

EDUCATION DAILY

The education community's independent daily news service

AT-RISK STUDENTS

Official: Shrinking middle class threatens ed outcomes

By Jean Gossman

The Obama administration has repeatedly stressed that high school completion and some form of postsecondary education is the key to a family-sustaining job and middle-class lifestyle. Many educators and policymakers have taken up the point, as well.

At the same time, the continuing economic crisis and impending federal funding sequestration find some observers worried about poor educational prospects for the middle class as well as for disadvantaged groups.

Indeed, sequestration “makes it difficult to anticipate how many people can be served by state and federal programs,” said Glenn Martin, vice president of development and public affairs of the Fortune Society, at a Capitol Hill panel discussion sponsored by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation last week.

When considering policies that support and grow the middle class, “the role of education couldn’t be more important,” U.S. Deputy Secretary of Education Tony Miller told the forum.

“How do we set not just high aspirations, but also high expectations for all kids?” He added, “We need to bring a collective sense of urgency” to educational improvement “because a lot is at stake.”

Miller recounted that his great-grandfather was a slave, and his father was homeless at age 15. He called his education his “own personal building block” to success, along with others “who know how to access” educational opportunities.

“But not enough people, specifically in some of our disadvantaged communities and African-American communities, really understand what’s at stake.”

Million-dollar difference

Persons with a college degree or other postsecondary education are three times more likely to be employed, Miller noted. “I ask students ‘Who values a million dollars?’ All the kids’ hands went up.”

Then he told the students that there is a \$1 million difference in lifetime income between

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Today's Highlights

Vol. 46, No. 33 · Wednesday, February 20, 2013

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Partnerships address barriers to student success

By Adam Dolge

Some students attending neighborhood schools in Cincinnati, Ohio, receive more than just an education at their local schools. They have access to a wide range of services, including mental and physical health care, parent and family supports, mentors, and college access supports, all thanks to the Oyler School Community Learning Center.

It is a program that seeks to improve academics by addressing not only the needs of the students, but also the needs of the community. By offering community partners rent-free space within the school building to conduct their services, the school — which serves students in grades preK-12 — has been transformed into the neighborhood hub.

“It’s been nothing but a gigantic collaboration of a lot of great folks that fill voids that we can’t,” said Craig Hockenberry, principal of Oyler School, during a recent webinar hosted by the Coalition for Community Schools.

Oyler’s program is run through the Community Learning Center Institute, which leads Cincinnati’s community in developing schools as community centers that are financially self-sustained and responsive to the needs and vision of each school and neighborhood. CLCI didn’t break ground over-

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Resource manager coordinates school's community partnerships

The community learning centers, run through the Community Learning Center Institute in Cincinnati, Ohio, all have resource coordinators who manage the partnerships. Jami Luggen, the Oyler School Community Learning Center resource coordinator, came to the role from management in the business world. That expertise gives her an outside perspective on coordinating services for both the partners and the school.

"Coming from the business world, everything was about results — not just feel good stories," she said. "I came in asking questions like 'how do we know we are successful, are you getting feedback from teachers?'"

At first she noticed partners had a very high overview of what was going on in the school, so it was her job to coordinate their efforts and show the direct impact.

"The first step is always a close relationship with the principal," she said. If she discovers a partner isn't

performing well, or a teacher isn't referring a student to one of the CLC's services, she'll have a conversation with the principal and she'll typically take on the conversations with partners and teachers herself.

The ultimate decision on partnerships and the CLC comes down to the Local School Decision Making Committee, which consists of staff, parents, and community members. The group makes the final decision about partnership management.

Members of the CLC are deeply integrated into the neighborhood. Craig Hockenberry, the Oyler School principal, attends all the community meetings, lives in the neighborhood, his kids go to school in the area, he shops locally, and he's made a career decision to stay with the school. He said he'd like the CLC to push further into college and post-graduation assistance, and the school will do that through community partnerships.

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night; instead, it took several years of planning and grants before the group was established to continue the city's work of supporting and promoting CLCs.

Partner integration

Before Oyler established its community learning center, staff, community leaders, administrators, business representatives, and parents got together to look at data and identify what was holding students back from meeting the school's goal of improved academics. Partnerships with community organizations help address those barriers to improved student outcomes.

Following are examples of how the school addressed health issues through its partnerships.

