



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

THE YORK COUNTY EDUCATION SUMMIT

October 26 & 27, 2006

Background and History

In the Spring of 2005, the Community and University Partnership at Penn State York formed a compact with YorkCounts, a county-wide initiative to improve the quality of life in York County, to provide the primary leadership and administrative support for the first all-county education summit. The idea of the summit was one of the original thirty “ready solutions” recommended by YorkCounts to address the issue of equal access to quality K-12 public education in York County.

Mission Statement for York County Education Summit

The Summit will provide a means for York County school districts to open lines of communication, develop shared leadership, enhance school-community relations and seek innovative solutions to issues that cross district lines. It will seek to engage community stakeholders and educators in working together to formulate strategies for assuring access to high quality education, improving student performance and raising attainment levels.

In addition, the summit was designed to give all citizenry the opportunity to engage in an authentic and meaningful dialogue about key education issues and to make recommendations about the future of education in York County.

To accomplish this goal, Beth Gill-MacDonald and Bea Landis of Penn State York enlisted the help of Dr. Emilie Lonardi, superintendent of the WestYork Area School District, as co-chair and a twenty-member steering committee made up of diverse education stakeholders. A list of the steering committee members follows.

SUMMIT STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

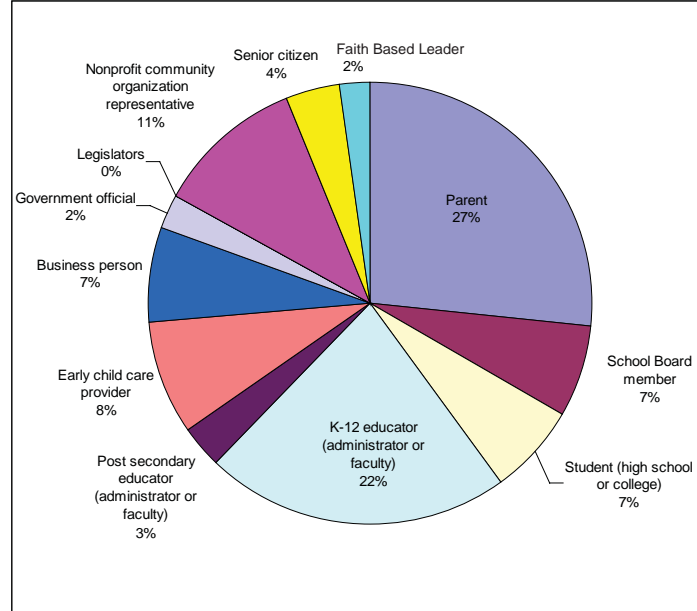
David Adams	Harley Davidson, Inc
Pastor Steven Almquist	Living Word Community Church
Mary Lou Alsentzer	Education Fund of Southern York County
Dianna Benaknin	York County Area Agency on Aging
Warren Bulette	Local Taxpayers Group
Don Burkins	LIU #12
Glenn Cauffman	York County Alliance for Learning
Robert Dovey	Penn State York- Graduate Program in Education
Bill Greenawalt	Chamber of Commerce Education Committee, Glatfelter Insurance Group
Judy Higgins	School Board Member, Eastern York School District
Mike Jefferson	Crispus Attucks Employment Center
James Kraft	York County School of Technology
Bea Landis	Penn State York – Continuing Education
Rep. Bev Mackereith	PA House of Representatives
Gretchen McFarland	Central York School District
Michael McGough	York College – Education Department
Rep. Ron Miller	PA House of Representatives
Penny Ritter	York County PSEA & Hanover School District
Robert Shanner	York Country Day School
William Simpson	Susquehanna Pfalzgraff Companies
Bryan Tate	York County Community Foundation

By design, this steering committee included education stakeholders that represented different opinions and constituencies, including educators, parents, business and community leaders, higher education representatives, seniors and taxpayer reform groups, and local legislators. The steering committee chose to focus on four key strands:

- equitable funding,
- improving academic performance,
- school district collaboration and consolidation and,
- increased parental, community and business involvement in the schools.

Highlights of the First-Ever York County Education Summit

The summit was held at the York Expo Center, a well-known and easily accessible location on the evening of October 26 and all day October 27, 2006. It was free and open to the public. Over 260 people attended each day.

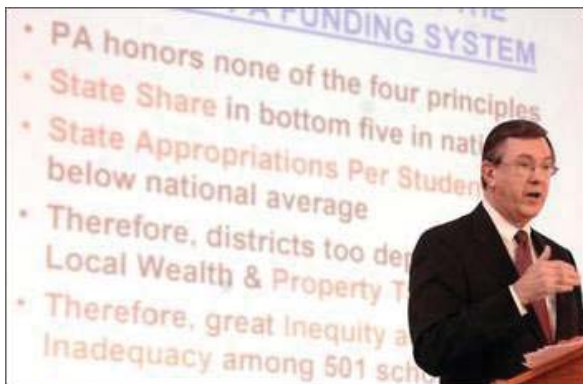


Thursday, evening, October 26, 2006

“The Education of York County Children: How Do We Stack Up?”: by Joan Benso, President and CEO of PA Partnerships for Children.

