

STATE SENATOR • HANSEN CLARKE • 1ST DISTRICT

# Clarke Press Release

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## **Education Reform Proposal to Transform Failing Detroit Public Schools**

Senator Clarke proposes the following reforms for those schools in the district that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act for five consecutive years and are in Phase 4 reorganization, to be implemented by the next academic year beginning in September, 2009:

**Curriculum Reform.** Convert failing schools into small, student-centered schools based on the model of University Preparatory Academy in Detroit;

**Student Incentives.** Implement a program of financial incentives for students based on their performance in five core classes essential to graduation: English, math, social studies, science and physical education.

The student incentives program will mirror similar programs currently in use in Chicago, Washington D.C. and New York City, which were developed by Harvard economist and school reform expert, Roland Fryer;

**Teacher Incentives.** Implement a system of incentive pay for teachers based on parameters such as attaining certification in hard-to-staff subject areas, improving student achievement, engaging in professional development and mentoring;

Senator Clarke proposes the following reforms for all Detroit Public Schools, regardless of their status under the No Child Left Behind Act:

**Community Use of Buildings.** Create policies and procedures, by legislation and otherwise, that promote the use of school facilities and grounds as community meeting places, recreation centers, locations for health and social services and municipal programs and libraries. Policies and procedures should be geared to preserving school buildings and facilities, including the reopening of closed schools, and should embody the concept of DPS schools as the center of the community.

Special emphasis should be given to encouraging the use of school facilities as places for job training programs geared toward training parents in skills needed for available, hard-to-fill jobs in the Detroit area.

**Extended School Calendar.** Alter the school year to include more instructional time by instituting an extended, year-round, academic calendar and by extending the school day by several hours.

These reforms should serve as a model for improving other school districts across the State of Michigan. Senator Clarke will call for a summit of business leaders, parents, students and educators to discuss his proposals and build consensus around a reform plan to be in place by September, 2009.

Details follow in the attached Proposal.

## **Education Reform Proposal to Transform Failing Detroit Public Schools**

**Senator Hansen Clarke**

### **P R O P O S A L   D E T A I L S**

Senator Clarke proposes the following reforms for those schools in the district that have failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for five consecutive years and are in Phase 4 reorganization, to be implemented by the next academic year beginning in September, 2009:

#### **I. Curriculum reform**

***Proposal: to convert failing Detroit public schools that are in Phase 4 reorganization into small, student-centered schools based on the model of University Preparatory Academy in Detroit.***

**A. General Background.** University Preparatory Academy in Detroit is a Big Picture School. The Big Picture Company is a nonprofit whose mission is to encourage school reform throughout the country by developing small, student-centered schools based on the model that its founders first developed in Rhode Island at the Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (called the "Met Center").

University Prep schools in Detroit were the first schools launched on that model and they are the largest of any Big Picture site.

Now more than 36 schools exist in 16 cities and 12 states. Big Picture staff provides support to the schools through site-based coaching, videoconferencing and fundraising support.

#### **B. Program Details.**

**1. Small schools with small class sizes.** Schools range in size from 125 to 500 students, with small class sizes of 15 to 16 students per class.

Documented benefits of small class sizes are better student attendance, lower dropout

rates, less violence, stronger test scores, higher graduation rates, higher rates of college enrollment, and higher teacher satisfaction.

**2. Relationship-based learning.** Students are placed in a homeroom (their main class) whose members stay together throughout their years at each school. Students build strong bonds with the homeroom teacher.

Students also enter into long-term internships with adult mentors from the workplace or community.

Documented benefits of relationship-based learning include increased student self-identity and motivation.

**3. Individualized learning plans/project based learning.** An annual learning plan is created for each student tailored to his or her skill level, learning style, maturity and interests. There is no one-size-fits-all curricula or textbook.

Individualized learning allows for an initial focus on student strengths and interests, increasing chances the student will build self-confidence and be motivated to succeed.

The plan involves traditional subjects such as language arts, mathematics and science.

Efforts will be made to coordinate with local juvenile justice programs to create learning plans for delinquent youth that will address their particular needs.

**4. College preparatory.** The program avoids tracking students into vocational training programs.

**5. Community partnership.** The schools team up with universities, cultural institutions, businesses, government and community organizations in developing core curriculum and identity-building activities, not just add-on programs.

This aspect of the curriculum is called "Learning through Internships" where students spend part of their school week working in business, professional and civic organizations with adult mentors, producing real world projects.

Other activities include field trips, performances at the school, etc.

**6. Morals-based instruction.** In addition to the foregoing curriculum changes, which are part of the Big Picture Schools program, Sen. Clarke proposes that the teaching of values and ethics be an integral part of the curriculum.

Education, at its core, requires teaching students the importance of honesty, courage, humility, kindness, generosity, and most importantly the ability to make crucial moral distinctions between right and wrong.

Stemming from those essential attributes, students will learn the value of self-discipline, self-esteem, embracing responsibilities and respect for the rights of others, all essential to success in school and beyond.

