

# Project U-Turn @ 2.5

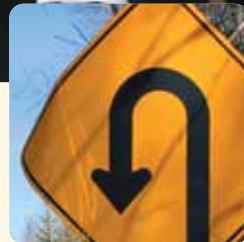
Broadening and Deepening the Work

An Update to the Community

April 2009



| FIRST SEMESTER  | ABSENT | S    |
|-----------------|--------|------|
| GRADE           | 11     | 6    |
| GRADE           | 9      | 7    |
| GRADE           | 11     | 7    |
| SECOND SEMESTER |        |      |
| GRADE           | ABSENT | TARD |
| 11              | A      |      |
| 9               | A      |      |



Paving Pathways to Educational Success

## OVERVIEW

**"I do not take on battles that can't be won. And I promise you, this is one that we can and must win."**

*—Mayor Michael Nutter*

The merits of a public campaign can rarely be gauged fully in its early months or even in its initial year. Rather, the true measures of a campaign's successes are revealed over time: in its ongoing impacts on opinion or policy, and on the tangible results it achieves. On both accounts, Philadelphia's Project U-Turn campaign continues to make significant progress.

The October 2006 launch of the Project U-Turn campaign generated considerable public attention, and the first year's work produced an impressive set of accomplishments, including hundreds of new seats in alternative education programs, the development of three new innovative high schools for struggling students and former dropouts, and fund-raising efforts that resulted in \$10M in new and leveraged dollars.

Those accomplishments were highlighted at the Project U-Turn Symposium, held at the School District headquarters in November 2007, to commemorate the first anniversary of the campaign. Convened by then Mayor-Elect Nutter, distinguished leaders from the City, School District and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania pledged their support for continuing efforts to resolve the dropout crisis in Philadelphia and in communities across the state.

Project U-Turn's momentum has continued to build in the eighteen months since the first anniversary event:

- In his inaugural address, Mayor Michael Nutter pledged to halve the City's dropout rate in five to seven years, and followed up that commitment by establishing an office of education in the Mayor's office and issuing an extensive education plan that highlighted the importance of dropout prevention and re-engagement.
- School District CEO Dr. Arlene Ackerman opened a Re-Engagement Center for former dropouts at district headquarters with significant staff support from the City of Philadelphia, and embraced research-based strategies for struggling students and out-of-school youth in the School District's strategic plan, released in February 2009.
- Project U-Turn partners collaborated on successful competitive grant applications that produced millions of dollars to support comprehensive high school reform efforts in seven low-performing high schools and created additional alternative education slots for reconnected and delinquent youth.



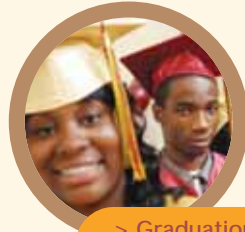
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Highlights of progress since November 2007:

- 1,662 out-of-school youth were referred to educational options.
- 2 new Accelerated High Schools and one new Bridge Program were created.
- The School District established a Re-Engagement Center for former dropouts.
- Partners developed \$42M, available over three years, to support high school-based prevention/re-engagement efforts.
- New research reports were produced that document earnings, employment and fiscal consequences associated with dropping out in Philadelphia.
- Four community summits and one statewide summit were held to build public will to address the dropout crisis.
- Credit recovery programs are now available to more than 3,000 under-credited students.

## [ DATA DASHBOARD ]



> Graduation Rate  
59.7%

Six-year cohort graduation rate for the Class of 2006. (The four-year "on-time" cohort rate for Class of 2006 = 48.9% and for Class of 2008 = 58.7%. The six-year rate for the Class of 2008 to be determined post-June 2010.)



> Multiple Pathways  
3,550

Number of youth in multiple pathways slots as of January 2009.



> On-track to Graduation  
58.4%

Percentage of first-time 9th graders in 2007-08 (Class of 2011) who accumulated 5 or more credits and passed English 9 and Algebra 1.



> Hoping to Go Back  
1,000 +

Number of youth on waiting list for multiple pathways slots as of January 2009.

"The District's 'Imagine 2014' Strategic Plan incorporates key strategies promoted through Project U-Turn. We greatly value this partnership and are confident we will realize our collective vision."