Friday morning, October 27, 2006

“State Funding...Is it Fair and Equitable?” with Ron Cowell, President, The Education and Policy Leadership Center followed by a solutions panel with Rep. Sam Rohrer, John Myers and Stinson Stroup



Ronald Cowell, president of The Education Policy and Leadership Center, talks Friday about state funding for education at the York County Education Summit at the York Expo Center. JASON PLOTKIN York Daily Record

Friday morning, October 27, 2005

“Education, Excellence, Adequacy and Equity” with Dr. Alvin Thornton, Chair of the Maryland Commission on Education Excellence, Adequacy and Equity”

Friday afternoon, October 27, 2006

“School District Consolidation: Why or Why Not?” with Dr. Edward Frye, former IU director and education consultant, Dr. Stephen Herzenberg, Director of the Keystone Research Center and Timothy Allwein, Asst. Director of the PA School Boards Association, and Rep. Ron Miller, R-Jacobus



School district consolidation panel

Friday afternoon, October 27, 2006

“Grass Roots Solutions” with Janis Risch, Executive Director of Good Schools PA



An audience member voices concern over the issues

Feedback from Summit Participants

After each section, the participants from the audience were asked to write individual reflections on what they heard from the speakers and what solutions they thought were the most appropriate for York County. They were then asked to discuss their ideas for York County Solutions with those sitting at their table. The following two pages represent the feedback received from each of the sessions.

1-Minute Reflection October 26, 2006

7:15 p.m. - *"The Education of York County Children: How We Stack Up"* Joan Benso

Based on what you heard tonight, what is the major priority that should guide the discussion tomorrow and the future direction of education in the county?

Recurring Themes

- Focusing our energy toward achieving equal opportunities across the county and the necessary funding to allow that to happen. **(41)**
- Focus on equity and funding but concentrate on early childhood programs, Pre-K, and all day Kindergarten. **(23)**
- Focus on getting more involvement of the families, because parental involvement is paramount to student success. **(21)**
- Focus on the needs of all students. **(13)**
- York County must have a rigorous and comprehensive educational system that focuses on what students must know and be able to do, in order to be competitive in the future. **(10)**
- Address ways to increase PSSA scores across the county. **(8)**
- Focus on getting students to stay in school. **(6)**
- Focus on encouraging our state legislators to get York County appropriate funding. **(6)**

Specific Solutions/Ideas

- ✓ Share county resources - consolidate funding and curriculum, healthcare.
- ✓ Practical intervention
- ✓ K-12 resource centers
- ✓ Expand technology in schools
- ✓ Add 13th and 14th years
- ✓ Magnet Schools
- ✓ Upgrade teacher training at college level
- ✓ School consolidation
- ✓ School consolidation is clearly not the answer
- ✓ Consolidate AFTER school funding
- ✓ Costing Out Study.
- ✓ Eliminate sports.
- ✓ Community must be engaged
- ✓ Career planning
- ✓ Use data-driven benchmarks.

1-Minute Reflection October 27, 2006

8:55 a.m. - *State Funding...Is It Fair & Equitable?*

Ronald Cowell

9:25 a.m. - *Solutions to the Funding Dilemma*

Panel - Representative Samuel E. Rohrer, John L. Myers, Stinson Stroup, Esq.

Based on what you just heard, what solution(s) are most appropriate for the future direction of education in York County?

Recurring Themes

- Create a viable and predictable source of income for schools through a combination of taxes (sales, property, personal income, etc.) which may mean a cap or reduction of current property taxes but not elimination. Reliance on sales tax exclusively is not the answer (Rohrer)...it is regressive, will not be adequate. **(31)**
- Comprehensive funding reform must be achieved beginning at the state level and include more state funding, fewer mandates and maintain some local control of decisions. Local legislators must be pressured into acting on this. **(29)**
- Eliminate property tax and rely totally on sales tax; distribute funds equally. **(13)**
- State allocations must account for York County's growth. **(13)**
- Increase state share of funding. **(6)**
- Increase cooperation among school districts to maximize fiscal opportunities. **(5)**
- Create one consolidated or regionalized school district. **(3)**

Specific Solutions/Ideas

- ✓ Need a school design model for schools to use. Create a School Construction Task Force.
- ✓ Develop a PA surcharge to build in a given school district.
- ✓ Dialogue of this nature needs to continue for the next 3 to 5 years to keep the momentum created by this noteworthy event.
- ✓ Equalize local effort rather than aid ratios (J.Myers).
- ✓ Costing Out Study is critical.
- ✓ State must eliminate unfunded mandates.
- ✓ Eliminate hold harmless.
- ✓ Allow students to cross districts to take advantage of specialized programs.
- ✓ Funding dilemma in a large part is due to Special Education costs.
- ✓ Attitude adjustment: think quality education not financial perspective.
- ✓ York County needs a consolidated effort to affect policy at state level.

