

Catch the Hope, Detroit —
An excellent school for every student

**EXCELLENT
SCHOOLS
DETROIT**
100 Talon Centre Dr.
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Detroit, MI 48207

Imagine ...

90% of students graduate from high school

90% go to college or quality career training

90% are ready to succeed without remediation

and every child is in an excellent school.



Bold? Yes.

**Possible? Yes ... but
only with your help.**

**EXCELLENT
SCHOOLS
DETROIT**

TAKING OWNERSHIP: OUR PLEDGE TO EDUCATE ALL OF DETROIT'S CHILDREN

Our coalition is a diverse group, made up of people with different backgrounds, experiences, and political perspectives. We also are united. We are united in:

- ◆ Our belief that all children can learn at high levels.
- ◆ Our commitment to make sure that all Detroit children receive an excellent education.
- ◆ Our outrage at the academic catastrophe that we have let happen.
- ◆ Our conviction that Detroit must take bold and dramatic steps to ensure that every single student is in a high-quality school.
- ◆ Our optimism that Detroit is uniquely positioned to become the first major city in the United States to fulfill this pledge.

Only 3 percent of Detroit's 4th graders and 4 percent of its 8th graders meet national math standards; experts say that Detroit students could have done about the same if they'd just guessed on the test. Only 2 percent of the city's high school students are prepared for college-level math and 11 percent for college-level reading.

Enough. It is time to do better.

Ensuring every child has access to an excellent school is a moral imperative and economic necessity ... for them and for us.

Our goals: By 2020, Detroit will be the first major U.S. city in which 90 percent of students graduate from high school, 90 percent enroll in college or a quality postsecondary training program, and 90 percent of enrollees are prepared to succeed without needing remediation. For students to be able to compete in the 21st century, quality education beyond high school is a necessity.

To ensure that the city's students are on track for high school graduation and college and career success, we need to make sure they are making progress every step of the way ... ready for kindergarten ... reading and doing grade-level math by 3rd grade ... leaving middle school with the knowledge, skills, and work habits to succeed in 9th grade.

Our citywide education plan is designed to help all children, whether they happen to attend a traditional public school, public charter school, or independent school. Every Detroit child should be attending an excellent school, period.

We are inspired by schools where students are engaged, enthusiastic, learning, and optimistic about their futures. There are dozens of schools like these in Detroit and hundreds of them across the country. We need many more of them. And we are collectively committed to reaching that goal. The children are counting on us.

Please join us.

Excellent Schools Detroit represents a broad and diverse cross section of Detroit's education, government, civic and community, parent, organized labor, and philanthropic leaders who are committed to ensuring that all Detroit children receive the great education they deserve.

- Mayor Dave Bing and Sue Carnell, City of Detroit
- Clarke Durant, Cornerstone Schools
- Ralph C. Bland, NEW PARADIGM FOR EDUCATION and Detroit Edison Public School Academy
- Sharlonda Buckman, Detroit Parent Network*
- Robert C. Bobb, Barbara Byrd Bennett, and Robert Boik, Detroit Public Schools
- Sandy Baruah and Greg Handel, Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Rip Rapson and Wendy Jackson, Kresge Foundation
- C. David Campbell, McGregor Fund
- Louis Glazer, Michigan Future, Inc.
- Shirley R. Stancato and David Gamlin, New Detroit
- Doug Ross, New Urban Learning
- Carol Goss, Tonya Allen, and Kristen McDonald, The Skillman Foundation
- Daniel S. Varner, Think Detroit PAL
- Michael J. Brennan, Michael Tenbusch, and Kelly Major Green, United Way for Southeastern Michigan
- Sterling K. Speirn and Gregory B. Taylor, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

** Organizational name used for reference only.*

MANY STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO ...

Detroit students score far below the Michigan average on the state's tests, which are comparatively low level to begin with. Worse, the city's students posted the lowest scores in the history of the more challenging National Assessment of Educational Progress. Only 58 percent of DPS students and 78 percent of charter school students graduate from high school in four years. Fewer than one in four enrolls in college. And miniscule percentages of Detroit's high school students are prepared for college-level math and reading.

... AND SOME ALREADY ARE SHOWING THE WAY

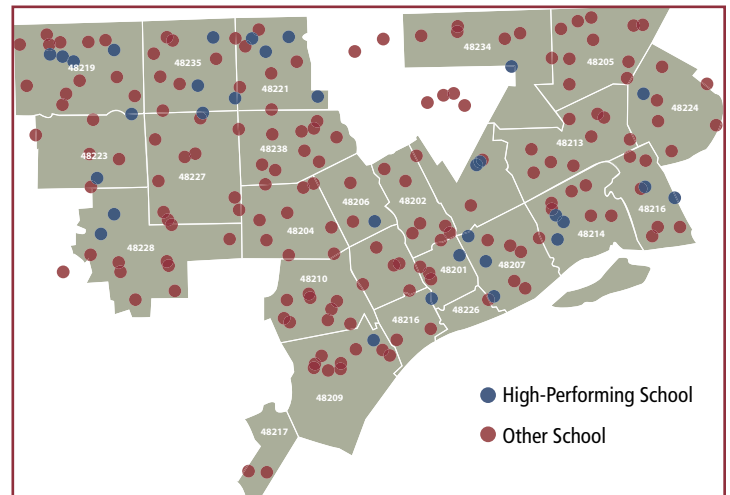
The good news is that there are high-performing schools throughout the city, at least 32 of them according to the Skillman Foundation's *2008 Good Schools Guide*. Schools with high percentages of low-income students such as:

- ♦ Garvey Academy, where all 3rd graders meet or exceed state standards in reading and math and 89 percent of 8th graders do so in math.
- ♦ Carstens Elementary, where 98 percent of 3rd graders meet or exceed state standards in reading and 95 percent do so in math.
- ♦ Clippert Academy, where 76 percent of 8th graders meet or exceed state standards in reading and math.

