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City Club speech – Schools and Communities: Innovating Together for Change

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THANKS

-Thank you Melody, my former PSU colleague, for the kind introduction and to Marge Kafoury and to Mike Moran for the invitation to speak in this marvelous City Club venue today.

-Thanks to everyone here at the Governor Hotel and to Amy Harris, who helped with the logistics of bringing me here today. "I Have a Dream" has several staff, board members, sponsors, supporters, and partners with us today - thank you for being here.

-And thanks to OPB and to City Club Friday Forum's other media partners for your continuing partnership with the Friday Forum series and to everyone listening on the radio today.

INTRO

-In the description for my talk at today's Friday Forum was a quote by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and some of you may have heard Secretary Duncan speak when he was in Portland 3 weeks ago. I attended both a Town Hall Forum that Duncan did at HB Lee Middle School in the Reynolds School District and Secretary Duncan's Convention Center speech that same night. At both gatherings, his introductions included mention of his past leadership with a nonprofit organization that helps low-income kids succeed in school and college. But in neither instance did his introduction include the name of that nonprofit organization. Marge and Amy and Mike, I imagine that you weren't aware of this when you included a Secretary Duncan quote in today's Friday Forum description, but that nonprofit organization is, in fact, "I Have a Dream" Foundation!

Secretary Duncan directed our "I Have a Dream" affiliate in Chicago before he was Superintendent there, and he actually spent about 5 minutes talking about his "I Have a Dream" experience during his confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate. Marge and Amy and Mike, thank you for quoting a former "I Have a

Dream" guy in the description for my talk today!

-So, Schools and Communities Innovating Together for Change is, indeed, what I want to talk about today. In particular, I want to focus our attention on something I know Secretary Duncan - and a number of people on both sides of the political aisle - care deeply about - that is, change in educational outcomes and in career readiness for Oregon's fastest growing student populations, i.e. low-income students.

-I wanna to do 4 things in my remarks today:

First - I want to provide some brief context around why I believe that educational under-achievement in low-income communities is - by far - the most important economic and social issue of our time.

Second - I want to argue that, given the enormous and complex challenges that kids who live in poverty face - challenges which they bring with them to school each and every day - communities throughout Oregon must be far more strategic and must be far smarter in how we partner with schools to help low-income kids succeed.

Third - I want to spend most of my time telling you about what I know best: an innovative new - actually, first-in-the-nation - school-community collaboration model that I think holds great promise for mobilizing communities throughout Oregon in more strategic and intelligent and comprehensive ways to transform outcomes in low-income schools.

Finally - I want to wrap up with some thoughts on a few related and complementary efforts in school-community collaboration here in Oregon and why I think we have a unique opportunity - right now - to help spur real, lasting change at the local and statewide and national levels.

Before I begin, I want to ask you three questions:

First, how many of you are frustrated with the level of overall outcomes we're seeing from our public schools regarding academic achievement and college/career readiness? (for the radio audience, almost every hand in the room

went up - and for the radio audience listening in your cars, please refrain from raising your hands!)

Second question: How many of you are equally frustrated that, as a community and as a state, we've spent so much time talking about improving educational outcomes and seen so little results over the past couple decades? (again, just about everyone raised their hand)

Third, how many of you and/or your organizations would be willing to help or - to help more - if you could just sort through where best to put your energy to make a real, tangible difference in educational outcomes? ([say how many for radio audience]).

Part of what I want to argue today is that all hands need to go up, and I hope I can convince you of that in my remarks today.

CONTEXT

Alright, a little context regarding why I believe that educational under-achievement in low-income communities is THE economic and social issue of our time. Let me start by asking you three more questions:

First, what percentage of kids from families in the top income quartile in this country are succeeding in school and in college, as measured by completion a 4 year college degree by age 24? --82%

Now, what percentage of kids from the bottom income quartile in this country do you suppose are completing a 4-year college degree by age 24? --8% - or less than one tenth the rate of their top income quartile peers. The statistics in Oregon and in every state in the nation are equally alarming regarding educational attainment in low-income communities.

And finally, at what percentage are bottom income quartile populations growing vs. top income quartile populations? -- From 2001-11, in the Portland metropolitan area, overall growth in the K-12 student population was 6%, while for low-income students, the growth rate was 62% - over 10 times the rate of overall growth.

