

Promise Neighborhoods: Wrapping Communities around Schools

A strong and vibrant Michigan requires children who are educated, healthy and ready to enter the workforce. Yet, a half a million children in Michigan live in poverty and less than one third of fourth graders are proficient in math and only 3 out of 10 students are proficient in reading¹. These children lack the opportunity and resources to achieve their full potential. The challenges facing these children are tough, and no quick fix exists. Multi-faceted approaches are needed so that all children have access to resources that ensure that they are healthy, their families are strong, and they live in safe homes and supportive neighborhoods.

Promise Neighborhoods seek to create a comprehensive pipeline of educational and community supports to make certain children reach their full potential. The Promise Neighborhood program is a powerful, community-based model that encompasses *shared* goals explicitly framed around educational outcomes that prepare young people for post-secondary studies and living-wage work. Education is the single most effective way to end the cycle of inter-generational poverty. Being prepared for college and career is the key to earning a living wage and entering (and staying in) the middle class. Data show that a college graduate can earn 75 percent more than a high school graduate and over twice as much as someone who fails to make it even that far². And, as the current tough times demonstrate, in a recession those with less than a high school degree lose jobs at dramatically higher rates (2x) than those with a high school degree and (10x) those with a college degree.

What is the Promise Neighborhoods Program?

Promise Neighborhoods, established under the legislative authority of the Fund for the Improvement of Education Program (FIE), provides funding to support schools, community based agencies and universities that are working to improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children in distressed communities, including urban neighborhoods, rural areas and American Indian tribes.

The promise Neighborhood program focuses on the following goals:

- Improving academic success and life outcomes for poor children
- Creating a college-going culture in poor neighborhoods
- Building a continuum of academic programs from the cradle through college and career
- Integrating existing programs in neighborhoods, filling gaps, and breaking down agency silos
- Sustaining and replicating what works

¹ KidsCount in Michigan Data Book 2009

² Howard, D. & Stone, N. (2009). Realizing the Promise of Promise Neighborhoods. The Bridgespan Group.

- Building capacity in local communities by supporting a lead organization that collaborates with local governments and others to deliver effective programs
- Undertaking rigorous evaluation to measure progress towards improving the life prospects of poor children.

The Promise Neighborhoods program was inspired by the Harlem Children's Zone nonprofit model. The goal is to replicate the model in 20 cities across the country. The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ)³ is a New York City-based nonprofit that has developed a holistic approach to combating intergenerational poverty that includes the provision of a comprehensive set of academic programs, and family and community supports designed to dramatically improve students' academic outcomes.

The HCZ Project currently serves more than 10,000 children within a 97 block radius. The HCZ Project annual budget for FY 2009 was \$64 million, or an average of \$3,500 per participant (adults and children) or \$5,000 per child.

Among the results of the HCZ model to date:

- 100% of third graders at Promise Academies tested at or above grade level on the math exam, outperforming their peers in New York State, New York City, District 5, and black and white students throughout the state.
- Of the 161 four-year-olds entering the Harlem Gems in the 2008-2009 school year, 17% had a school readiness classification of delayed or very delayed. By the end of the test, there were no students "very delayed" and the percentage of "advanced" had gone from 33.5% to 65.2%, with another 8.1% at "very advanced," up from only 2%.
- 197 high school students were accepted into college for the 2009-2010 year, representing 90% of HCZ high-school seniors.

Over 300 organizations across the country submitted applications for Promise Neighborhoods planning grants including: 260 community based agencies; 62 institutions of higher education; and 17 from other sectors including tribal nations, cities, and municipalities. The vast majority of the applicants (270) focused on improving urban communities, while 48 targeted rural areas.

Clearly the interest far outweighs available resources. The \$10 million currently available in first-year funding for Promise Neighborhoods will support up to 20 organizations with one year grants of up to \$500,000 to plan for the implementation of cradle-to-career services designed to improve educational outcomes for students in distressed neighborhoods. These planning grants were intended as the first step in a multiyear process. President Obama's fiscal 2011 budget proposal included \$210 million to support five-year grants for implementation as well as support for planning grants in additional communities. The House recommended only \$60 million for Promise Neighborhood work and most recently, the Senate HELP Committee approved just \$20 million in their version of the budget for this work, well below the \$210 million that the President proposed.

³ <http://www.hcz.org/images/stories/HCZ%20White%20Paper.pdf>

How is the Promise Neighborhoods Project Impacting Michigan?

Seventeen applications for the project came from Michigan and represent proposals that serve Antrim, Berrien, Genesee, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Kent, Lake, Macomb, Newaygo, Oakland, Saginaw, Washtenaw, and Wayne counties. Five applications came from the Detroit area. Fourteen of the applications came from neighborhoods led by community based organizations and three were from institutions of higher education.

How can you support Promise Neighborhoods?

- ✓ **Make sure that your U.S. Congressman and Senators know that they need to support funding for the Promise Neighborhoods program at the President's proposed funding level of \$210 million in the 2011 budget.** Members of Congress are now on a brief summer recess and are working in the district now through September 12th. It's extremely important that all members of Congress, especially those on the appropriations subcommittees responsible for the Department of Education budget, hear from you. All members of congress will ultimately vote on the 2011 budget, so even if your members of Congress are not on the appropriations committees, it's important for them to hear from you.
- ✓ **If you are not able to contact your elected official while they are home, contact the Capitol switchboard at 202-225-3121. They can connect you to your Federal Legislator's office.**
- ✓ **Need help figuring out who your federal and state legislators are?** Please visit <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/state/main/?state=MI&view=myofficials>

What is the Message?

- Express to your policymakers that there is a strong demand for and a great need to fully fund the Promise Neighborhoods at \$210 million in the FY 2011 budget to improve school achievement and community conditions in poor neighborhoods.
- The Promise Neighborhood model uses evidence-based methods that are proven to increase graduation rates and college access for students enrolled in high poverty and low performing school districts.
- The Promise Neighborhood program is one of few opportunities that fosters cooperation and collaboration among schools and other youth serving organizations to improve outcomes for children. Michigan needs your help make Promise Neighborhoods a reality for our state.

For more information on current advocacy efforts that impact vulnerable children and families, visit Michigan's Children's website at <http://www.michiganschildren.org>, and for more information on the Promise Neighborhoods Initiative, visit the Promise Neighborhood Institute at Policylink at <http://www.promiseneighborhoodsinstitute.org/>