—Superintendent Arlene Ackerman

## PROGRESS SINCE NOVEMBER 2007 IN FOUR KEY CATEGORIES

Based on these and other related successes, the City of Philadelphia is increasingly viewed as a national leader not only in bringing much-needed attention to the dropout crisis, but also – and more importantly – in taking concerted action to resolve it. Despite these recognitions and accomplishments, the hardest work remains before us. Project U-Turn partners recognize that the only successes that really matter are those that produce lasting impact and positive outcomes for our City's young people.

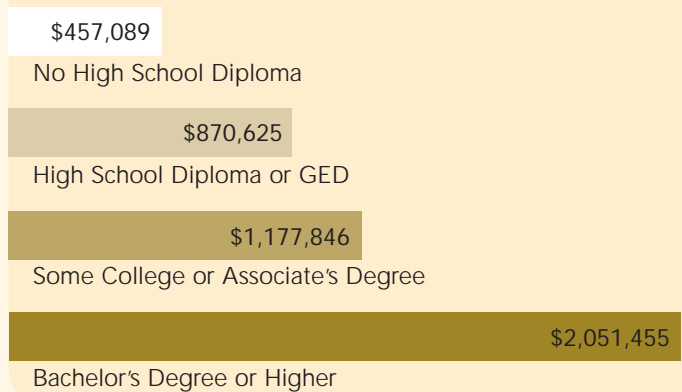
### 1. Expand Resources and Build Public Will

Clearly, the most important contribution to building public will during the last 18 months was Mayor Nutter's decisive and unambiguous commitment in his inaugural address to halve the City's unacceptably high dropout rate in 5-7 years. Heartened by the Mayor's pledge, the Project U-Turn Steering Committee and broader Collaborative re-doubled their efforts, helping to frame clear benchmarks of progress, expand community involvement in the campaign and continue to develop resources to support dropout prevention and re-engagement.

#### Notable progress since November '07

- **Mayoral Leadership.** Building on his commitment to halve the dropout rate, the Mayor appointed Dr. Lori Shorr as his Chief Education Officer, and in Summer 2008 announced his education plan, with prominent attention to dropout prevention and re-engagement. Then, in Fall 2008 the Mayor appointed and convened the Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success, a high-level group of cross-sector leaders, and charged it with advancing his education goals and those of the School District.
- **Data Dashboard.** Working with leading education researchers and policy advocates, the Project U-Turn Steering Committee developed and recommended a "data dashboard," which tracks a set of clear benchmarks to document progress and facilitate regular reporting to the public on the City's efforts to reduce dropouts and increase graduation rates. (See page 2)

#### Expected Lifetime Earnings — by Level of Educational Attainment



Based on data from: Fogg, Harrington, Khatiwada, *The Tax and Transfer Fiscal Impacts of Dropping Out of High School in Philadelphia City and Suburbs*, January 2009. Mean lifetime earnings of 18- to 64-Year Old Civilian Non-Institutional Population (Excluding 18 to 22-year old students) in Philadelphia City, 2006.

- **Research.** Two major research reports focusing on fiscal aspects of dropping out in Philadelphia were completed by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies. These studies document that a high school dropout earns only about half of what a high school graduate earns over a working lifetime, and less than one-quarter that of a four-year degree-holder. Furthermore, the benefits to government revenues of converting a single Philadelphia high school dropout to a high school graduate exceed \$500,000 over a working lifetime.
- **Public Awareness.** The Project U-Turn Collaborative planned and carried out four "Turning it Around" Community Dropout Prevention/ Re-Engagement Summits, sponsored by America's Promise. Held in neighborhoods across Philadelphia, the summits offered opportunities for community members to learn more about the crisis, and to express



#### Turning-it-Around Summits — Lead Planning Agencies

**North: Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network and Nu Sigma Youth Services** [March 29, 2008 at Benjamin Franklin High School]

**Southwest: Southwest E<sup>3</sup> Center and Young Leadership Connectors Project** [April 5, 2008 at Bartram High School]

**South: Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-Violence Network, Diversified Community Services, United Communities of Southeast Pennsylvania, Eastern Pennsylvania Organization Project and Wordsworth Beacon Center** [May 22, 2008 at Barrett Middle School, Beacon Center]

**Eastern North: Eastern North Philadelphia Youth Services Coalition** [May 17, 2008 at St. Boniface]

their points of view about needed action. The cause of public awareness and engagement was also promoted by Public Citizens for Children and Youth, which held a series of public forums and issued several briefing papers on key issues relating to Project U-Turn priorities.



