

Saint Paul Progress 2005:

A Blueprint to Keep Saint Paul Moving Forward

The Vision For Educational Excellence and Youth Development in Saint Paul

I. Introduction

Saint Paul's future success is intrinsically linked to the success of our city's public and private schools and our many post-secondary institutions. We must ensure that these schools achieve educational excellence in order to attract and retain families and businesses in Saint Paul. We can develop the "Best Workforce in America."

The next Mayor of Saint Paul must provide leadership to promote educational excellence in our schools and continue the economic prosperity of our city.

It is critically important that the city focus on the overall needs of youth and families to ensure that our children get the opportunities they need to become good students and productive adults.

II. Education Summit

Within the first ninety days of my new administration, I will call an "Education Summit" to develop recommendations on how our entire community can come together to achieve educational excellence in our schools. The Summit will include representatives of our public and private schools, our post-secondary institutions, the business community, faith based

organizations, non-profit organizations and foundations, and the broader community as represented through various organizations.

The goal of the Summit will be to develop specific recommendations of ways that our various community organizations can work with the city and schools to help inspire better academic performance. The Summit would also recommend ways in which we can achieve greater institutional support within our city for helping the schools attain educational excellence. Many of the challenges facing our schools are related to social and economic issues that the greater community can assist the schools in addressing. Our goal should be to “let the teachers teach” and get the rest of us to help address the social issues that stand as barriers to the excellence we must seek as a community.

Topics that the Summit could address might include:

- Changing the starting and ending times of the school day to better serve the students’ needs;
- Increasing the availability of after-school learning and enrichment opportunities such as reading and computer tutoring;
- Assisting students to remain in the same school for the entire academic year even if the family moves within the district;
- Working with the business community, our post-secondary institutions, and our secondary schools to create the “Saint Paul Education Compact” modeled after the “Boston Compact” that provides students job incentives to succeed in school;
- Reducing absenteeism and truancy through close cooperation between parents, police, and schools;
- Increasing parental involvement in and responsibility for students’ success in school; and
- Improving the efficiency of the school district administrative functions to maximize financial resources for classroom teaching.

III. **Healthy Families and Youth Development**

To help students succeed in school, our city must focus on the many aspects of youth development that helps them to become better students. As former Minneapolis Don Fraser has advocated, cities must play a leadership role in focusing the greater community's attention on early childhood and school readiness efforts that prepare children to succeed in school. Examples of these are Minneapolis' "Success by Six" program developed by the city and corporate community and some of the "Healthy Start" initiatives of other cities.

In addition, the city must take seriously its important role in providing quality library and recreation services to our youth and families if we expect them to do well in school. The city should form a partnership with community non-profits and the schools to keep every school open until 6:00 pm for after-school learning and enrichment opportunities.

The school buildings are already paid for. The community non-profits would be available to help staff the after-school programs. The city would take the lead in recruiting thousands of volunteers through a "Saint Paul Pledge for Youth" effort led by the Mayor to help support these after-school efforts.

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Education and Youth Development Policy Group
P.O. Box 40203
Saint Paul, MN 55104
(651) 645-9171
www.longforsaintpaul.com