impact their futures.

The KIDS COUNT Data Book is an annual publication that reports the assessment of child well-being nationally and state by state, using an index of indicators in four key areas: economic well-being; education; health; and, family and community. First published in 1990, the report ranks states in these key areas and tracks national and state trends.

Ohio's overall ranking was 26th, with state trends in general alignment with national findings of significantly decreased teen birth rates, drug and alcohol use, and percentage of teens not graduating on time. Data from 2014 was compared to 2008 findings.

Ohio ranked 25th in economic well-being with improved rankings in the percentage of children living in households with a high housing cost burden (decreasing from 33 percent to 29) and in the percent of teens not in school and not working (decreasing slightly from 7 percent to 6). Results worsened in the percentage of children in poverty (increased to 23 percent from 19) and in children whose parents lack secure employment (increased to 31 percent from 28).

In education, Ohio ranked 17th, improving slightly in the percentage of fourth graders not proficient in reading (decreasing to 62 from 64) and the percentage of high school students not graduating on time (decreasing to 15 from 21). The percentage of eighth grade students not proficient in math remained unchanged at 65, while the results were slightly worse in the percentage of young children not in school, increasing to 55 from 54.

Ohio improved in all four health measures: low-birthweight babies (8.5 percent, down slightly from 8.6); children without health insurance (5 percent, down from 7); child and teen deaths per 100,000 (23, down from 28); and, teens who abuse alcohol or drugs (5 percent, down from 8).

Ohio ranked 31st in family and community, with significant improvement in teen births per 1,000 (25, down from 39). Results were worse for the percentage of children in single-parent families (38, up from 34) and in the percentage of children living in high-poverty areas (14, up from 12). Results were unchanged for the percentage of children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma (10).

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STUDENT ABSENTEEISM A CHRONIC U.S. PROBLEM

The first release of chronic absentee data by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) reveals that the severity of the problem varies from state to state - from about one-third of students in Washington, D.C. missing 15 days or more in one school year, to just 4.5 percent for students in Florida. Ohio's absentee rate is 15.1 percent, above the national average of 13.1 percent.

The USDOE data show that students of different races and ethnicities experience chronic absenteeism at different rates. Compared to white peers, black students are 30 percent more likely to lose three or more weeks of school, and Hispanic students nine percent more likely. Chronic absenteeism is 22 percent less likely among English language learners.

Chronic absenteeism is widespread - one out of every eight students missed three weeks or more of school in 2013-2014. That translates to 93 million school days lost, the report said. "Research suggests the reasons for chronic absenteeism are as varied as the challenges students and families face - including poor health, limited transportation, and a lack of safety - which can be particularly acute in disadvantaged communities and areas of poverty."

Access the full report online at: <http://www2.ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html>.

KIDS COUNT Data Book — continued

The report points to a disturbing reality: that Generation Z teens growing up in low- to moderate-income households have fewer opportunities to improve their economic standing as future prospects for young adults armed with only a high school diploma are bleak. A college degree is now required to qualify for most middle income jobs, yet college tuition costs continue to rise. At the same time, a shift in financial aid -- away from needs-based grants to loans -- has put college out of reach for most economically disadvantaged students.

Recognizing that state policies impact children's chances for success, the Casey Foundation offers recommendations to help ensure that "all children are prepared for the future, based on this country's shared values of opportunity, responsibility and security."

Access the full report online at The Annie E. Casey Foundation website: <http://www.aecf.org>.

Study affirms need for high quality instructional planning

As previously reported, Buckeye Community Hope Foundation's (BCHF) June 2016 Leadership Summit -- *Xtreme Focus: Doing Less and Achieving More* -- was based on the work of Mike Schmoker (2016) and emphasized the three factors that matter most in terms of the improvement of student performance: curriculum, instruction and literacy.

The need for high-quality, pre-planned instruction was underscored in results of a recent study by C. Kirabo Jackson and Alexey Makarin at Northwestern University. The study found that providing middle school math teachers with pre-written, high quality lesson plans improved their instruction significantly. Weaker teachers showed the most benefit.

According to the study, the effect on teacher performance was nearly equivalent to "moving from an average-performing teacher to one at the 80th percentile" (Jackson & Makarin, 2016, p. 23). In reviewing the costs of providing access to the lesson plans, an investment of a \$430 online subscription, the researchers found the alternative to be more cost effective than most professional development experiences.

For the study, a group of approximately 360 teachers from three school systems in Virginia were given logins and passwords to inquired-based lesson plans. The authors stressed that the source and nature of the lesson plans were well researched for quality and

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COMPLIANCE UPDATE

Annual items that require board action

Each school's **academic intervention policy** must be reviewed and adopted annually by the board (ORC 3313.6012), even if there are no changes to the policy. This policy specifies which services are provided for students in testing grades that were not proficient on the AIR Assessments, Ohio Graduation Test and/or other state required assessments.

Each board must pass a resolution to **designate school EMIS coordinators and SOES coordinators** for the 2016-2017 school year.

Annual **conflict of interest disclosure statements** should be signed by board members at the next scheduled meeting (if not already done) to satisfy the 2016-2017 requirement.