## **C. Success Statistics.**

**1. Generally.** Big Picture schools across the nation have an average 2% dropout rate and 94% attendance.

On average, 99% of 2006 Big Picture School graduates were accepted to college, and 89% had enrolled for the fall by the time of graduation.

12 Big Picture schools met all AYP federal goals under NCLB, while 1 school met every AYP goal but one in 2005. The remaining Big Picture schools do not yet have AYP data.

### **2. University Preparatory Academy.**

Overall attendance rate for all UPA schools is 96%.

94% of UPA middle school graduates enroll in UPA high school.

University Prep graduated its first class in June 2007, with 95% of their freshmen graduating, and 91% percent of the graduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions.

The graduation rate in Detroit Public Schools is 42 percent according to the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research's 2006 study. Another study sponsored by the Gates Foundation found that rate to be 21.7 percent.

## **II. Student Incentives**

***Proposal: To implement a program of financial incentives for students in failing Detroit Public Schools developed by Harvard economist and school reform expert, Roland Fryer. The proposed program would mirror similar programs currently in use in Chicago, Washington D.C. and New York City.***

### **A. Background.**

**1. Roland Fryer and Ed Labs.** Roland G. Fryer is a Harvard professor and economist who started the "Education Innovation Laboratory" ("Ed Labs") at Harvard University. Ed Labs is studying the use of monetary and other incentives to bridge the achievement gap in public schools through programs in New York, the District of Columbia, and Chicago.

**2. Nationwide Movement.** Public school districts nationwide have been experimenting with incentives to improve student performance. Some of the larger programs include:

A **suburban Atlanta** "Learn and Earn" program that pays 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students \$8 an hour to participate in a 14-week after-school study program;

a **Baltimore** program that pays struggling high school students up to \$110 each to improve scores on state graduation exams. The state is planning to spend more than \$935,000 of public money on the program;

a 12 year-old **Dallas program** that pays students \$100 for each passing grade of 3 or higher on an Advanced Placement Exam;

a **National Math and Science Initiative program** funded by Exxon Mobil and involving seven states, which began in September and mirrors the Dallas Advanced Placement Exam program. The states are receiving grants of \$13 million each to implement the program.

**B. Program Details.** Ed Labs has launched incentive programs in New York City, the District of Columbia, and Chicago Public Schools. Sen. Clarke is proposing a program for failing Detroit Public Schools similar to that launched in Chicago in October.

**1. The Chicago Paper Project.** In Chicago Public Schools, cash incentives are given to 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students for core class grades.

Approximately 20 high schools and 5,000 students are currently involved in the program.

Financial incentives are given for performance in five core classes essential to graduation: English, math, social studies, science and physical education. Students receive \$50 for each "A," 35\$ for each "B," and \$20 for any "C" earned during each five-week progress report period.

The student will lose all money earned for any grading period during which the student fails a class. However, if the student completes the necessary make-up work and subsequently earns credit for the class, the money will be reinstated.

Students can earn up to \$2000 a year; estimates indicate the average student will earn approximately \$800 per year. Every five weeks, half of student rewards are deposited in a bank account or distributed via check; the other half are distributed at graduation (thereby providing an additional incentive for graduation).

**2. Proposed Program for Detroit.** Sen. Clarke is proposing a program that will mirror the Chicago Paper Project, implemented only in those Detroit Public Schools which have not made Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act for five consecutive years and are in Phase 4 reorganization.

Approximately 6,000 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in 24 high schools \* will be eligible to participate in the 2009-10 academic year.

The program will be offered to both 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in those same schools during the 2010-11 academic year.

**C. Success Statistics.** Various empirical studies, together with anecdotal evidence, indicate that student financial incentive programs work.

**1. Ed Labs Initiatives.** News reports cite preliminary data from surveys in the New York City schools suggesting that 91% of schools report an increased focus on exams, 59% report better classroom performance, and 75% of parents report positive changes

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\* These estimates come from the Senate Fiscal Agency and are subject to further verification.

in their child as a result of the program.

**2. A study of the Dallas program** by Kirabo Jackson, a Cornell University economist, found incentives were linked with a 30% rise in the number of students with high SAT and ACT scores and an 8% rise in the number of students attending college. Most of the gains came from minority students in the 40 high schools studied.

**3.** A preliminary study of incentive programs in **charter schools** across the United States, sponsored by Stanford University, suggests reward systems have stable and consistent positive impacts in reading.

### **III. Teacher Incentives**

***Proposal: Implement a system of incentive pay for teachers based on parameters such as attaining certification in hard-to-staff subject areas, improving student achievement, engaging in professional development, and mentoring.***

#### **A. Background.**

**1. District of Columbia.** D.C. Chancellor of Public Schools Michelle Rhee has proposed a performance-pay plan under which teachers have a choice of staying in the current traditional seniority system or giving up their seniority and tenure rights in exchange for the opportunity to earn as much as \$131,000 a year for raising student performance. Under the plan:

Teachers would have to relinquish tenure and spend a year on probation, risking dismissal.