It's the answer to this last question that is both historic and that ought to - at long last - elevate our educational challenges into true emergency mode. And which ought to motivate ALL of us to get more involved and NOW.

Never before have we seen this kind of dramatic difference in growth between populations who have not succeeded in school and college and in populations that have. And of course, further compounding this problem is that never before has completing some kind of post-secondary degree or certificate been more essential for an Oregonian who wants to secure a living wage job.

Recognizing this essential need for post-secondary completion, the state of Oregon has actually set very clear 40-40-20 goals - that is, in order to meet even minimum future workforce needs, at least 40% of Oregonians must complete a 4-yr degree, another 40% must complete a 2-yr degree or certificate, and at least 20% must finish high school. As of today, as you all know, we're not even close. For example, in Multnomah County, only 57% of students are even graduating on time from high school, and for low-income students those rates are more like 30-40% at best. Of the total number of high school graduates who go on to a two-year or four-year college, less than 50% complete a degree or certificate within 4-6 years of first enrollment. Completion rates for low-income students are far lower, typically in the 10-20% range.

If we add together these abysmally low college completion rates among low-income kids, with the huge population growth differential in low-income communities, and with the unprecedented need for post-secondary completion to secure a living wage job and meet workforce demands, we have something more than what many have dubbed an education crisis - we have a ticking time bomb that could quite literally destroy the fabric of our communities.

We simply MUST do better with low-income kids, and, on the flip side, the return-on-investment if we can address this challenge of educational achievement in low-income communities is mindbogglingly huge.

By recent estimates, for example, if we could just increase college completion rates by 1% today, we would add over \$1B to the OR economy over the course of those new graduates' lifetimes.

And if we can crack this education nut, the leverage regarding every other major economic and social issue - from securing living wage jobs to health care to crime to prisons to housing - you know the drill - the impact is literally astronomic.

There is just no substitute - absolutely no substitute - for a good education as a building block for a good life and for a good society.

NEED FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE, STRATEGIC SCHOOL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

So, what can communities do together with their schools to better leverage the unique return-on-investment that only a good education can provide? More specifically, how can we as a community much better leverage this return-on-investment for our fastest growing, low-income populations and for our fastest growing ranks of low-income students?

I want to talk mostly here about what communities can do, but first let me say just a couple words about some basics that are needed in schools and in school districts if they are to be good partners with communities as we work together to change outcomes for low-income kids.

I want to highlight just two basics, coupled with concrete examples from Alder Elementary School and the Reynolds School District, where "I Have a Dream" is partnering on our new Dreamer School model, which I'll describe in more detail in a few minutes.

As we looked to create an exemplary model of school-community collaboration, "I Have a Dream" was most interested in two assets in a school and district partner:

1 - a culture of high expectations for both teachers and for students

As part of our interview process with each of our 5 candidate schools, we asked the Principals of each candidate school about how they would summarize their philosophical and practical approach to running their school... They all gave good answers, but the best answer was also the shortest - this Principal simply said, "high expectations, no excuses" - to which I asked "anything else" and to which he

asked "is there anything else?" - this was from Principal Paz Ramos at Alder Elementary School, which as I mentioned, "I Have a Dream" Oregon ultimately chose as our first Dreamer School.

But, in choosing Alder, it was not only that clear philosophy and practice of high expectations and no excuses, it was also the clarity we saw regarding what high expectations means at Alder - where, by the way, 94% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch costs, making Alder one of Oregon's poorest schools. Alder is located on the eastern edge of the City of Portland in the Rockwood neighborhood, and what high expectations means at Alder Elementary School is "college-ready". Let me give you a few snapshots: as you walk onto the Alder campus, the welcome marquis proclaims - in both English and Spanish - that "Alder Students are College Bound"; over the front entrance, another large sign beckons, "Alder Elementary School - Where College Begins", just inside the front door, dozens of college pennants line a large display that is entitled "Have you chosen your college yet?", just a few steps further is a new "Hall of Dreams" with dozens more college pennants and with career posters that depict elementary-aged kids in oversized outfits dressed as computer scientists, as chefs, as business executives, as teachers, as firefighters, and so on. Down the next hall are the K-2 classrooms, each prominently labeled as the Class of 2028, 2027, and 2026 - the year of their respective college graduations. Walk into the gym and hanging from the ceiling are dozens of huge banners from colleges and universities from throughout Oregon and from throughout the U.S.

