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## More groups climb on cradle-to-career bandwagon

By [Charles Bartling](#) on September 19, 2014 - 2:56pm



Some 22 Evanston organizations have pledged a total of \$227,875 in startup funds for a community-wide effort to help Evanston youth get a head start on their career objectives.

The initiative, dubbed “Cradle to Career,” was launched by Evanston/Skokie School District 65 and Evanston Township High School District 202 in an effort to deal with the achievement gap between white and African-American students in the public school system.

Because studies show that educational success is largely a product of early-childhood training, the districts have collaborated on a program, patterned after a similar effort in Cincinnati, Ohio, to deliver educational stimulation to children from the time they are born, rather than waiting until they enter the public school system when it may be too late.

While they realize that successful parenting efforts are largely responsible for that stimulation, supporters contend that many students come from low-income families headed by a single parent who lacks the time and resources to provide that foundation for success.

This lack of early childhood training, they contend, is a significant factor in these students failing in the classroom situation and turning to a lifetime of crime as a result of their inability to find productive work.

In addition to the cash pledges, the high school is acting as its fiscal agent, the YMCA is taking on the human resources function, and Family Focus is providing office space.

The group is now in the process of hiring an executive director who will assist in strategic planning and begin the process of developing goals and objectives that will lead to programming for the benefit of Evanston's young people.

The two school systems began the fund-raising effort with pledges of \$50,000 each. The City of Evanston responded with an equal amount, and Northwestern University threw in its support with \$25,000, followed by \$10,000 from the McGaw YMCA.

Since then, \$5,000 pledges each have come from the Childcare Network of Evanston, the Evanston Community Foundation, Peer Services, United Way Northwest, Youth Organizations Umbrella, and YWCA Evanston/North Shore.

Other four-digit pledges include the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston and the Second Baptist Church at \$3,500 each; the Center for Independent Futures, \$2,000; and Connections for the Homeless, \$1,000.

Other contributions include the Moran Center for Youth Adequacy, \$750; Evanston Chamber of Commerce, Evanston Scholars, Reba Early Learning Center, and St. Nicholas Parish, \$500 each; and Allowance for Good, \$125.

At a joint committee meeting yesterday of representatives from the two public school districts, ETHS Superintendent Eric Witherspoon said the group is currently interviewing candidates for executive director, who they hope to bring on board around the first of the year.

The Cincinnati effort, called Strive, has five key goals and strategies:

Every child will be prepared for school from birth through early childhood education.

Every child will be supported inside and outside the school walls.

Every child will succeed academically.

Every student will enroll in some form of postsecondary education.

Every student will graduate and enter a career.

By combining efforts of the schools, city government, non-profit organizations, and the business community, the belief is that young people will be in a better position to profit from the various resources available in the community.

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