



NEWS The United States Conference of Mayors

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NASHVILLE MAYOR BILL PURCELL AWARDED HIGH SCHOOL REFORM PLANNING GRANT FROM THE U.S. CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

Washington, D.C. – Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell has been awarded a \$40,000 grant under the U.S. Conference of Mayor's *Enhancing the Mayors' Role in Urban Education Reform* program, which supports mayoral leadership and involvement in public education. Nashville is one of two cities to win this national planning grant to assist the city and its school system in addressing the particular needs of high school students and better prepare them for the postsecondary education and world of work.

Supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the project's expectation is that through a year-long planning process, mayors interested in public education reform will be able to develop innovative policies and programs to stem the growing number of high school drop-outs. Most importantly, the grant dictates that any efforts initiated by the mayor must be done in partnership with the school system and other education stakeholders in the city.

In Nashville, Mayor Purcell has proposed to use the grant to develop a strategic plan for implementing comprehensive reform for all of the city's high schools. A city-wide steering committee composed of key representatives from Metro Schools, the Mayor's Office, the Mayor's Youth Council, and the local Workforce Development Board, as well as key community and business organizations, will conduct an analysis and summary of the system-wide dropout rate; make a site visit to a city that has implemented a successful high school reform initiative that reduces the dropout rate; conduct a series of focus groups among youth in and out of schools; and produce a report of findings and recommendations at the Mayor's Summit on Children and Youth in early 2007.

"We've made significant progress in improving our school facilities, and we're now seeing academic gains, particularly at the elementary and middle school level," said Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell. "This planning grant brings new resources to the table to help our school district and city establish outstanding high schools."

"Comprehensive high school reform is my top priority for the coming year," said Dr. Pedro Garcia, Director of Metro Schools. "The key to real improvement in our schools is a community-wide, collaborative effort. I'm pleased that the US Conference of Mayors and the Carnegie Foundation is investing in our work in Nashville."

The Conference of Mayors is eager to share information from this project with other mayors to assist high school reform in cities nationwide. Mobile (AL) Mayor Samuel Jones was also awarded a USCM High School Reform Planning Grant.

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors is the official nonpartisan organization of cities with populations of 30,000 or more. There are 1,139 such cities in the country today, each represented in the Conference by its chief elected official, the Mayor.