Now is great time to **schedule your 2016-2017 board training** or to identify external training opportunities for your board. All board members are required to complete at least two hours of training annually. New board members must also complete an additional two-hour orientation training.

High quality instructional planning — continued

alignment to curriculum. The teachers were randomly assigned to one of three groups: a control group that had no access to the plans; a group that received logins to access the online lesson plans; and, a group that received logins and on-line support. Seven lesson plans were available, all of which tied to real-world situations and incorporated things of student interest like Xbox, basketball or eating at McDonald's. The teacher's role in each lesson was to serve primarily as a facilitator.

The authors noted effects on both teacher performance and student learning. Students of teachers with access to both the plan and the online support showed about a 10 percent higher improvement in math scores than students of the control-group teachers. The performance boost was most evident for teachers who were deemed weaker at the outset of the study.

The study authors hypothesized that the pre-planned lessons gave weaker teachers more time to focus on their delivery instead of spending time coming up with lesson ideas. "The difference here would be the quality of the lessons, not that you have a lesson per se," the authors stated (Jackson & Makarin, 2016, p. 23).

The focus of BCHF's Accountability and School Improvement department in the coming 2016-2017 school year will be on the topics of curriculum, instruction and literacy. Results of the recent study emphasize the importance of having a library of exemplary, well-researched lesson plans within a school's curricular resources. The need is more urgent for charter schools with higher teacher turnover or higher numbers of teachers new to the profession.

Request a catalog of BCHF's School Improvement series for the coming year by sending an email to: pd@bchfschools.org.

Jackson, C. Kirabo & Makarin, A. (2016). Simplifying teaching: A field experiment with online 'off the shelf' lessons. *National bureau of economic research working paper series*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: NBER.

Schmoker, Mike (2016). *Leading with focus: Elevating the essentials for school and district improvement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The study found that providing middle school math teachers with pre-written, high quality lesson plans improved their instruction significantly. Weaker teachers showed the most benefit.

ACT, SAT testing of high school juniors

The 2016-2017 school year will begin with a host of new requirements. Some relate to Ohio's ongoing phase-in of new graduation and testing requirements, including ACT/SAT testing.

Beginning in Spring 2017, traditional public schools and charter schools must administer a state-funded college admission test to high school juniors. This testing fulfills the third option of students' three diploma testing options. To meet graduation requirements, students must finish required credits and successfully complete one of the following: 1) earn a cumulative passing score of 18 points on Ohio's state end of course tests; 2) earn 12 points through completion of recognized industry credential(s) and earn a workforce-ready score on Work Keys; or 3) earn "remediation-free" scores in English language arts and mathematics on a nationally recognized college admission exam.

The state will pay one time for all 11th grade students in the classes of 2018 and beyond to take the exam free of charge. Schools will choose to either administer the state-funded ACT or SAT college admission test.

The exams are available in both paper and online formats. Test vendors will provide a range of services and resources to district administrators, teachers and students. Here are dates and information on both testing options.

SPRING 2017 ACT & SAT TEST DATES

ACT

For spring 2017, ACT will offer two test dates for paper testing and a two-week window for online and accommodated testing.

Paper Testing

March 21, 2017 *and* April 19, 2017

Paper Makeup Testing

May 3, 2017

Online Testing Window*

March 21, 2017 to April 4, 2017

Accommodated Testing Window

March 21, 2017 to April 4, 2017

**There is no makeup day for the online administration. Students must make up the exam during the online test window.*

SAT School Day (College Board)

For spring 2017, College Board offers two test dates for the SAT and a single test date for online testing. Schools may select one primary date to administer the exam.

Paper Testing Only

March 1, 2017

Paper Accommodated Testing Window

March 1, 2017 to March 6, 2017

—OR—

Paper and Online Testing

April 5, 2017

Paper Accommodated Testing Window

April 5-10, 2017

Paper Makeup Testing*

April 25, 2017

**All makeup testing will be paper based, even if the primary testing was online.*

Some issues related to the testing are not yet clear as a test vendor has yet to be selected. These include issues such as how e-schools will arrange for testing sites and if schools may collaborate on testing sites. Questions should be emailed to: gradrequirements@education.ohio.gov.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

The need for “second chance” schools

By Carol S. Young, Ph.D., Department Lead, BCHF Accountability and School Improvement Team

This story has stayed with me. I was sitting at a governing board meeting for a dropout recovery school listening to the monthly report of the school leader. After reporting the number of students who recently passed the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT), the principal said, “And then there was Angel who missed passing science by one point again—for the second time. We are keeping her very close to us; we hope Angel won’t give up.” This statement stirred some conversation among the adults at the meeting about times we had missed something by just a point or two and how disappointed we were. The school leader brought us back to reality. “But in your case,” she said, “you each probably had someone at home who hugged you and cried with you and then encouraged you to try again. Angel only has a very ill grandmother at home and Angel is the provider.” As I left the meeting that day, I couldn’t help but glance at Angel, a pretty girl with dark, luminous eyes and beautiful wavy hair who was helping clean the school over the summer. What would be the consequences if she gave up?