- By the way, at least ten of these banners have been provided by people who have taken a tour of Alder with us over the past year - no one who visits that gym gets away without a commitment to Principal Ramos to get him a banner from their alma mater!

A few more snapshots from Alder: College and career themes on teacher boards outside classrooms throughout the school, spelling assignments using college terminology at every level starting with the first spelling word in kindergarten: college, and ending in fifth grade with words like baccalaureate, which I can't even spell!

Or the snapshot of two Alder kindergartners talking to each other, with one saying "I'm going to college, are you?" and her friend replying, "no, I'm too

young!" --- but they're TALKING about college!

More snapshots: Alder fifth graders, who compose requests to colleges and universities for information about admission, tuition, and academic programs, etc, as a writing assignment and then cheer for each other when letters come back from the likes of Harvard, Stanford and from just about every college and university in Oregon.

And, very powerfully, Alder Elementary School students do regular college visits and even overnight trips to places like PSU and Linfield College, where students stay in the dorms, eat in the dining halls and attend classes taught by professors. High expectations, indeed.

We know from volumes of educational research that high expectations are extremely important to improving educational outcomes, and every elementary school in Oregon can do similar things to what Alder has done to set the bar at college admittance and college completion.

Now, keep in mind that many of the kids at Alder - and at countless elementary schools in Oregon - have rarely been beyond a 10 or 12 block area between school and home and grocery or church, and that very, very few walk into a school like Alder with "college" as an expectation in their minds. Even fewer of these students have EVER stepped foot on a college campus and again, very, very few have family members with college degrees. So, creating a culture of college throughout the school experience and providing these reality-expanding college visits are absolutely essential to instill college aspirations. As one Alder fifth grader - whose entire family is gang-related - wrote in her reflective paper after visiting PSU, "before we visited PSU, when Principal Ramos talked about college, it was all a bunch o' jibber jabber - but now it's real!"

So, one expectation we had of a school as we considered them to become the nation's first Dreamer School was "high expectations," and those expectations were crystal clear at Alder. Again, let me say that all of the things that Alder has done regarding setting the bar toward college, are things that all other elementary schools in Oregon could do, with minimal cost.

2 - The second basic that we were looking for in a school and in a district was: highly collaborative leaders, teachers and staff.

Our belief at "I Have a Dream" - having spent 21 years working with almost 900 low-income kids in Portland and in Cornelius/Forest Grove - is that even with clear, high expectations in place at school, given the huge barriers low-income kids face, we needed to find a school and a district where the leaders, the teachers and the staff were truly committed to working together with us and with a wide array of community partners to transform outcomes for low-income kids.

Let me give you a sense of the challenges that the kids at Alder face. As I said earlier, over 9 of 10 Alder kids live in poverty. Equally alarming is that over 100 of Alder's 580 kids are homeless - without a permanent residence, so bunking in where they can, or actually living in a car or in a shelter or on the street. Over twenty languages are spoken and over 3/4ths of Alder kids enter kindergarten with little to no reading or English language skills. Many get inadequate nutrition for their bodies and minds, and many have inadequate long-term relationships with caring adults in their lives.

With all of these barriers and more, Alder leaders, teachers and staff knew that they would need more help from the community if they were to be successful in helping Alder kids succeed in school and in college. Impressively, in their proposal to become our first Dreamer School, every single teacher and staff member at Alder signed the application to us pledging their support to work with us and with a wide range of other community partners to help ensure that every Alder child is prepared to succeed in school and in college.

In addition, Principal Ramos and Reynolds Superintendent Joyce Henstrand - both of whom are here with us today - also believed deeply that more robust, strategic mobilization of community resources would be necessary to make a difference at Alder. And very impressive to us was the commitment from the entire Reynolds School District Board of Directors. With enthusiastic and unanimous support from the school board, just last year, Reynolds committed to a 15-year contract to collaborate with "I Have a Dream" Foundation Oregon to create these ground-breaking, strategic, comprehensive community partnerships at Alder and to use Alder as a flagship elementary school for their district. Think about that: a 15-

year contract - entirely appropriate, because it takes awhile to get elementary kids into and through college, but also incredible, out-of-the-box leadership from a district and from a school board. And beyond that remarkable 15-year commitment, as part of our contract negotiations, Reynolds agreed to add a new Assistant Principal position and to add full-day kindergarten at Alder, to the tune of over \$300,000 in additional investment per year. Collaborative leadership, indeed.