- **Youth Voice.** Few voices are more powerful than those of young people who can speak plainly and persuasively about their hopes and aspirations. The Philadelphia Youth Network's Youth Ambassadors, a corps of talented young people who advise the Council for College and Career Success and provide a cogent youth voice on issues that impact young people, has expanded to include formerly disconnected youth who are now enrolled in alternative education programs and back on track for graduation.

- **National Leadership.** The Project U-Turn Steering Committee hosted several national meetings of practitioners and policy makers interested in learning about Philadelphia's progress in addressing the needs of struggling students and out-of-school youth. These gatherings were organized by Jobs for the Future, the Youth Transition Funders Group, the National League of Cities and the American Youth Policy Forum, and brought together hundreds of leaders from communities all across the country.

## 2. Increase the Quantity of High-Quality Education Options

The School District of Philadelphia, under new leadership from Dr. Arlene Ackerman, continued its strong support for the goals and principles of Project U-Turn. Furthermore, the Project U-Turn Steering Committee was actively involved in several visible efforts to develop and increase the availability of high-quality options for struggling students and out-of-school youth.

### *Notable progress since November '07*

- **Comprehensive High School Reform.** Underscoring Philadelphia's national leadership in dropout prevention and re-engagement and the quality of its interventions on behalf of the City's disconnected young people, the U.S. Department of Labor awarded competitive grants totaling \$42M over three years to the School District to institute major education reforms in seven comprehensive high schools.

- **Institutionalizing Support for Multiple Pathways.** Based on a reorganization process led by Dr. Ackerman, the School District formally established the Department of Multiple Pathways to Graduation, providing it with staff, an operating budget and a mandate to develop increasing numbers of high-quality educational options for the School District's young people.

- **Support for Prevention and Recovery in Strategic Planning.** As a part of the School District's strategic planning process, the Graduation 2014 work group was convened to identify strategies to increase high school graduation rates and to ensure that dropout prevention and recovery are integral components of the School District's broader high school reform efforts.

- **Expanding Educational Options and Capacity.** With support from a variety of community partners, the School District prepared and released a new Request for Proposals that will direct funds toward research-based education programs and services for struggling students and out-of-school youth. This

process is expected to significantly increase and diversify the availability of high-quality education options for Philadelphia students.

- **Advocacy and Development.** Led by Public Citizens for Children and Youth, Project U-Turn partners actively campaigned for Governor Rendell's new basic education formula and funding request, designed to address funding gaps identified by the Commonwealth's Costing-Out Study. Project U-Turn partners also helped to organize a press conference with the Mayor, Dr. Ackerman and leading City employers to express strong support for the Governor's education proposals. Furthermore, with support from the Knight Foundation and leadership from the Workforce Development Subcommittee of the former Philadelphia Youth Council (now known as the Philadelphia Council for College and Career Success) a report and recommendations for strengthening Career and Technical Education in the School District of Philadelphia was completed with key recommendations focusing on struggling students and out-of-school youth.

- **Bridge and Literacy Programs.** With funding from the U.S. Department of Labor, a network of Bridge Literacy Transition programs has been implemented. Three Workforce Investment Act funded programs administered by Youth Empowerment Services, Indochinese American Council and Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition respectively, in addition to a Bridge program located at E<sup>3</sup> Center West, were created to provide literacy instruction, social service support, and an array of enrichment, skill and credit-bearing opportunities to youth. These programs fulfill a critical system need by helping youth prepare for successful entry into a diploma- or GED-granting education pathway.

