

## **Cumulative Summary July 24, 2006**

This is a summary of input that we have received from our various meetings at various community sites. This summary includes conversations/meetings with adults and/or students at the following sites: **Georgia Fatherhood, Early Head Start (2 groups), Grand Slam, Boys and Girls Club, Service Providers, Senior Providers, Rocksprings Community Center, Hancock Community Development Association, St. Joseph's Church (Spanish speakers), Oasis, Columbus Ave. Recreation Center, Religious Community, Housing Authority's ICC, East Friendship Baptist Church, as well as ongoing input from private citizens.** (More meetings are scheduled.)

**Schools that have been visited to talk with faculty and staff include: Burney Harris Middle School, Barrow Elementary, Alps Road, Chase Street School, the Alternative School, Gaines Elementary, Whit Davis, Oglethorpe, Timothy Road, Winterville, Clarke Middle, Hilsman, Cleveland Road, Fowler Drive, and Cedar Shoals.**

**A topic that has frequently come up both directly and indirectly is the importance of developing a group focused on POLICY ISSUES AND ADVOCACY. Another area that might be addressed is Regional Conversations with our neighboring counties on a variety of issues. These may be potential new committees which would help link some issues contained in various committees and provide additional information.**

**This Summary is divided into the six major committees as well as the Education Subcommittees.:**

### **EDUCATION**

- **The high dropout rate is a problem.**
- **The better the education someone has, the less likely they will live in poverty.**
- **Have UGA provide free tuition to children whose parents work at the university provided that the children qualify to attend.**
- **Students who are reading below grade level in third and fourth grade are more likely to drop out of school.**
- **Students who are retained once are 60% more likely to drop out of school, while those who are retained twice are 90% more likely to drop out of school.**
- **If someone is reading below a seventh grade level in high school there are very limited academic options in Athens.**
- **There are many reasons students choose to dropout of school including boredom, families needing money, sick of being in school, pregnancy, believe school is not for them, feel teachers don't support them, bullying, too far behind, low self-esteem, low expectations, too many rules, not enough support at home, peer pressure, drugs.**
- **Undocumented status for immigrants prevent students from going to college.**

- There are many ideas to help encourage and support students staying in school. These ideas include providing many more hands-on activities particularly vocational opportunities and perhaps schools focused on vo-tech opportunities. The emphasis was that these were not elective classes, but rather a vocational focus so that students could learn a marketable trade.
- It was emphasized that early academic reading support for students in trouble is critical. This support needs to be with persons trained to teach reading skills in schools.
- There is a need for more mentors and teachers supporting and encouraging students.
- Alternative schools should be focused on providing for the needs of students and not simply as punishment.
- The attitudes of teachers, both positive and negative, has a huge impact on students' likes or dislikes about school.
- Put family planning/sex ed. back in schools starting at age 11.
- Put drivers ed into schools.
- Many special needs students are being lost in the NCLB emphasis on test scores.
- Provide Spanish as a second language
- Standardized tests may inhibit teaching.
- Provide programs like DARE
- Provide more funding for smaller class sizes and more focused attention on the students and their families.
- Look at school uniforms as a possibility for ACC.
- Students need field trips and other access to broader life experiences.
- Literacy coaches and public library staff have been helpful in working with teachers and parents.
- With the high school dropout rate between 40 and 50% in Athens-Clarke County it is apparent that there is a need for different choices in educational opportunities. One size does not fit all.
- Disabilities often go undiagnosed.
- Don't punish schools with high numbers of poverty students.
- Discipline support is needed to address the chronic behavior problem.
- Pay teachers more and empower them more as professionals.
- Get rid of trailers at the school.
- Stigma is often associated with being poor and this effects student behavior and expectations.
- Provide alternative methods for measuring school success. AYP is measured by one test. NCLB needs to be looked at.
- The rule on absenteeism seems unreasonable.

#### **A. NEW/SUCCESSFUL MODELS**

- A. Community Center/Holistic Approach—Develop school models that address the needs of students Pre-natal through high school.**

- Establish school based community resource centers to address the various child care, health care, and mental health needs of students and their families.
  - Develop different educational models for high poverty schools (i.e. apprenticeship programs, extended day, extended year, schools within schools, community centers within schools, full care centers serving families and their children beginning at birth or before.)
  - Provide High quality staff and programs in low income communities.
- B. Vocational and Technical Schools**
- Some of the skills would include cosmetology, cooking, auto mechanics, cartooning, plumbing, construction, industrial arts, carpentry. These courses would not be seen as electives, but rather teaching students marketable skills.
  - Provide high quality vocational programs at the middle and high school levels.
  - There is a need for more post-secondary school opportunities for parents.
  - Do a better job of promoting what comes after high school. Vocational schools, community colleges, and trade schools need to be promoted.
  - It was mentioned that it was important that there are other ways to get grades than paper and pencil
- C. Charter Schools**
- Explore the governance and successful practices of charter schools including KIPP schools, Drew Charter School in Atlanta, etc. A trip is being planned to Atlanta.
- D. Replication/Expansion of Performance Learning Center.**
- E. Expand Early Learning Programs and Pre-K**
- F. Extended School Year programs at Chase St. and Gaines St.**
- G. Look at gender based schools as a possibility.**