Now, granted, not all schools have a deeply embedded culture of high expectations and not all schools or districts have leaders, teachers and staff that are highly collaborative -- or at least not on the surface. But I would submit to you that most teachers and most leaders do - truly - believe that all kids can succeed and that - if the community is steadfastly sincere - that most teachers and most school and district leaders would welcome the kind of comprehensive, highly strategic partnership opportunities like those we are helping create at Alder via our Dreamer School model.

So, what do low-income schools - their leaders, their teachers and their staffs - need from us - their local community - to help them make a difference for low-income kids?

First - They need to know that we're not coming in to fix them. Far too often, teachers and administrators are confronted with well-intentioned community leaders who believe that they know better about how to make a difference for kids - including scores of people who have no idea what the realities are in these schools and in the lives of the kids whom the school is serving. Nothing will kill a potential collaboration faster than an attitude of disrespect toward school leaders, teachers or staff.

Second - Schools and districts need to know that we're serious about making real, lasting change in educational outcomes for kids and that we're in it for the long haul. I have heard far too many stories from Principals, teachers and staff about "here today/gone tomorrow" partnerships, and about the many hours they spent to get such partnerships off the ground - only to have them be ultimately ineffective or unsustainable. Leaders, teachers, and staff - and most importantly, kids - deserve real partnerships that make a substantive difference over time.

Third - schools and districts need help in creating, leading and sustaining high impact partnerships. As several Superintendents, Principals, teachers, and staff have told me, they have neither the training nor the time to provide the kind of leadership necessary to mobilize their communities in highly strategic and comprehensive and sustained partnerships like those we are creating at Alder.

DREAMER SCHOOL AS EXAMPLE OF COMPREHENSIVE, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Now, let me turn to more detail about our new Dreamer School model - why we created it, how it works, and how we think it can be replicated in schools throughout Oregon.

For those of you unfamiliar with "I Have a Dream" Foundation - Oregon, we are part of a loosely confederated national "I Have a Dream" organization that was founded in New York City in 1980 by a wealthy business leader named Eugene Lang. Right around the time he retired, Lang was asked to return to his East Harlem elementary school to deliver a congratulatory and motivational address to students and families as the students completed their 6th grade year and were about to enter junior high. In the middle of his address, Lang suddenly stopped his remarks and said "you know what, actions speak louder than words - get through school and your college education is on me!"

As the story goes, Lang woke up the next day and thought, "my god, what have I done?!" But the more important moment came a few WEEKS later, after he had talked with several of the families and kids and teachers and staff, and when he realized that - even with his promise of scholarships - very few of these kids would make it to high school graduation, much less be ready for college. It was at that moment that Lang decided to create "I Have a Dream" Foundation and to create the three basic program elements that would define the organization for the next 30 years as it expanded to dozens of other cities in the U.S. Those three ingredients were:

- long-term relationships with caring adults - mentors;
- academic and personal/social support services, such as after school programming, tutoring, homework help, summer programming, and our "whatever it takes" services - helping kids without medical or dental insurance get those services, pulling kids away from gangs, and on and on.
- third, creating a culture of college and career - because of Lang's initial idea of

providing scholarships, we have long been most known for our scholarship promise to third graders, but, frankly, much more important than scholarships has been our efforts to create a culture of college and career among our 15,000 plus student Dreamers in the U.S. and our 900 Dreamers here in Oregon.

Some of you may have heard of Lang and "I Have a Dream" via 2 segments that aired on "60 Minutes" in the 80's that featured Mr. Lang, his impromptu scholarship offer, and his subsequent huge success in getting kids from his East Harlem elementary school through high school and into college. It was actually those segments that attracted Ken Lewis to invite Lang to visit Portland. And it was under incredible leadership from Ken Lewis that "I Have a Dream" Oregon was born. Ken also succeeded Mr. Lang as chair of our national board, still serves on the national "I Have a Dream" board of directors, and he is with us here today.