### 3. Educate the Hardest-to-Serve Youth

The Project U-Turn Steering Committee insisted on a specific goal focused on educating the hardest-to-serve youth not only because they are particularly at-risk, but also because it might be possible to demonstrate overall improvements in dropout and graduation rates while still failing to meet the needs of our most vulnerable young people.

#### *Notable progress since November '07*

- **DHS Education Office.** The Department of Human Services is working to create an education advocacy office, designed to monitor the educational progress of students in Philadelphia's public care systems, and to serve as advocates for them in their efforts to achieve academically.
- **New Small High Schools.** With support from two competitive grants won from the U.S. Department of Labor in 2007, the School District opened North Philadelphia Community High School, a new small school serving 100 out of school youth and the Open Door Academy serving 100 youth returning from delinquent placement facilities.
- **A Focus on Low-Income Teens.** Research shows that teenagers in households receiving TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) are particularly at-risk for negative academic outcomes. Therefore, the Philadelphia Youth Network is directing youth development funding, made available by the PA Department of Public Welfare to Pennsylvania's Workforce Investment Boards, increasingly to programs that serve these vulnerable young people.



- **Supports for Teen Parents.** Public Citizens for Children and Youth, with funding through Project U-Turn, issued several briefing papers on teens' need for child care. Although there are still waiting lists for child care, Project U-Turn was able to secure state agreement to have a child care subsidy set-aside for teens to return to school.
- **Increased Accountability.** Through the new alternative education RFP, new provisions were put into place to ensure oversight and accountability for outside providers of disciplinary and accelerated schools.
- **Targeting Funding Where it is Needed Most.** The School District is currently planning budgetary options for the 2010 school year to establish differentiated funding levels for students with varying needs, with the goal of instituting a "funds follow students" model that would provide more resources to schools serving students with the greatest needs.



- **Increased attention to counseling needs of youth.** The District's Imagine 2014 Strategic Plan calls for reducing the student-counselor ratio in all District high schools. Additionally, the District plans to support students by ensuring an adult advocate for each student returning to school from disciplinary or juvenile placement or former dropout with a particular focus on college preparation and planning and the creation of individualized graduation plans for each ninth grader.
- **Easing transitions from delinquent placement.** Project U-Turn partners collaborated to improve the alignment between the schools at delinquent residential facilities and the District, and to improve the re-engagement process for youth returning to District schools from delinquent residential placement.
- **Further Research.** The Philadelphia Education Fund, with support from Project U-Turn, designed a survey of pregnant and parenting teens to better understand their educational experience and how it relates to the availability, breadth, efficacy, and use of school- and community- based services and resources. The results of the survey, which is currently being administered, will be used to inform policy and programmatic interventions to support the educational attainment of this target population.

#### 4. Reduce the Number of Dropouts and Increase Graduation Rates

Of course, the bottom line for the Mayor, the School District and Project U-Turn partners is that Philadelphia continue to make progress in increasing the numbers and percentages of students who graduate prepared for college and careers.

- **Focus on At-Risk Ninth Graders.** Consistent with research concerning key transitions and early dropout predictors, in Fall 2008 the School District implemented a new policy to identify and focus on students who are repeating or are over-age in ninth grade to get them back on track for graduation. In addition, the District's new Strategic Plan includes a commitment to using the "early warning indicators" of dropout at key student transition points between 6th and 9th grade
- **Summer Transition Programming.** Even for first-time ninth graders without any signs of academic challenge, the larger and more anonymous high school environment and its increased academic rigor can be challenging. To provide for a more seamless transition, the School District is developing a summer bridge program for up to 2,500 rising ninth graders to help them become acclimated to their new school environments and to understand more fully the expectations of high school.
- **Opportunities for Re-Engagement.** Since its opening in May 2008, the School District of Philadelphia's Re-Engagement Center, which provides a one-stop resource for former dropouts desiring to return to school, has provided services to 1,662 young people.