Existing teachers would have the option of keeping tenure and accepting lower raises (although tenure would be phased out over time), but new hires would have no choice and they would remain on probation for four years, twice as long as the current requirement.

**2. Other states.** Many other states, including Florida, Minnesota, Texas and Denver, have adopted pay-for-performance plans.

In Denver, for example, a teachers' union agreed to pilot a pay-for-performance plan, which has since been adopted district-wide. The plan rewards teachers for improving student achievement, choosing to work in hard-to-staff schools, and earning positive appraisals from peer evaluators.

In Texas, school districts across the state have experimented with merit pay for student performance, professional development, excellent attendance, and mentoring, among other parameters.

**B. Program Details.** Senator Clarke' s proposal need not require teachers to relinquish seniority or tenure, but it would reward teachers for improving student achievement, mentoring students, engaging in professional development, choosing to work in hard-to-staff schools, and earning positive appraisals from peer evaluators.

**C. Success Statistics.** The U.S. Department of Education is currently funding a comprehensive study to confirm that merit pay programs work to improve student performance and teacher moral. However, several studies already suggest that merit

pay plans work.

A study of a merit-pay system implemented in various Texas public school districts suggest that merit pay resulted in higher test scores, higher state accountability rankings, improved teacher moral, and lower teacher turnover.

An evaluation of a teacher pay-for-performance program in Little Rock, Arkansas also found that the program produced significant gains in student performance on standardized tests.

Senator Clarke proposes the following reforms for all Detroit Public Schools, regardless of their status under NCLB:

#### **IV. Community Use of School Buildings**

***Proposal: Create policies and procedures, by legislation and otherwise, that promote the use of school facilities and grounds as community meeting places, recreation centers, locations for health and social services and municipal programs and libraries. Policies and procedures should be geared to preserving school buildings and facilities, including the reopening of closed schools, and should embody the concept of DPS schools as the center of the community. Special attention should be paid to using buildings and facilities for job training programs.***

**A. Background.** Detroit Public Schools do have a policy of allowing district school facilities to be used by community organizations for activities including community meetings, athletic leagues, religious services, parent and adult enrichment and arts and crafts.

However, there is concern that DPS is not effectively implementing this policy. One local paper reported that while DPS has closed numerous schools in the last few years, in 2006 it paid more than \$430,000 at local hotels for meeting space for conferences and workshops.

**B. Program Details.** Legislation and policy should be adopted encouraging specifically:

Financial incentives for the sharing of school facilities for community use;

Partnerships that implement public-private, intergovernmental and/or interagency use of school facilities and grounds;

Requirements for renovation projects that support the continued use and adaptive reuse of older or historic schools, including closed schools, and/or the conversion of existing buildings and structures to serve an educational function;

Requirements in standards for public school building projects to accommodate co-located entities.

Consideration of criteria in site selection, planning and development of new schools that

support and enhance neighborhoods around the schools, including proximity to population centers, walk-ability, the relationship to other public facilities, availability of public water and sewer, condition of existing roads.

Special emphasis in each of these policies should be given to encouraging the use of school facilities as places for job training programs geared toward training parents in skills needed for available, hard-to-fill jobs in the Detroit area.

#### **IV. Extended School Calendar**

***Proposal: Alter the school year to include more instructional time by instituting an extended, year-round, academic calendar and by extending the school day by several hours.***

**A. Background.** The current configuration of the school year, with a 3-month summer break, is largely the result of the farming economy of the last century, where children were released from school to help their families in the fields.

Schools across the nation are experimenting with alternative calendars, including four-day school weeks, trimester schedules, year-round school, and extended learning time.

An extended school year would avoid summer learning loss and would benefit both struggling and successful students. The extra time would allow struggling students to get extra help in passing exams and classes, and it would give high-achieving students additional time for college courses and gifted education programs.

**B. Program Details.** Senator Clarke is proposing that learning time be extended for Detroit Public School students by changing the academic calendar to require a longer school day and a longer school year, which could include Saturday and/or summer class sessions.

Connected to the calendar change, the proposal calls for the state to change its fall testing system to the spring, as recommended by the Council of Great City Schools in its 2008 report, "Reforming and Improving Detroit Public Schools."

**C. Success Statistics.** Districts that have implemented alternative calendars to extend learning time have seen scores on standardized tests rise. One study indicates that 54 of 64 school variables, including attendance, grades, discipline, and test scores, are better in schools with a longer school year than those with a traditional calendar.

#### **VI. Fiscal Integrity**

To establish fiscal integrity, Senator Clarke proposes adopting the fiscal recommendations contained in the Council of Great City Schools 2008 report on Reforming and Improving Detroit Public Schools, including in particular the following:

**Internal Auditor.** The appointment of an internal auditor, reporting directly to the Detroit Board of Education.

**Forensic Audit.** A forensic audit of the real estate and procurement practices of the

Detroit Public School system.

**State Oversight.** State oversight to help insure overall financial integrity, including overseeing a capital improvement plan which would include the conversion of the current large DPS schools into smaller schools.

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