1-Minute Reflection October 27, 2006

10:50 a.m. - *Education Excellence, Adequacy and Equity* Dr. Alvin Thornton

Based on what you just heard, what solution(s) are most appropriate for the future direction of education in York County?

Recurring Themes

- Create a commission (like the Thornton Commission) to study solutions to funding dilemma, costing out, and to engage public stakeholders in process of reform. Grassroots effort is needed to ensure legislative action and garner support. **(28)**

- Coordinate state constitution and legislation - legislators must act now. **(12)**
- Maryland example will not work in York County. **(12)**
- State must create new funding formula and increase funds. **(9)**
- Share more resources and expertise among districts. **(8)**
- Set high standards for schools; high accountability and equalize funding. **(7)**
- Seriously consider consolidating school districts. **(5)**
- Start with very young students and make early education a priority. **(3)**

Specific Solutions/Ideas

- ✓ Study County-based vs Municipal-based system.
- ✓ Study ramifications of consolidation; slow down movement.
- ✓ Focus study on all citizens, not just educated ones.
- ✓ Support goals of Metro --York.
- ✓ Utilize YorkCounts as vehicle for Commission.
- ✓ Stop comparing districts, rather unite them.
- ✓ Reflect deeply on what we value as a people.
- ✓ Need for review of the data before suggesting a solution.
- ✓ Force a constitutional amendment to equitably fund quality education.
- ✓ Build consensus through the courts.
- ✓ Thornton Commission -- we are doing it in the Summit -- stay the course.
- ✓ Incorporate Rusk Report into dialogue and recommendations.
- ✓ Be patient when considering all points in the debate.
- ✓ Become humble, open-minded, and reflective as committed listeners come to consensus, then generate momentum to spread consensus and find solutions
- ✓ School Boards must be active and aggressive with legislators.
- ✓ Study places that look like York County; emulate what works.
- ✓ Be persistent; don't let funding drive educational decisions.

1-Minute Reflection October 27, 2006

1:20 p.m. - *School Consolidation: Why or Why Not?*

Panel: Dr. Stephen Herzenberg, Dr. Edward T. Frye, Rep. Ronald E. Miller, Timothy Allwein

Based on what you just heard, what solution(s) are most appropriate for the future direction of education in York County?

Recurring Themes

- The idea of functional consolidation allows for more effective, efficient, and equitable use of funds without consolidating all districts into one (Dr. Frye). **(37)**

- Utilize data to seek solutions (some already in place); continue dialogue, base decision on research (Ron Miller) and consider all issues and impact of issues very carefully after deciding what we really want/believe. **(22)**
- Research the idea of magnet schools and/or better utilization of LIU. **(14)**
- Do not consolidate schools. It will not be cost effective. **(6)**
- Follow through with the Costing Out Study. **(3)**
- Consolidate York County schools. **(2)**

Specific Solutions/Ideas

- ✓ Negotiate one contract for salaries across the county and add a bonus for schools that make AYP.
- ✓ Implement foundation formula for funding schools.
- ✓ Focus on poor students in poor communities.
- ✓ Decide on one (1) important issue (Dr. Frye), not many.
- ✓ Focus attention on student impact not money spent.
- ✓ Call for a state constitutional convention to change PA constitution and school code.
- ✓ Decide whether the LIU system is an asset or liability.
- ✓ Must begin honest discussions about race, class, and educational quality.
- ✓ Must get small groups joining together leading to larger group dialogue and solution seeking (GoodSchools PA).
- ✓ Eliminate city school district and spread students across other districts. Use city buildings as magnet schools.
- ✓ Keep schools as they are but fund from county level.
- ✓ Use Rusk Report recommendations to get state legislature to pursue regional government restructuring.
- ✓ Create a study group (Thornton Commission) to examine the impact of consolidation.
- ✓ Speakers did not share national data on schools that are consolidated.

Summit participants indicated the following as a result of the summit:

"I gained some information I did not have previously"	122
"I changed my opinion/attitude on some education issues"	41
"I valued the exchange of ideas with the people who attended"	120
"I felt like my opinion was heard and will make a difference"	28

90% of summit participants rated the summit as excellent or average.

Summit Outcomes

Increased awareness of by summit participants of the factors involved in making systematic community and education change.

Rekindled grass roots interest in local education reform.

Record of the Community Dialogue with Specific Ideas and Recommendations for the Future Of Education in York County Given to the YorkCounts Metro York initiative.

County Education Summit was produced on a budget of less than \$10,000 due to the generosity of these community sponsors:



If you have questions or would like more detailed information about the summit, please contact Beth Gill-MacDonald at 717-771-4047 or bxg5@psu.edu