- **Coordinating Truancy Efforts.** Representatives from the District, the Department of Human Services, the Courts and other agencies are reviewing and rethinking the truancy prevention and reduction system in Philadelphia. The result will be a coordinated and focused system that will provide consistent support and strategically targeted interventions to keep students in school and on-track for graduation.
- **Heeding Early Warnings.** The Philadelphia Education Fund, Johns Hopkins University, City Year Greater Philadelphia and Communities in Schools of Philadelphia are collaborating on an Early Warning Indicator Project at the Feltonville School of Arts and Sciences to track individual student data for warning signs of dropping out and ensure appropriate and targeted interventions based on the specific indicators. This full implementation model may be expanded in 2009-2010.



The Project U-Turn Steering Committee and Collaborative are proud of the campaign's continuing successes and, despite the challenges of the current economic climate, we remain optimistic about our ability to make progress in the months and years to come. Our confidence is based on several overriding factors:

- > The *Council for College and Career Success* will continue to grow and mature as a leadership body with the potential to bring strong political support to the goals of the Mayor and the School District.
- > The *School District's Strategic Plan* will roll out in ways that will continue to support and expand multiple pathways options for School District students.
- > *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act* funding (commonly referred to as "stimulus" dollars) will provide major infusions of funding – albeit short-term – that will bring benefits for the City's workforce system and the School District, enabling both to expand investments in programs and services for struggling students and out-of-school youth.
- > *Multiple Pathways expansion*, which is likely to be made possible by the School District's recent RFP process, promises the creation of significantly more seats in high-quality educational programming, providing new opportunities and hope for thousands of the City's disconnected young people.

Beyond the specifics of a particular strategy or approach, we believe that the demonstrated commitment by the leaders now in place throughout the City will ensure that the issues of struggling students and out-of-school youth continue to be visible – not merely as peripheral points of interest to a few constituents – but rather as central elements in the continuing conversation about how best to position our City and its citizens for social and economic well-being now and in the future.



## PROJECT U-TURN COLLABORATIVE

### Steering Committee:

Center for Literacy  
 Center for Social Organization of Schools at  
 The Johns Hopkins University  
 City of Philadelphia, Mayor's Office of Education,  
 Department of Human Services and Department of  
 Recreation  
 Congreso de Latinos Unidos  
 Eastern Pennsylvania Organizing Project  
 Family Division, Court of Common Pleas  
 Nu Sigma Youth Services / Philadelphia Anti-Drug/Anti-  
 Violence Network  
 Pennsylvania Academic and Career Technical Training  
 Alliance  
 Public 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  
 Youth Empowerment Services

### Participating Members:

Catholic Human Services- Archdiocese of Philadelphia  
 Ceiba  
 Children's Aid Society of Pennsylvania  
 City Year Greater Philadelphia  
 Cookman Methodist Church  
 Communities in Schools of Philadelphia  
 Community College of Philadelphia  
 Community Education Partners  
 Community Women's Education Project  
 District 1199C  
 Diversified Community Services  
 E<sup>3</sup> Centers  
 Eastern North Philadelphia Youth Services Coalition  
 Educating Communities for Parenting  
 Education Law Center  
 Fairhill Community School  
 Foundations, Inc.  
 Free Library of Philadelphia  
 The Gay and Lesbian Latino AIDS Education Initiative  
 Greater Philadelphia Federation of Settlements  
 Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition  
 Indo-Chinese American Council  
 Juvenile Law Center  
 Lutheran Settlement House  
 Maternity Care Coalition  
 Mayor's Commission on Literacy  
 North Light Community Center  
 Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America  
 Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children  
 Pennsylvania School for the Deaf  
 Philadelphia Academies, Inc.  
 Philadelphia Health Management Corporation  
 Philadelphia Housing Authority  
 Philadelphia Opportunities Industrialization Center  
 Point Breeze Performing Arts Center  
 Public/Private Ventures  
 Resources for Human Development  
 Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Associations Coalition  
 Support Center for Child Advocates  
 Temple University  
 To Our Children's Future with Health  
 United Communities of Southeast Philadelphia  
 The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania  
 YouthBuild Philadelphia Charter School



1-877-TURN-180  
[www.projectUturn.net](http://www.projectUturn.net)

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Photographs featured in this report were taken at the E<sup>3</sup> Power Centers Graduation on June 28, 2007, the Project U-Turn Anniversary Symposium on November 27, 2007, and the North Turning-It-Around Summit on March 29, 2008.