Though Lang initially started with a sixth grade class, "I Have a Dream's" traditional model since then has been to adopt an entire third grade level in a low-income school and to stick with them through college with the three core services I just mentioned and with modest college scholarships. In Oregon, we have adopted 7 cohorts within PPS and 3 cohorts within the Forest Grove School District, reaching 900 students and doubling or better expected high school graduation rates for these students. Our most recent graduating classes - one in 2009 and one in 2011, had especially impressive results - both for HS graduation and college participation. In both cohorts, approximately 90% of our low-income student Dreamers finished high school. And in our 2011 cohort, almost 70% of those high school graduates entered college this fall.

While these results are impressive, and while we know that our impact has reached well beyond our 900 student Dreamers as they inspire other family members to aspire to college, we had even bigger aspirations to make a difference for more low-income kids throughout Oregon. And we knew that our "occasional miracle" model through which a select, small group of students essentially won the education lottery, wasn't having a lasting, systemic effect on the schools or districts or communities with whom we were working. Our cohorts of kids mostly were marching their way through the system and the community without the system or the community paying much attention.

So, in 2006-2007, our board began conversations about a new program and business model that would reach far more kids, that had real potential for replication and systemic impact, and that would be more financially sustainable, both for our school and district partners and for "I Have a Dream." With incredible leadership from board chair Dave Johnson, a retired Intel executive, our board did their full share of homework, looking at several school-community partnership models throughout the U.S. and eventually landed on the idea of adopting an entire elementary school, rather than just one grade level, and of starting our programming at birth, instead of third grade.

One of the primary models the board studied was the Harlem Children's Zone in New York City. Some of you may be familiar with HCZ - their success and their founder, Geoffrey Canada, was featured in last year's major motion picture "Waiting for Superman." And by the way, I am serving on a committee with Concordia University right now that is planning a February 2012 Portland event featuring Geoffrey Canada and also honoring former Governor Vic Atiyeh - I would encourage all of you to consider attending, as Canada is truly inspiring.

Our board looked hard at Harlem Children's Zone, because it had three key elements that we wanted to replicate in our new Dreamer School model - a cradle to career timeframe, a comprehensive set of services for kids, and a clear focus on a particular neighborhood, so their impact would extend beyond the school. They also had the same "high expectations, no excuses" philosophy and the same post-secondary completion focus as we were envisioning here for our Dreamer School in Oregon. HCZ was attracting attention as a potential model for replication in other cities, and their model eventually spawned what is now known as the Promise Neighborhood initiative, so we could see the replication and system change potential that our board desired.

We also saw two major challenges with HCZ's model. First, the foundation for their model was the creation of a charter school as the base for their operations. And second, their annual budget - which is now in the \$30 million range - is simply not attainable or sustainable unless you are in Wall Street's back yard. Last time I checked, Portland is not in Wall Street's back yard...

The challenge regarding HCZ being a charter school is not that we, as an

organization, are opposed to charter schools. The challenge is that New York has a far different charter school context than Portland and than just about every other city in the nation. The original idea of charters was to afford more freedom to schools to innovate and then to spread these innovations into traditional public schools. For a number of reasons, that is much more feasible in a place like New York than in a place like Portland, in part because private support for charters is more plentiful in Wall Street's back yard, and in part because outside of New York and a few other places, the original idea behind charters just isn't working. That is, the transfer of innovative new ideas from the charter context to the traditional school context is a huge challenge, both because traditional schools don't have the freedom or the finances to implement new ideas in the same way, and because many in the traditional system believe that the whole charter idea may end up, in the long run, hurting the traditional schools by siphoning away money and attention from those traditional schools. In this kind of current context, the likelihood of traditional schools learning from and replicating ideas from charters is simply very low.

Again, this is not to say that we are for or against charters as an organization. And we're certainly interested in learning from any model - private or charter or traditional public or alternative public - that helps low-income kids succeed. In fact, we have great respect and admiration for the innovative work being done to transform educational outcomes at places in Portland like SEI, Rosemary Anderson, Open Meadow, and DeLasalle. What this is to say is that we believe that the best way to spur change in traditional public schools vis-a-vis school-community partnerships, is to demonstrate models of success within the context of those same traditional public schools.

Now, to the second challenge regarding the HCZ model: money. Again, a \$30 million annual budget is obviously not sustainable or replicable outside of Wall Street's backyard. Here in the Portland metro, a third or a fourth or a fifth of that annual budget is tough to sustain, and in most places outside of the metro, even a tenth of that kind of annual budget is out of reach. So, if we were serious about doing business differently regarding money and replication throughout Oregon, we knew we had to think way out of the Wall Street box.