## **B. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

- Provide more family support and parent education programs.
- Provide Spanish for adults
- Parents need support in helping their students with homework.
- Parents need to take more responsibility in raising their children.
- Parents are uncomfortable being at the school as many have had bad experiences themselves.
- Often homework is not followed up at home.
- Fighting is often seen as an appropriate method of handling conflict. This creates a problem in the school setting.
- It is important to listen to one another and develop trust.
- Get parents to sign contract to support their school.
- Parents love their children.

- Provide self-awareness training to those in poverty to help them find the root to their problems.
- Match mentors with families to help them get out of poverty.

### **C. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY**

- Faith based partners need to become more vocal in combating the issues of poverty including, drugs, teen pregnancy, etc.
- Churches have vans and people to help provide students with role models and experiences.
- Facility usage may be available for early learning programs.
- Churches could develop a Mentor Program to help people get and retain jobs.
- Churches need to take the lead in addressing the race and class issues.
- Church/State issues need to be put on a back burner so that effective partnerships can be developed to serve the needs of the poor.
- It was suggested that a Family Committee become a component of Prosperous Athens.

### **D. YOUTH**

- Need safe places for kids and teens to go, particularly at night and week-ends.
- Summer activities for elementary school kids with transportation provided
- Many fee based programs (even small fees) keep a lot of kids out of activities—there is a need for more quality programs available to poor families (i.e. Basketball Leagues)
- Leisure Services may need to reach out more to poor communities.
- Leisure services may need to extend their hours and programming in high need areas.
- There needs to be more high quality recreational opportunities for kids. i.e. expanding programs like Grand Slam and Boys and Girls Club.
- There is a need for more recreational options including different musical groups, more youth activities. These activities need to be provided throughout Athens.
- It was mentioned that there is a need for more open conversations to discuss drugs, sexual issues, peer pressure, careers, etc.

### **E. EARLY LEARNING**

- 27.6% of Athens-Clarke County children under age 5 live in poverty; 29.5% of babies born in ACC in 2004 (last year of our data) were born to mothers who did not receive prenatal care (in 97 & 98, it was less than 8%); 29.1% of 2004 ACC babies were born to mothers with less than 12 years of education; the 2004 teen pregnancy rate for ACC was 46.8/1000 (statewide it was 39.4).

- **Need for high quality child care, not baby-sitting. The higher the quality of care that a child has from birth to 5 years old, the more likely they are to be successful in school.**
- **Replicate current successful early learning models at ACC.**
- **Child care provided at businesses.**
- **For early care and learning there is a gap at age 3. Early Head Start serves from prenatal to the third birthday, prekindergarten serves 4-year-olds- possibly Head Start could fill this gap.**
- **After school programs need to be of higher quality**
- **After school programs could be linked with Leisure services**
- **Campaign for employer sponsored child care.**
- **Average cost for licensed early care & learning centers in Athens for an infant is \$118 per week (\$5900 per year excluding holidays etc.; tuition at UGA is \$4878 per year); maximum DFCS subsidy is \$93/week.**
- **41% of parents who called Child Care Resource & Referral reported that they could not find child care that met their needs.**
- **As of March (when we gathered the data), the waiting list for Pre-K was 198 (520 children enrolled), for Even Start 75 (163 children enrolled), and for Early Head Start 154 (80 children enrolled).**
- **High quality early child care needs to be developmentally appropriate and is important in order to have students academically ready when they begin school.**
- **Establish school based community resource centers to address the various child care, health care, and mental health needs of students and their families.**
- **There is a lack of coordination of services**
- **There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.**
- **Facility usage may be available for early learning programs.**
- **DFCS child care assistance has been frozen except for parents under 18 & in school full time, TANF recipients (fewer than 100 in Athens), and kids in the foster care system. So, if you need the assistance to keep your job, you can't get it, so you quit your job because you can't afford child care, you go on TANF, and then you can get assistance.**
- **The state is developing a rating system related to quality of providers.**
- **An immense amount of learning occurs during the preschool years due to rapid brain development. For instance, the number of connections (synapses) in the child's brain doubles between ages 2 and 3 years. (Shore, 1997**
- **Children who receive high quality care and learning opportunities during the preschool years tend to be more successful in school and later in life than those who are not as fortunate. (NICHD study, Perry Preschool study)**
- **The quality of parental care during the child's early years is the major determinant of a child's school success. (NICHD study)**