- **School-based health center.** Data showed students were missing school because of illness. "If kids aren't there they aren't learning," Hockenberry said. The CLC worked with the Cincinnati Health Department to create a school-based health center, and now there is a full-time nurse, a nurse's aide, and other workers.

- **Health services work with core academics.** When a child gets sick, he doesn't have to be pulled out of school and can be treated on site. Students aren't allowed to be pulled out of core academics unless it is an emergency, so if a child needs

to see a nurse for a routine checkup or a physical, they can do so first thing in the morning or during physical education, lunch, or a free period.

- **Easy medical follow-ups.** For Dilruba Rahman, a registered nurse who heads the school-based health center, being onsite makes her job a lot easier because her patients are typically all in one place and she can work with teachers and families to get a more complete picture of her patients' health.

- **Affordable health services for the neighborhood.** The health center, which stems from the Cincinnati Health Department, is self-sufficient and patients' insurance companies are billed normally. The clinic also offers a sliding scale and other assistance for families without insurance or those unable to meet the co-pay. Rahman said the clinic will see kids regardless of health insurance. Even if children in the community don't attend the school, they may use the health center.

- **In-house eye clinic.** The school's CLC also has an eye clinic in house. Before, some 150 students would fail the eye exam every year and the school would make a daytrip so those students could receive eye care. Now a partner provides an eye clinic in the school building and just like the health center, students only need to walk down the hall for all their eye care needs.



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Don't just expand preK-3, change K-12 conversations

By Tricia Offutt

Scale and sustainability for preK-3 systems means more than taking good practices and spreading them so they reach more kids, said Kristie Kauerz, research assistant professor for P-3 education policy and leadership at the University of Washington's College of Education.

"We should also think about the spread of ideas, beliefs, values and principles that support this work," she told attendees during the webinar *Scale and Sustainability: Implications for State and District Policy*.

It's also important that there be depth and quality when scaling up, that ownership for preK-3 systems shift to a broader array of individuals, and plans be made for financial stability, she added.

The PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group webinar was the final installation in the *Reducing Achievement Gaps by 4th Grade: The PreK-3rd Approach in Action* series.

Kauerz was joined during the webinar by a panel of preK-3 experts, including Jacqueline Jones, former deputy assistant for policy and early learning at the Education Department. Panelists discussed strategies for thinking broadly about P-3 scale and sustainability at the district, regional, state and federal levels through partnerships, professional development, and smart policies that last long after current advocates and practitioners retire.

- **Rethink policies.** No preschool program alone can ensure success at the end of third grade, so it's important to emphasize policies and practices that support the entire preK-3 continuum, Jones said.

To develop effective preK-3 policies, you have to have a broad perspective yet also get "into the weeds of how you're going to do this," she said.

A primary federal role is continued support of research that studies the effectiveness of various approaches and figures out the most important elements of good, sound programs.

State-level policies also play a big part in improving quality, she said. For example, "The notion of a P-3 credential is a real commitment from a state and influences how programs are set up and how teachers are trained," Jones said.

- **Invest in professional development.** New Jersey's investment in early childhood professional development for administrators and teachers appears to be paying off, said Vincent Costanza, early childhood program specialist for the New Jersey Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Education. The percentage of kindergarten programs in the state that

Bring preK-3 voices to policy table

The preK-3 world need not wait on official policies to wield a major influence, Kristie Kauerz, research assistant professor for P-3 education policy and leadership at the University of Washington's College of Education, told attendees at a recent webinar hosted by the PreK-3rd Grade National Work Group.

For example, preK-3 advocates and educators can:

- Join state early childhood advisory councils, state boards of education, school boards, and city councils to advocate for a preK-3 approach.
- Advocate for more than a "connect-the-dot" approach between Common Core and early learning standards by bringing preK-3 values, such as social and emotional skills development, into the conversation.
- Speak up for half-day kindergarten teachers and children who must tackle Common Core, which is based on the premise of a full-day program.
- Show superintendents and principals the value of a state's early childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System for understanding the quality of programs attended by their incoming students.

are full day rose from around 70 percent to 76 percent in the last few years.

Administrators can attend a four session preK-3 leadership series while kindergarten teachers attend a seminar series. The state also worked to connect preK-3 work to other initiatives that district and school leaders are implementing, such as ASCD's emphasis on a more holistic or "whole child" approach.