Part of the challenge here in Oregon is that delivering the full range of services needed to help low-income kids succeed is, indeed, expensive, particularly, as in

HCZ's case, if one organization bears all of these costs in the creation of another "new" program. Recognizing this reality in Oregon, our board asked a very smart question: what if, instead of creating another NEW program, we mobilize the best EXISTING programs to allocate just a portion of their efforts around one school, thereby creating a shared cost, collaborative model that would be far more efficient and far more replicable, both programmatically and financially?

That's exactly what we're doing with our Dreamer School model at Alder Elementary. Specifically, we are mobilizing dozens of nonprofit and education partners in nine key program areas - yes, nine areas, all led by experts in these areas: academic intervention, mentoring, culture of college and career, after school and summer, pre-K and early childhood, teacher effectiveness, family and wellness, middle and high school, and neighborhood. In addition, we have assembled a great evaluation/assessment team and next year, we will be assembling a replication team to help us craft a strategy for expansion to other schools and districts.

This year, 2011-12, begins the first year of a three year implementation plan for our Dreamer School at Alder Elementary. Partners already on board include:

- in the Academic Intervention area - SMART and Portland Reading Foundation, who are working together for the first time to bring their respective reading intervention expertise and services to the table. Right now, over 60 students at Alder, all of whom are way behind on their reading skills, have tutors from these great organizations to help them catch up to their peers.

- in the Mentoring area - Carolyn Becic from Oregon Mentors helped us identify a fantastic team of mentoring organizations, who this year will provide mentors for over 70 Alder students - including Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Family of Friends, and OASIS. We have also collaborated on a proposal with Friends of the Children, which we hope will very soon bring that fantastic organization to Alder as well.

- in the Culture of College and Career area - over fifty campuses have their pennants or banners flying in the school, and each grade level has been adopted by a local college or university - I mentioned Linfield and PSU earlier, which have adopted the fourth and fifth grade, respectively. Lewis and Clark has adopted the third graders, Concordia the second graders, PCC the first graders, and Mt Hood

CC the kindergartners. Each college has provided t-shirts that all the kids at Alder will wear every Friday as part of a weekly university day, all have provided campus swag, and all will be hosting campus visits - for example, in two weeks the second graders will kick off this year's site visits with a full-day at Concordia University. And once again, later this year, the fifth graders will do an overnight at Linfield College.

- in the Evaluation/Assessment area - we are very pleased to be working with the Oregon Research Institute and their Promise Neighborhood Research Consortium, with PSU's Regional Research Institute, and with ECONorthwest, which manages all of the statewide OAKS test data and which now tracks all Oregon college students through a special partnership with the National Student Clearinghouse.

- in the Neighborhood area, though still in the planning stages, we're focused right now on housing issues, as that was the top priority expressed in an Alder parent survey we did last year. We're specifically focused on how we can best help parents and guardians be able to stay in the area, so that their child can stay at Alder. As many of you know, transience is a huge issue in low-income communities, and many families are in such tight financial shape that even \$10 a month cheaper rent can cause a move to another district. Interestingly, we think it's the kids who will actually be our most powerful advocates in creating some stability in the student population at Alder. We already have anecdotal evidence that this is starting to happen - for example, last spring, a third grader came into school crying and when the Alder counselor asked why she was crying, she said, "because my mom says we have to move, but if I stay here, I'm going to college." The counselor then brought mom - who wasn't really sure what Alder was doing vis-a-vis college aspiration and preparation - into the school, and after mom understood better what the opportunities were for her daughter at Alder, she decided to stay. We're exploring partnerships with organizations like Habitat for Humanity, with the local Housing Authority, and with others to help families who want to stay in the neighborhood, be able to stay at Alder.

Well, you get the idea - again, we're leveraging partnerships in a shared cost, collaborative model with a wide range of nonprofit and education partners to address the huge array of challenges low-income kids face and to make a real, lasting difference for these kids and their families.

What I want to especially highlight here is that none of this would be possible without someone to play what we call the "strategic partnership developer" role. As a community, we often talk about the need for more collaboration and for more strategic partnership between nonprofits, and between nonprofits and schools. But the reality is that highly strategic, comprehensive partnerships like those in our Dreamer School model simply aren't possible without leadership that is specifically focused on mobilizing and leveraging the wide array of community resources needed to impact low-income kids' lives. We think that this strategic partnership development role is not only replicable, but is necessary to leverage the community resources necessary to substantially impact low-income kids' lives at schools throughout Oregon.

