

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Education #3: Invest \$3 million per year in each of the next ten years on “intensive care” for at-risk students: intense, targeted programming to at-risk students, as they enter grade school to keep them focused and/or in middle and high school to keep them from thinking that dropping out is an option.

Why is this a recommendation?

The purpose of Metro-York has largely been to look at medium- and long-term solutions to the region’s most pressing needs, but in this area, a short-term fix is also needed. Current students and recent graduates are struggling *today*. These students can’t be left behind just because it will take a while to establish new big-picture programs.

How did Metro-York reach the decision to include it?

Metro-York Education Workgroup participants, and the experts they heard from, offered many examples of programs that they know of that work. These are programs that already exist but are currently limited in terms of funding, so they’re serving dozens of students instead of hundreds. A prime example is Quantum Opportunities, which is a four-year dropout prevention initiative¹ for high-schoolers run by York’s YWCA. Members of the Workgroup were excited to learn that immediate needs could be met through existing programs... and Metro-York wants to let the community know that supporting these efforts is a way people can help *now*.

What else can you tell us about it?

The figure of \$3 million is based on a pair of analyses. The York County YMCA obtains a third-party programming cost analysis every three years, and currently, the YMCA’s estimate is that it takes \$4732 to serve one student in a given youth development program for one year – so serving a base of 500 students would cost close to \$2.4 million. The YWCA, on the other hand, provided hard figures on Quantum Opportunities. It costs \$300,000 to serve 50 students for one year, so it would cost about \$3 million to serve 500 students for one year. These total figures, \$2.4 million and \$3 million, are close enough to each other that they represent an adequate estimate; Metro-York is using the larger of the two figures with hopes that as many students as possible will be helped.

Where else is it being tried?

Quantum Opportunities, for example, has been in place in numerous metropolitan areas, including Baltimore; Birmingham, Ala.; Columbia, S.C.; Dover, N.H.; Herndon, Va.; Jackson, Miss.; Portland, Ore.; and Washington, D.C.² The program was developed by Philadelphia-based OIC of America, Inc.

What happens next?

The initial goals for the champions of this recommendation will be to raise awareness of effective existing programs and to identify potential funding streams.

What are, realistically, some obstacles this idea faces?

A major obstacle to success is avoided because Metro-York is endorsing the support of existing programs that have an *established record of success*. It will, of course, be a challenge to find \$3 million in support per year. One hope is that, by highlighting what has been working, we can make it easier for philanthropists and businesses to decide how to allocate their gifts over the next several years. Separately, local civic and political leaders should join forces to lead the charge for more state funding for these programs now.

1. YWCA of York. <http://www.ywcaofyork.org/qop.html> and available via yorkcounts.org/metro.

2. Eisenhower Foundation. <http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/qop.php> and available via yorkcounts.org/metro.