- **Seek partnerships.** Collaborations among districts allow you to leverage resources, and bring a "louder voice" to the table when advocating for young learners, said Kimberly Kinzer, director of early learning for Seattle Public Schools, and Lynn Lahey, curriculum specialist for early childhood education for Everett (Wash.) Public Schools. Kinzer and Lahey's districts formed a P-3 Coalition along with Edmonds (Wash.) Public Schools.

The state takes notice of the coalition's suggestions through an advisory work group on Washington's Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills, or WaKIDS. Also, each district brings skills to help the others. Seattle brings expertise on literacy alignment, Everett specializes in observation and data collection tools, and Edmonds offers skill at data analysis. Among other efforts, the districts worked together to address kindergarten transition and develop cross-district training.

Education Department

ED announced dates for SEA data submission

The U.S. Department of Education announced the dates for the submission by state educational agencies of expenditure and revenue data and average daily attendance statistics on ED Form 2447 (the National Public Education Financial Survey) for FY 2012.

The deadline for the final submission of all data, including any revisions to previously submitted data for FY 2011 and FY 2012, is Aug. 15.

Any resubmissions of FY 2011 or FY 2012 data by SEAs in response to requests for clarification, reconciliation, or other inquiries by NCES or the Census Bureau must be completed by Sept. 3.

For more information, see www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-02-04/html/2013-02376.htm.

Resource

NASA launches STEM partnership initiative

Last week, National Aeronautics and Space Administration officials announced the availability of

partnerships on a “no-exchange-of-funds basis” to improve science, technology, engineering and math education efforts both inside and outside the formal classroom.

The agency is accepting responses to an announcement released Feb. 14 calling for information from organizations interested in working with NASA to improve and expand U.S. STEM education.

The opportunity is open from “all categories of domestic groups” that are looking to engage new or broader audiences in STEM education, including reaching traditionally underrepresented student populations in the STEM fields.

Proposals for the High-Impact, National, Strategic STEM Education Partnerships will be accepted through Dec. 31, 2014. NASA is holding an informational conference call on the initiative on March 27 from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. EST. Prospective respondents are requested to submit any questions in writing to NASAEdPartners@nasa.gov no later than March 21.

For details on accessing the conference call, or for more information on the partnerships, see <http://go.nasa.gov/VgRZYt>.

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those who have completed high school and those with a college degree.

K-12 stakeholders have also noted that education is vital for civic involvement, and Miller remarked on this as well.

“It’s not just about economic participation, as critical as that is — it’s about being part of a vibrant democracy, where you can make change in your own communities. It takes [an education] to do that.” Education is also necessary for parents “to give the gift that keeps on giving” and perpetuate learning, Miller added.

“The research is pretty clear that if one or more parent in a household has gone to college, the likelihood that children in that household [will graduate from college] is dramatically higher.” He also pointed out that the opposite is true, where children of high school dropouts are more likely to drop out themselves.

“If you look at the state of [education] in our country today, it’s not delivering enough high quality education to all students, particularly disadvantaged students.”

Miller emphasized the administration’s “cradle-to-career” education framework, including the proposal for universal pre-K announced by President Obama in his State of the Union address. He said the administration was supporting states by providing incentives and promoting high standards, and called on educators to

improve student engagement with curricula that can make college and career relatable.

“We can’t make kids ready for kindergarten, close the achievement gap through high school, and then not be able to capture that last step to real attainment of 21st century skills, which means some kind of higher education,” but not necessarily a bachelor’s degree, Miller said. “To make a more informed choice,” he encouraged families to look at “what colleges offer the greatest bang for the buck” by using the college cost scorecard also announced in the State of the Union address.

But in the last 40 years, the nation’s income disparity has widened, and the middle class is smaller, adversely impacting the direct relationship between higher parental education and income levels and greater advantages and outcomes such as preschool and postsecondary education for their children, according to Aixa Cintron-Velez, a senior program officer with the Russell Sage Foundation.

In Philadelphia, the federal Head Start program is sited in public schools, and “it is probably going to go” under funding cutbacks, said Vivian Gadsden, director of the University of Pennsylvania Center on Fathers and Families.

She added that the State of the Union address suggests that early childhood education is valued by the administration, yet funding cuts shows that “societal contradictions” are “inherent and embedded.”