From a financial perspective, the majority of our partners are simply making Alder one of their sites to do their important work, thus sharing costs among several existing nonprofits, rather than creating a new entity to perform all of these functions. Again, we think that this is a far more sustainable model, and in fact, we have already been approached by three other school districts about replicating the Dreamer School model. Our response to these districts has been that we need a bit more time to get this first Dreamer School model right, but that we are flattered and encouraged by their faith in the Dreamer School idea.

Ultimately, I think what these districts are saying to us is that they see the wisdom of our strategic partnership development role, that they see the wisdom of approaching a school not from the perspective of fixing them but rather in a spirit of working together, that they see how a shared cost collaborative model could be replicable, that they see the importance of attending to the entire cradle to career continuum, and that they see the potential for a traditional public school model to inspire other traditional public schools in similar ways.

RELATED PROMISING EFFORTS

Beyond any of these districts' interest is a larger movement at the metro, state and national level that tells me that we're on to something here. Frankly, in my 26 year career in educational change, I have never seen greater alignment between local, regional, and state-wide educational frameworks and agendas than I see right now in Multnomah County and in the State of Oregon.

At the state-wide level, Governor Kitzhaber, of course, is leading a bi-partisan movement toward integrating preK, K-12, and higher education systems under one umbrella, all focused on the same goal of 40/40/20 educational outcomes for 4-year degrees, 2-year degrees or certificates, and high school completion.

At the county level, a new Multnomah County-wide "cradle-to-career" effort, led by the newly renamed All Hands Raised organization - formerly the Portland Public Schools Foundation - is adding regional fuel to the Governor's cradle-to-career fire.

In both cases, state and regional leaders envision a highly collaborative, shared cost, cradle to career system that is exemplified at the on-the-ground, local level in the Dreamer School model at Alder Elementary. Within both the Governor's state-wide effort and within the All Hands Raised county-wide effort - and of course within our effort at Alder - there is a powerful underlying assumption that communities do, indeed, ultimately want to work together to support better educational outcomes for low-income kids.

Remarkably, even at the national level, there is alignment with the cradle-to-career framework and with the shared cost, collaborative model of creating better outcomes for low-income kids. Nationally, in the private sector, an organization called CEOs for Cities and its cousin Living Cities initiatives are rallying behind cradle to career models. And the Feds have aligned themselves with this movement through the Promise Neighborhood Initiative, which aims to create more comprehensive, cradle to career efforts in cities throughout the U.S., modeled after Harlem Children's Zone, but much more oriented toward comprehensive, multiple organization collaboratives.

Even the academic press has gotten behind this movement, as evidenced by a recent article in the Stanford Social Innovation Review regarding the potential for what they call "collective impact" efforts like our Dreamer School, like Multnomah County's All Hands Raised effort, like the Governor's cradle to career initiative, and like Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Neighborhoods.

This synergy between local efforts, between county/regional efforts, between state-wide efforts, between national efforts, and with academic circles is - in my

view - a real rarity in alignment of educational vision, in educational framework, in educational goals, and in educational structure - it is truly unlike anything that I have seen before.

And so I am hopeful before you today that, together, we can make a difference in educational outcomes for our fastest growing population of low-income kids.

CLOSE

To close my remarks, I want to harken back to Secretary of Education - and "I Have a Dream" guy! - Arne Duncan's quote - "A country that out-educates us today will out-compete us tomorrow."

The reality is that anywhere from 15-25 countries, depending on how you count it, are already out-educating us today. The reality is that we're being out-competed RIGHT NOW. And the cold, hard reality, is that this problem, no matter what we do now, will in all likelihood get even worse before it gets better. But, on the more hopeful side, what we do today to support better educational outcomes for low-income kids, can profoundly and positively effect how we succeed as a city, as a region, as a state, and as a nation, over the next decade and for decades to come.

And the further good news is that if we invest now in kids, in education, and in communities and schools working together in highly strategic, highly collaborative relationships, we can make a difference and make a better community for all of us.

Let's all make it so, and thank you for letting me share these thoughts with you today.