

PepsiCo Foundation, City Year, Communities In Schools and Johns Hopkins Talent Development Announce “Diplomas Now”

Research-based Dropout Intervention Program Rolls Out in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans and San Antonio

Sept. 23, 2009 – PURCHASE, N.Y. and WASHINGTON, D.C. – The PepsiCo Foundation today announced a three-year, \$5 million grant to Diplomas Now, an initiative that will unite three proven players in U.S. high school dropout prevention – City Year, Communities In Schools and Johns Hopkins Talent Development. The organizations are combining their expertise and resources to help turn around America’s most challenged middle and high schools, those that produce a majority of the country’s dropouts.

Using ground-breaking research that identifies students most likely to drop out, the partners will match interventions to individual students. Piloted last year in Philadelphia, Diplomas Now is expanding to Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans and San Antonio this year.

“Diplomas Now is part of PepsiCo Foundation’s expanding commitment to ensuring that a high-quality public education is within reach for all of America’s students,” said Indra K. Nooyi, PepsiCo chairman and chief executive officer and chairman of PepsiCo Foundation. “We are proud to support the collaboration of three outstanding organizations as they focus their considerable experience and passion for working with children and schools on a joint initiative that is helping youth across the country stay in school and reach their goals.”

Diplomas Now responds to ground-breaking research developed by Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Social Organization of Schools and the Philadelphia Education Fund that shows 75 percent of America’s high school dropouts can be identified between sixth and ninth grades by tracking poor attendance, poor behavior and course failure in English or Math. Diplomas Now uses these early warning signs to identify students most likely to drop out and provides a “second shift” of caring adults who have the time, expertise and commitment to identify and meet the unique needs of individual students.

“To solve the dropout crisis, we need research-based solutions strong enough to transform our most challenged schools,” said Robert Balfanz, co-director of the Talent Development Middle Grades and High Schools programs at Johns Hopkins University. “We need a reform that will turn around the whole school, while delivering the right intervention to the right student at the right time.”

The partner organizations will bring resources and expertise to underserved schools in the following ways:

- City Year brings diverse teams of young leaders in full-time service to schools as “near peers” who focus on improving students’ attendance, behavior and coursework, and support overall student success.
- Communities In Schools provides a school-based coordinator who connects students with community resources, such as healthcare, mentors, tutors and after-school programs to address students’ unmet social needs and help them focus on learning.

- Talent Development provides comprehensive school improvement through evidence-based curriculum and instruction, school organization and extensive professional development.

“Through Diplomas Now, we have the best of three worlds,” said Daniel J. Cardinali, president of Communities In Schools. “The combination of Communities In Schools, City Year and Talent Development provides schools with on-site experts who are committed to targeting student needs; it’s an approach with the potential to substantially increase the graduation rate among students served in some of America’s most challenged public schools.”

“National service has an important role to play in strengthening America and taking on some of the toughest problems we face, especially in our schools,” said Michael Brown, chief executive officer and co-founder of City Year. “City Year’s dedicated AmeriCorps members are focused on helping students stay in school and on track, and Diplomas Now is an important new partnership for making that happen.”

Diplomas Now was successfully piloted at Feltonville School of Arts and Sciences in Philadelphia during the 2008-09 school year. Data from the first year indicates that this initiative can improve student attendance, behavior and coursework. The school reached Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), a measurement defined by the U.S. No Child Left Behind Act. Philadelphia Education Fund (PEF), which has been a partner from research to pilot, provided training and technical assistance at Feltonville and will serve as the technical assistance partner as Diplomas Now moves across the country.

“Having a program like Diplomas Now makes a big difference,” said Nelson Reyes, Feltonville’s principal. “Teachers can focus on teaching, and a dedicated team of professionals is focusing on the things necessary to create conditions for our students to learn.”

A congressional briefing, co-sponsored by the PepsiCo Foundation and Dr. Robert Balfanz of Johns Hopkins University, will be held at 11 a.m. EST on Sept. 29 at the Congressional Visitors Center. The briefing is designed to showcase the first-year results of Diplomas Now and examine how federal policy can help expand effective solutions to put an end to the nation’s dropout crisis.

Additional information can be found online at www.DiplomasNow.org.

For more information on the research conducted by Johns Hopkins Center for Social Organization of Schools and the Philadelphia Education Fund visit <http://www.philaedfund.org/research/index.htm>.

About the Diplomas Now Partners

City Year is an AmeriCorps program that unites diverse young leaders for a year of full-time service. City Year corps members are trained to work in underserved schools to provide targeted academic and school-wide interventions to help students get on track and stay on track to graduate. As tutors, mentors and role models, City Year corps members have an impact on the lives of children and transform neighborhoods across the United States and South Africa. www.cityyear.org

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Communities In Schools is the nation's largest dropout prevention organization, working in nearly 3,300 K-12 public schools. Founded in 1977, Communities In Schools is anchored by the national office in Arlington, Va. Today, more than 1.3 million young people annually receive direct services through nearly 200 Communities In Schools local affiliates in 26 states in the District of Columbia. Between 80-90 percent of Communities In Schools' monitored students show improvement in academic achievement, attendance, behavior and promotion to the next grade level. www.communitiesinschools.org

Talent Development is a program at Johns Hopkins University that specializes in research and comprehensive school reform models to address the needs of low-performing schools and their students. Talent Development middle and high school programs specialize in organizational, curricular and environmental reforms to make the whole school a better place to learn. www.every1graduates.org/tdworks

The PepsiCo Foundation, established in 1962, is the philanthropic anchor of PepsiCo, providing charitable contributions to eligible non-profit organizations in the health, environment and education fields. In 2008 alone, PepsiCo Foundation contributed \$30 million towards programs to help achieve the vision of creating a better tomorrow for the global community. Since the 1950s, PepsiCo has been dedicated to funding educational programs for the underserved, and PepsiCo Foundation currently has more than \$12.5 million committed to this cause. Diplomas Now is one of PepsiCo Foundation's signature programs. www.pepsico.com/Purpose/PepsiCo-Foundation.aspx

Philadelphia Education Fund is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of public education for underserved youth throughout the Philadelphia area. Working with schools, districts and other organizations, the fund aims to create high performing secondary schools, provide all students with access to postsecondary educational opportunities, and support student success from pre-K through college. www.philaedfund.org

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