

Looking At The ISSUES

July 7, 2006

College Access: A Collaborative Effort Across Stark County

The culture is shifting in Ohio. Over 86% of adults now agree that “getting a college education is as important as getting a high school diploma used to be.”¹ And, in Stark County, there’s a new growing trend – more and more kids are becoming the first in their family to go on to college. While it’s difficult to estimate how many of our kids fall into this category, we do know that among those students applying for financial aid, the number of first timers range from 30% in Jackson to 67% of the kids in Sandy Valley.²

College, however, can be a mysterious place for first time students with forms, tests, applications, financial barriers and others. Sometimes, because kids and parents don’t understand how to navigate the “system,” they get lost in the maze. Sometimes, they even give up, or don’t start the process at all.

College access programs are a helping hand that opens the door for kids and families by providing support for understanding and completing the college admissions process. Activities may include: career guidance, test preparation, application support, and financial aid counseling. The programs are most helpful to first generation and low income students who do not have family college experience.

Across Stark County schools, businesses, organizations and foundations have increasingly realized that the quality of life and economic future of our community are linked to our levels of education. This is seen as well at the state level where Ohio has set a goal of increasing the college going rate by 30% by 2015.³ To meet that goal in Stark County we will need to send about 1,200 additional high school graduates on to college each year.⁴ That’s why the Stark Education Partnership and its partners are supporting multiple strategies for college access:

- We’re a member of the **Ohio College Access Network (OCAN)** providing Post Secondary Access Advisors (PSA2s) to work in four Stark County districts – Alliance, Canton City, Canton Local and Massillon. Collaborating with and expanding the reach of guidance counselors within the high schools, our PSA2 advisors meet with students and families regarding college selection, application and financial aid. Stark County P-16 Compact (See *Looking at the Issues* - 6/2/06) support has enhanced these services through grants.
- The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton provided a grant of \$10,000 for ACT test preparation materials and Dominion (East Ohio) has provided a grant of \$10,000 to support fees for qualified students to take

Generous Local Support for College Access

Access issues often center on finance. Stark County students are fortunate to have generous and ever growing scholarship opportunities through local corporations – like the *Timken Company* – and foundations. The *Paul and Carol David Foundation* (www.davidscholar.org), for instance, is one of the largest independent scholarship funds in Ohio and has provided funds to over 200 students since 2002. The *Stark Community Foundation* (www.starkcommunityfoundation.org) manages approximately 80 scholarship and loan funds. Over 380 scholarship and loans were awarded for the 2005-06 academic year from philanthropic funds which have been established with Stark Community Foundation. For Stark County students this translates into approximately \$345,000 in awards to assist them in their pursuit of higher education.

Questions or Comments?

Email aoneill@edpartner.org or call 330-452-0829.

Our Website

www.edpartner.org

Our Address

220 Market Ave S - Suite 350
Canton, Ohio 44702-2181

the ACT a second time. Our membership in the **National College Access Network** (NCAN) has made Stark County students eligible for one time Nelnet College Access Scholarships. Three students have been awarded \$2,000 in the past two years.

- For the past six years a federal grant, **GEAR UP** (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for College), has provided Canton City School students who were in the 6th and 7th grades at its inception with experiences and skills to enter and succeed in college. (See *Issues* - 6/16/06). The Stark Education Partnership served as a partner and provided matching funds which have provided earned stipends to students to take the ACT, apply to college, and/or pay for matriculation fees and/or books. During the 2005/6 school year Canton City Schools seniors requested and received 933 checks totaling \$39,066 to support their access to college.

Converging access strategies such as these have contributed to an increase in the college going rate in Canton City Schools from 36% (2003) to 66% (2006).⁵

Canton Local Collaborates with Local Colleges

We applaud Canton Local's collaboration with Malone College and Kent State Stark to provide familiarity and access.

- Malone College has teamed with Canton South High School to create "Compact for Success," an initiative which encourages the belief of students and their parents that achieving a bachelor's degree is an attainable goal. The program begins at the middle school and continues through high school. Students who complete the program are guaranteed admission to Malone College and a "Compact for Success" scholarship.
- Kent State Stark Campus's *Application Action!* began in Canton Local in January 2006. Strategies for access and success include: in school application and FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) support by college financial aid counselors and guidance counselors; application fee waivers; campus visit; reduced cost summer course and free student seminar; and a book store voucher. The pilot's first class enrolled 13 students in the summer opportunity. This week, the Stark Education Partnership was awarded a Best Practice grant to continue this pilot project (see sidebar).

¹Ohio's Education Matters KnowledgeWorks Foundation 2005 Poll

²Ohio Board of Regents

³Governor's Commission on Higher Education and the Economy, 2004

⁴"Changing a Culture: Toward a 30% Increase in Degree Attainment in Stark County, Ohio"

⁵The Repository, June 12, 2006

Looking At The Week

The Stark Education Partnership has been awarded a *Best Practice Implementation Grant of \$23,450 by the Ohio College Access Network to fund "On Course for Success: A Collaborative Partnership of Canton Local, Kent State Stark and the Stark Education Partnership."* The college campus retention program will build on *Application Action!* and will focus on Canton Local students entering Kent Stark in the 2006/07 school year.