



## Capital City My Brother's Keeper Breakout Session Overview

### Early Literacy Highlights

#### *Issues*

- Early literacy starts well before formal education does. Parents need to have literacy skills and need to be connected to/engaged in the child's school experience.
- Parents that are not fluent in English will have difficult time being engaged in child's school experience.
- Lead poisoning is a significant issue in the city that affects early literacy and early education overall.
- Libraries need to be re-introduced as larger part of learning experience.

#### *Objectives*

- Offer one hour of after school assistance to children struggling on reading.
- Discuss the possibilities of public - private ventures to help children read.
- Create weekend opportunities to read.
- Creating avenues that deliberately deliver literacy related information to parents where they are.
- Desire to develop a strategic, comprehensive plan and understand what is out there before any long-term goals or objectives can be set.
- A parallel process is needed to develop both parents and children's skills in literacy.

#### *Action Items*

- Create parent focus groups (or some other method of outreach) that will allow people to understand what barriers parents face and how to best support them.
- Replication of successful summer programs and other summer programs that address reading loss.
- Isles committed to helping schools address lead poisoning.
- Mentorship programs that connect kids one-to-one with a mentor.
- Young Scholars' Institute committed to helping parents understand their role in literacy.



- Examine what is being done and taught during the school day to understand how it can be complemented.
- Encourage prominent Trenton school alumni to read to children regularly.
- Community celebration centered around Trenton Makes Words.



## Chronic Absenteeism Highlights

### *Issues*

- Sometimes parents do not think school is important, or are having issues that do not allow them to regularly bring child to school/check in on their attendance.
- Families do not have well developed relationships with their schools. Parents need to be incentivized to take part in sharing that will help address absenteeism. The people you need to hear from the most don't participate.
- Parents who cannot speak English are hardest to reach.
- School curriculum needs to be made more engaging and culturally relevant for students. Doorway to Hope found that kids were hungry, felt unsafe, disengaged, and unmotivated. Cultural relevance is particularly important for students of color.
- Absenteeism is particularly bad at beginning of school year, during winter, and at the end of the school year, with during winter being the worst of the three.
- People are not accountable for kids – if someone sees kids out during the school day, they need to say something.
- Kids have difficulty getting to school in terms of transportation, on top of other issues they may have keeping them from school.

### *Objectives*

- Address problems that originate with parents – establishing importance of school, potential mental health or substance abuse issues.
- Offer incentives for parents to participate in focus groups or other methods that will help schools and community better address absenteeism.
- Ensure that there is an outlet to reach parents who don't speak English.
- Make curriculum culturally relevant to children of color.
- Explore the opportunity to expand community schools and other methods of bringing resources to schools.
- Review transportation related policies to make it easier for kids to get to school.
- Ensure kids are healthy and not missing school for health related reasons.

### *Action Items*

- Survey parents about behaviors related to absenteeism through focus groups.



- Teach students specifically about major groups and people relevant to people of color.
- Center for Supportive Schools – research opportunities for culturally relevant curriculum.
- Identify Safe Corridors to School opportunities.
- Young Men Leadership academy to provide mentoring for students, same for Seeds Male Mentor Program.
- Boys and Girls Club keystone club.
- NJ Association of School Resource officers to help with anti – bullying to make kids feel safe at school.



## Employability Highlights

### *Issues*

- Employers are not aware of various incentives/requirements related to hiring people living in Trenton or those in re - entry.
- Lack of jobs, but also lack of jobs that pay well enough. Not only for young adults but also teenagers.
- Not enough employers accepting and willing to work with people who have a record.
- Kids and young adults do not have basic social skills that allow them to be ready for even most basic jobs.
- Lack of mentors for those who have been recently placed in a job to provide them support.
- School system is not appealing to kids, starting early in education. Sets stage for dropping out and low academic achievement.
- Parents do not know how to teach their kids as supplement to school system; regarding basic life skills.
- There is no one place for youth to seek services, and it is also not taken to them. Services are disparate.
- Council providing CDBG funding not holding organizations accountable.
- Existing drug laws are huge obstacle for people.
- Much more to say - time restrictions did not permit full conversation.
- Databases about jobs and information accessibility still an issue - need to determine how databases can reach people.
- No Trenton specific data on employment figures for young men in re - entry.

### *Objectives*

- Create a one stop shop and complete environmental scan to truly understand what is already available in Trenton when it comes to employability and re - entry.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for young men, especially those who need support when just starting a job.
- Advocate to change laws around drugs and expungement.



- Take re – entry and employability to the schools to make it easier to reach people. Also go through the streets to actually reach people who need to be reached. Can't wait for people to come to you.
- Create community wide action plan on re – entry and employability.
- Community education centers and halfway houses need to teach the social skills related to getting and remaining employed before anything else.
- Create space for mentoring and life skills.
- Inform local businesses about what it means to and the impact of hiring local people.
- Explain to businesses how they can hire someone in re – entry and how to best keep them employed.

#### *Action Items*

- Make available databases more accessible to the public related to jobs and availability of services.
- Create plan that will provide framework for how organizations should collaborate to work on this issue.
- Trenton City Council will review how they hold organizations who received CDBG funding responsible for performance.