- The following family factors challenge a parent's ability to provide quality care for their young children: poverty, domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness, mental retardation, teenage parenthood, and a history of being maltreated as a child. (Gowen & Nebrig )
- Although parental care is the major determinant of a child's success in school and life, high quality early care and learning programs can mitigate the effects of very low inadequate parental care. (NICHD study)
- Children living in near poverty tend to receive the poorest quality out-of-home child care and learning opportunities. (NICHD study)
- Most children living in poverty are eligible for some form of federally subsidized early care and learning program (e.g., Early Head Start, Head Start, child care (CAPS) subsidies), but due to lack of funding, some do not receive it. For instance, even before the freeze, 22,000 eligible children in Georgia did not receive CAPS child care subsidies due to lack of funds.

#### **F. ROLE MODELS**

- The importance of positive role models and mentors were ongoing themes
- It was mentioned that mentors for families were also important to help them overcome poverty.
- Students having professional mentors to help teach and model various vocations were emphasized. Internships and apprenticeship programs have been emphasized.

#### **G. CONTINUING EDUCATION**

- The better the education someone has, the less likely they will live in poverty.
- Need more adult education with qualified tutors. Put GED classes in community centers.
- Let women use their community volunteer hours for education.
- More ESOL and GED classes on week-ends and afternoons.
- Need more adult education with qualified tutors. Put GED classes in community centers.
- Provide educational programs in prisons.
- There are language issues with Hispanic speaking families.
- UGA and Athens Tech could provide workforce training.
- If someone has low literacy capabilities, then there are few job options.
- Undocumented status for immigrants prevent students from going to college.

#### **H. DEPENDENT CARE**

- Need affordable adult day care centers
- Many Seniors are on fixed incomes

#### **ECONOMY**

- Develop regional economic development strategies.
- Develop a community foundation to support the coordinated efforts of funding service delivery gaps and needs.

- **Help for people whose taxes are going up because of newer houses in their neighborhood**
- **Need a diverse economy**
- **Entrepreneurs need some start-up capital.**
- **Need to teach financial literacy.**
- **Teach people to clear their credit records.**
- **Mass Mutual Financial Group has a free education life insurance policy for the poor.**
- **Make sure illegal immigrants do not have advantages over local work force for job opportunities.**
- **Make sure everyone is taking advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit.**

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- **It's important that buses run at night and Sundays and that they go to job sites outside of Athens Clarke County.**
- **There may be a need for a regional transportation strategy.**
- **Free bus fare may encourage parents to attend things at their child's school as well as encourage parents to further their education**
- **Transportation is a need for seniors.**
- **School, child care, health services, etc. need to be accessible to parents. Transportation is an issue.**
- **Field trips are extremely important to expose kids to the larger world and larger visions.**
- **More bike lanes are needed.**
- **More lights near sidewalks for safety.**
- **Transportation needs to be provided for high quality extended day and extended year programs.**
- **Student mobility is an issue.**
- **Transportation for field trips is important for student learning.**
- **Bus transportation for parents getting GED or jobs is an issue.**
- **There is a lack of coordination of services**
- **There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.**
- **Transportation is not provided to Performance Learning Center.**

### **HOUSING**

- **There is a need for more low income housing. The waiting list for public housing is a year or more.**
- **Section 8 housing is also very limited.**
- **Other types of affordable housing are needed. (You have to make \$9.79 per hour to rent a 1 bedroom in Athens-Can someone give me that source?)**
- **Need recreational areas to go at night for those living in public housing.**
- **More homeless shelter beds-expand the homeless shelter.**
- **Many homeless people are avoided and their needs seem overwhelming.**
- **Homeless people need mentors and training.**

- **Need support for seniors to fix up their homes.**
- **Affordable housing for formerly incarcerated men.**
- **There is no public housing available to those with drug charges.**
- **The focus seems to be providing housing for students, not Athens' residents.**
- **Rentals often require a deposit and/or application fee that some can't pay.**
- **Homeless people are treated with disrespect.**
- **There are a lot of good people trying to help the homeless.**
- **Athens Clarke need to become involved more in the improvement of its housing stock. This should include funding (loans or grants) for the rehab of owner occupied and rental housing units.**

### **HEALTH CARE**

- **Have affordable health care for adults**
- **Veterans need health care benefits.**
- **People without insurance are charged high fees and/or get put at the end of the line.**
- **Have Medicaid workers help families stay on Medicaid**
- **Perhaps a 24 hour clinic for people needing help rather than emergency room**
- **Food stamps-make sure that everyone who needs them , get them.**
- **Access to health care for immigrants.**
- **Students often come to school sick.**
- **Students often come to school with family and emotional issues that need to be addressed.**
- **Self-esteem is a huge issue for some students.**
- **Students come to school sleepy.**
- **Disabilities often go undiagnosed.**
- **Students need insurance or peachcare to get dental services.**
- **Establish school based community resource centers to address the various child care, health care, and mental health needs of students and their families.**
- **There is a lack of coordination of services**
- **There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.**
- **Provide full-time social work services at schools.**

### **WORKFORCE**

- **High school students need internships and meaningful summer jobs.**
- **There are many ideas to help encourage and support students staying in school. These ideas include providing many more vocational opportunities and perhaps schools focused on vo-tech opportunities. Some of the skills mentioned included cosmetology, cooking, auto mechanics, cartooning, plumbing, construction, industrial arts. The emphasis was that these were**

not elective classes, but rather a vocational focus so that students could learn a marketable trade.