- ♦ University Prep High School, where 100 percent of students graduated in June 2008 and 94 percent of that class went on to college (71 percent to four-year colleges).
- ♦ Communication and Media Arts High School, where 98 percent of low-income students graduate in four years and go on to college or postsecondary education.

Schools such as these provide inspiration and hope. They show what's possible, no matter what social, economic, and emotional challenges children might bring to school. If these schools can help children succeed, we should expect the same from all Detroit's schools.

32 Detroit Schools Are Considered High Performing



Source: Skillman Foundation *2008 Good Schools Guide*

STRATEGY 1: ENFORCE REAL ACCOUNTABILITY

All schools, no matter who controls them, should be held to the same standards of excellence. And parents, students, and the public have the right to know which schools are succeeding and which are not. Our priorities:

- ♦ **Create an independent citywide Standards and Accountability Commission** to establish high, measurable goals for all schools and pre-K programs ... publish easy-to-read annual report cards ... and keep the heat on DPS, charter authorizers, and independent schools to make way for better programs by closing failing ones.
- ♦ **Help parents become “smarter shoppers” and make more informed choices.** The annual report cards will provide a clearer picture of each school's academic performance.
- ♦ **Help build public support for making the mayor accountable for Detroit Public Schools.** He or she would appoint the superintendent/CEO, who would be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the schools, including budgets, staffing, and programs. The School

Board should be disbanded. Students can no longer be the victims of the divided governance that continues to stifle the bold reforms needed for DPS to survive.

STRATEGY 2: CREATE EXCELLENT SCHOOLS FOR EVERY CHILD

We will create many more excellent school choices for students ... and have zero tolerance for schools that, year after year, fail to educate their students. Our priorities:

- ♦ **Build public support for closing the lowest-performing schools and pre-K programs.** By closing, we mean replacing the academic program, not necessarily firing all the staff or shuttering buildings (although some will have to be closed because they have too few students). Closing schools, even when they are not succeeding, is an emotional process. We understand that. But we also believe that the status quo is indefensible. Without dramatic changes, we won't be doing students any favors. And this citywide plan is about them — and their futures.

- ◆ **Help coordinate and speed the opening of 40 new schools by 2015 and 70 by 2020.** To be on track for college and career success, children must have many more quality choices. Successful schools should be rewarded for success and encouraged to expand. Some of these new schools will be in new buildings, others will take over existing buildings, and in some cases multiple schools will occupy the same building (such as the new small schools in Cody and Osborn). Specific initiatives include Michigan Future's High School Accelerator, More Good Schools, the Greater Detroit Education Venture Fund, and efforts by the Detroit Federation of Teachers to open its own school.
- ◆ **Develop a citywide “community schools” initiative.** By partnering with community organizations and city agencies, schools would stay open evenings and weekends and offer health clinics, mental health services, counseling services, adult literacy, and other programs that support children and their families.
- ◆ **Establish a Detroit Leadership Academy to provide the professional training programs that help leaders open new schools and turn around failing ones.**
- ◆ **Mount a major national recruiting campaign to encourage the best school leaders in the city, region, and country to work in Detroit.**
- ◆ **Advocate for the increased school-based autonomy over staffing, budgets, and programs that will make Detroit an attractive place for the best and brightest school leaders to work.** Some public charters already have this kind of flexibility. DPS's new Priority Zone is a significant step in the right direction.
- ◆ **Attract alternative teacher programs,** such as Teach for America, the Woodrow Wilson Michigan Teaching Fellowship Program, or urban residencies that give new teachers much more practical experience before they enter the classroom.

STRATEGY 3: RECRUIT AND DEVELOP THE BEST SCHOOL LEADERS AND TEACHERS

Detroit's growing portfolio of new schools will not be successful unless we can reward, recruit, develop, and keep enough talented principals to lead them and excellent teachers to teach in them. Our priorities:

- ◆ **Identify excellent leaders currently working within Detroit and provide incentives for them to take over the lowest-performing schools.**

THREE ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

The strategies and action steps described above are not meant to be comprehensive; however, we believe they are our strongest levers for change. Clearly, many more improvements will be needed. In particular, our organizations remain committed to supporting innovative approaches in three areas: mobilizing more parents, strengthening community supports, and expanding early education programs.

WHY WE WILL SUCCEED THIS TIME

Detroit has had no shortage of school reform plans. This one is different. First, there is widespread recognition that dramatic changes are needed. Low-skill, high-wage jobs are gone for good, and our schools must catch up with this new reality.

Second, instead of trying to find the silver bullet or two that will fix DPS, we are actively nurturing the expansion of many quality options — including inside DPS.

Third, we do not have to start from scratch. We know how to educate urban children from high-poverty neighborhoods so

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that they can succeed at Harvard and the University of Michigan. Great schools here in Detroit and across the country are doing just that. We need many more of them.

Fourth, this coalition of leadership organizations has united around a single set of education priorities for all city students. Through Excellent Schools Detroit, we can — and will — take many of these actions on our own. Where we don't have direct control, we will work together to build and sustain the political will to pressure others to act.

The children deserve it. Our community's future depends on it.