The consequences are well known. The life path faced by a student who lacks a high school diploma is a difficult one. In his report entitled, “By the Numbers: Dropping Out of High School,” Jason Breslow (2012) highlights the significant personal and societal costs:

- ♦ While the national unemployment costs stood at 8.1 percent in August 2012, joblessness among those without a high school diploma measured 12 percent. Among college graduates, it was 4.1 percent.
- ♦ Among those between the ages of 18 and 24, dropouts were more than twice as likely as college graduates to live in poverty according to the U.S. Department of Education. Dropouts experienced a poverty rate of 30.8 percent, while those with at least a bachelor’s degree had a poverty rate of 13.5 percent.
- ♦ Among dropouts between the ages of 16 and 24, incarceration rates were a whopping 63 times higher than among college graduates.
- ♦ When compared to the typical high school graduate, a dropout will end up costing taxpayers an average of \$292,000 over a lifetime due to the price tag associated with incarceration and other factors such as how much less they pay in taxes.

The reality of today’s society is that the path to a diploma is not a straight or easy one for many youth. In fact, in Ohio alone, thousands of students give up on school, in each and every school year, for a variety of reasons. Each of the “Big 6” urban areas in Ohio contributes about 1,000 students to the pool of those who have dropped out of high school.

Concern about rising numbers of high school dropouts gave rise to dropout recovery programs. These programs, most of which operate as community schools in Ohio, reconnect with out-of-school youth in an attempt to “bring them back” to schooling and a successful life path. Dropout recovery programs offer a second chance at high school completion and are an attempt to reverse the unfavorable odds for many youth. They are second-chance programs.

After about a fifteen-year history in Ohio, we are beginning to realize some of the indicators of successful dropout recovery schools. Dropout recovery or credit recovery programs in rural or suburban settings may mirror a traditional high school with a bit more personalized curriculum. These kinds of programs primarily offer more time for credit completion. However, in urban areas, problems that lead to difficulty in high school are much more complex. Like Angel, urban students are more likely to function as caregivers or providers in their own families. A significant number are parents of their own young children. Many must hold jobs. Many are hungry and a significant number are homeless. This issue was underscored for me one day when a school leader told me that the school had been closed for treatment of bed bugs. “We think it happened because it is winter and so many of our students are couch surfing right now,” the principal reported. I realized for the first time that young people, in effect *children*, in Central Ohio were struggling to find a place to sleep at night.

Successful urban dropout recovery programs wrap these complex needs into their curricula. They design individualized and flexible academic programs that focus on the pathway to graduation and reduce barriers. In the BCHF portfolio, the creativity is evident. Students at

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Second chance schools — continued

YouthBuild Columbus begin their careers with a course called “Mental Toughness.” The course helps students break the pattern of non-attendance and focus on success habits that will put them on the path to graduation and a career. Students at this school also immediately enroll in a pathway that leads to an industry credential. Flex High School refers to its “classes” as “appointments” and locates its school in a Girls and Boys Club setting. At Focus North High School, Focus Learning Academy of Southeastern Columbus, and Focus Academy Southwest, it is not unusual to have diaper giveaway days or open (free) clothes cupboards. The holiday celebrations at these schools feature kids and families. Achieve Career Preparatory Academy has a library full of books for and about urban youth, as well as a multi-media room. The Academy for Urban Scholars Columbus and Youngstown include seminars that address urban problems in its course offerings. In these seminars, guest lecturers such as local attorneys address issues such as positive relationships with law enforcement. Life Skills Middletown is a storefront learning center that contrasts dramatically with the environment of a large urban high school. In all of these programs, youth are supported by learning coaches, success counselors, or retention specialists in addition to teachers and school leaders. These additional personnel encourage students to attend regularly, and to overcome some of the life barriers to success. These additional personnel help keep students “close,” something that typically didn’t happen in the high schools these students attended previously.

Are dropout recovery programs working? The answer is pretty clear. Ohio Department of Education statistics report the following numbers of 2014-2015* graduates for dropout recovery programs in the BCHF portfolio alone:

The Academy for Urban Scholars Columbus	54
Academy for Urban Scholars Youngstown	16
Achieve Career Preparatory Academy	75
Focus Learning Academy of SE Columbus	78
Focus Learning Academy of SW Columbus	150
Focus North High School	76
Life Skills High School of Middletown	8
YouthBuild Columbus Community School	55
Total	512

It is pretty significant, in one school year, to put 512 youth on track for a better life pathway. I can only hope that Angel was one of them.

Many times, I hear educators espouse the belief that “all children can learn and succeed.” To me, support for dropout recovery schools is the ultimate test of that belief and whether or not we are willing to invest in it. If we truly believe that all children can learn and succeed, it is certainly worth giving them a second chance!

**2014-2015 reports account for 2014 graduates; official reports of graduates by ODE are for the prior year. Flex High School did not open until 2015-2016 so no graduates are reported in the list above.*

Breslow, Jason (2012). By the numbers: Dropping out of high school. *Frontline*, September 21, 2012.

Rennie Center (2012). Forgotten youth: Re-Engaging students through dropout recovery. Boston: Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy.

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