- **Workers feel that minimum wage is not sufficient. \$8-10/hr. is needed to overcome poverty.**
- **The University seems focused on providing jobs for students, not Athens' residents.**
- **There is a need to provide more jobs and technical support for those with disabilities.**
- **People need to be paid a living wage-particularly by the university.**
- **Need more adult education with qualified tutors. Put GED classes in community centers.**
- **Let women use their community volunteer hours for education.**
- **More ESOL and GED classes on week-ends and afternoons**
- **Health care benefits**
- **Discrimination-people don't want to hire a woman for certain work.**
- **More and better job training**
- **Set up job training for high school students and older people**
- **Past criminal behaviors prevent people from getting jobs**
- **It is difficult to get a job without a high school education, even labor jobs.**
- **Potential employees who have been in jail want opportunities to get jobs**
- **Convicted felons who do their time are having trouble getting jobs.**
- **There needs to be job training available in jails.**
- **College students taking many of the jobs that teens could do.**
- **When the paper prints that a person has been arrested, this can ruin that person's reputation even if the charges prove false. Arrests show up on background checks even if there are no convictions.**
- **Poor work history, no GED, and felonies get in the way of getting a job. (How do we serve this group of citizens?)**
- **Non-payment of child support puts people in jail and incapable of paying child support.**
- **UGA and Athens Tech could provide community embedded workforce training.**
- **Parents have difficulty getting off work to make school conferences and visit schools.**
- **Employers need to provide time off for parents to visit schools.**
- **GED classes are important for parents.**
- **There needs to be more communication between outside service providers and schools.**
- **Summer employment opportunities and internships are needed for high school students.**
- **University of Georgia needs to become more of a partner and support of its employees.**
- **Families working multiple jobs have a problem spending time on school issues**

- It is very important that high school students be given the opportunity to have summer jobs in order to earn money as well as develop employment skills.
- Internships and Business Mentoring are important opportunities to develop.
- No sick care for children. Sometimes parents jeopardize their jobs to stay at home.
- Students need to learn about the legal system and the long-term consequences of crime in relation to their future employment.
- Discuss employer/employee issues including breaks, benefits, clock in times, etc.
- An accounting of the number of jobs lost in the last ten years and the number gained with the hourly wage for each, and whether or not the jobs include benefits.
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### **RACE ISSUES**

- Black kids from the ghetto get in trouble for being loud.
- There is discrimination in hiring practices based on race.
- There may be a need to develop a Tenants' Rights organization.
- Honest race discussions are needed among whites, blacks, and latinos.
- Race is an issue. Students are treated differently because they are black.
- Kids need to see people like them running programs
- There was a consistent belief that there are race issues, although most people seem to have friends of other races.
- There is often a cultural and racial divide among parents, teachers, and schools.
- Provide poverty workshops for teachers and staff to help them understand the implications of poverty on their students and families.
- The Steering Committee needs to be more representative of the community.
- Churches need to take the lead in addressing the race and class issues.

### **SERVICE PROVIDERS**

- Develop a community foundation to help fund and develop strategies for filling service gaps.
- Better advertising of services
- Service providers of all kinds need to go out more into the communities to advertise and recruit –don't just go on Channel 7
- There needs to be a greater spirit of cooperation and collaboration among agencies and service providers. Incentives need to be provided to encourage collaboration and not "ownership" of programs.
- The need for more emergency assistance including diapers/baby food, housing, utility bills, transportation, and food.
- More integration and coordination of services
- Support small agencies with less bureaucracy that are closer to the clientele.
- Students need basic clothing and school supplies

- **Update 211**
- **More strategic collaboration, fund-raising, and sharing of resources is important for service providers.**
- **Developing a unified advocacy component.**

#### **MISCELLANEOUS**

- **Provide bi-lingual access to information.**
- **People scam the poor.**
- **Attend listening forums held by Leisure Services.**
- **Immigrants need documentation.**
- **Getting legal help is difficult. Poor people are often taken advantage of because they don't know how to get their legal rights.**

**IF YOU HAVE ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, THOUGHTS, ETC. PLEASE LET ME KNOW**