

It takes a village.

For over 25 years United Way Worldwide (UWW) has been tracking and researching the correlation between social trends and education, all of which indicate that improved education levels have a positive impact on several key economic and social measures. This research has prompted United Ways across the country to take a more integrated approach to working on community level goals that improve education, help people achieve financial stability and promote healthy lives.

Based on the findings of local community needs assessment efforts, United Way of Greater Duluth (UWGD) has strategically aligned its work around three key priority areas - Education, Income, Health – while at the same time maintaining support of Basic Human Services. Ultimately, UWGD is working to address community-level issues by engaging individuals and organizations in initiatives that address our community's most pressing needs.

In 2009, United Way's Community Impact Report offered an in-depth look at the effects of poverty on children in Greater Duluth in the areas of early childhood care and education, youth development and K-12 education. The 2010 Community Impact Report takes this topic even further by highlighting the priority area of education with a focus on increasing on-time graduation rates and addressing racial and socio-economic disparities. The report outlines the issue and provides suggested strategies to help increase on-time high school graduations, and close the achievement gap. It also highlights partnerships, relationships and initiatives currently working to address these issues. This report serves as an invitation for the entire community to join together in setting a measurable goal for our local on-time graduation rates and identifying local strategies that will help our community reach that goal. Together we must commit to strategic investments that pave the way for children's success and community prosperity.



“Many factors make up a good school—community support, highly-qualified staff and an overall positive environment.”

John Muenich
Principal, Hermantown High School, ISD #700



“Early childhood education is the foundation for success in school which carries children throughout life.”

Marcia DeMeo-Morse
Teacher, Proctor-Hermantown Early Childhood Program



“It is my hope that I am able to provide my students with the tools necessary to rediscover the joys and excitement of learning, to inspire and nurture a genuine concern for others and to bring a spirit of joy and laughter into their daily lives.”

Carol Hubert
Teacher, Rockridge Elementary School, ISD #709

“The community needs to work together to increase on-time high school graduation rates.”

theissue

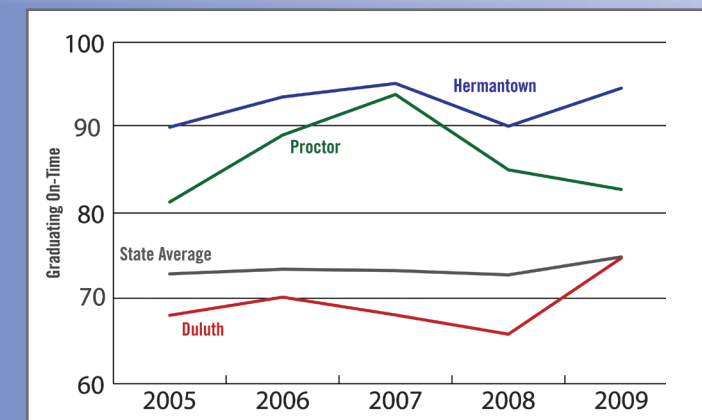
As a community, we recognize education as the cornerstone of a growing and vital community. Low on-time graduation rates indicate we are failing a large percentage of our youth. If we want to make a difference in our children's lives, we need to make a difference in student outcomes and ultimately increase on-time graduation rates.

To accomplish this, we must involve more than just parents and teachers. We must involve the entire community. Working together, we can ensure that children enter school ready to succeed, that all can read proficiently by 4th grade, that each

student has a successful transition into and out of middle school, and ultimately, that each student graduates from high school on-time and is ready for success in college, work and life.

*Almost half of America's children come to school lacking the critical developmental skills needed to succeed in school. Most disadvantaged children enter into school at least two years behind their peers in pre-reading skills and most never catch up. **Of 50 kindergartners struggling to learn to read in kindergarten, 44 will still be struggling in 3rd grade.** Since children are reading to learn after 4th grade, struggling readers fall further and further behind, checking out by middle school and dropping out of high school or not graduating on-time.*

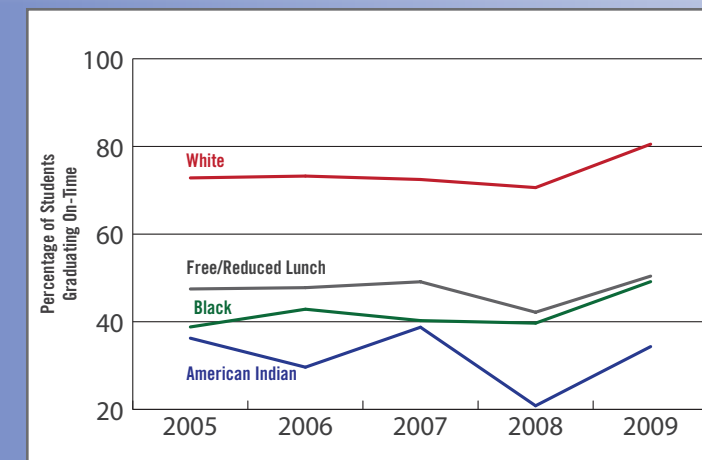
FIVE-YEAR COMPARISON: ON-TIME GRADUATION RATES



While the graph indicates our local school districts' on-time graduation rates have increased slightly, it is clear that the on-time graduation rates are still at an unacceptable level.

- » Duluth's on-time graduation rates are consistently lower than the Minnesota state average.
- » In 2009, an average of 74.72% Duluth students graduated on-time.
- » In 2008, the average on-time graduation rates in the state of Minnesota as well as Duluth, Proctor and Hermantown decreased.

COMPARISON OF DULUTH ON-TIME GRADUATION RATES BY POPULATION



Within the Duluth School District, there is a significant disparity of on-time graduation rates by race and socio-economic background.

- » From 2005-2009, the White student population outranked its counterparts in relation to on-time graduation rates.
- » For the past five years, American Indian students' on-time graduation rates have been consistently lower than any other student population.

In 2009:

- » An average of 80.52% White students graduated on-time.
- » Students receiving free or reduced lunch averaged 50.41% for on-time graduation rates.
- » An average of 49.15% Black students graduated on-time.
- » An average of 34.33% American Indian students graduated on-time.
- » The difference of on-time graduation rates between the White students and American Indian students was 41.07%.

For districts to receive a graduation rate, the cohort total must be equal to or greater than 40 students. Because of this, the chart showing comparisons of on-time graduation rates by population is not relevant to the Hermantown and Proctor school districts.

community investment

When we invest in our youth, we invest in our community.

Our entire community including business owners, homeowners, families with or without children, retirees and others contributing to the uniqueness of our area benefit from increased on-time graduation rates. Whether it's through improved community health and wealth, reduced crime, an expanded tax base, increased qualified individuals in the workforce, achievements in education or stronger sustainable neighborhoods—all members of our community will feel the positive effects of improved on-time graduation rates.

We must not rely solely on the schools or families with children to work on increasing on-time graduation rates, but rather, our community as a whole, must work together to ensure our youngest citizens succeed.

In order to positively impact on-time graduation rates, we need to focus on the entire education continuum from birth through age 18. We must also work together to close the disparity of on-time graduation rates by race and socio-economic background.

On-time graduation rates will then serve as a measure of the impact on our children and our community.

“Every dollar spent in supporting quality early childhood care and education can have a 12% public rate of return.”

— Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis



“Just a 5 percent rise in the graduation rate would save about 5 billion dollars annually by reducing government services.”

— Alliance for Excellent Education



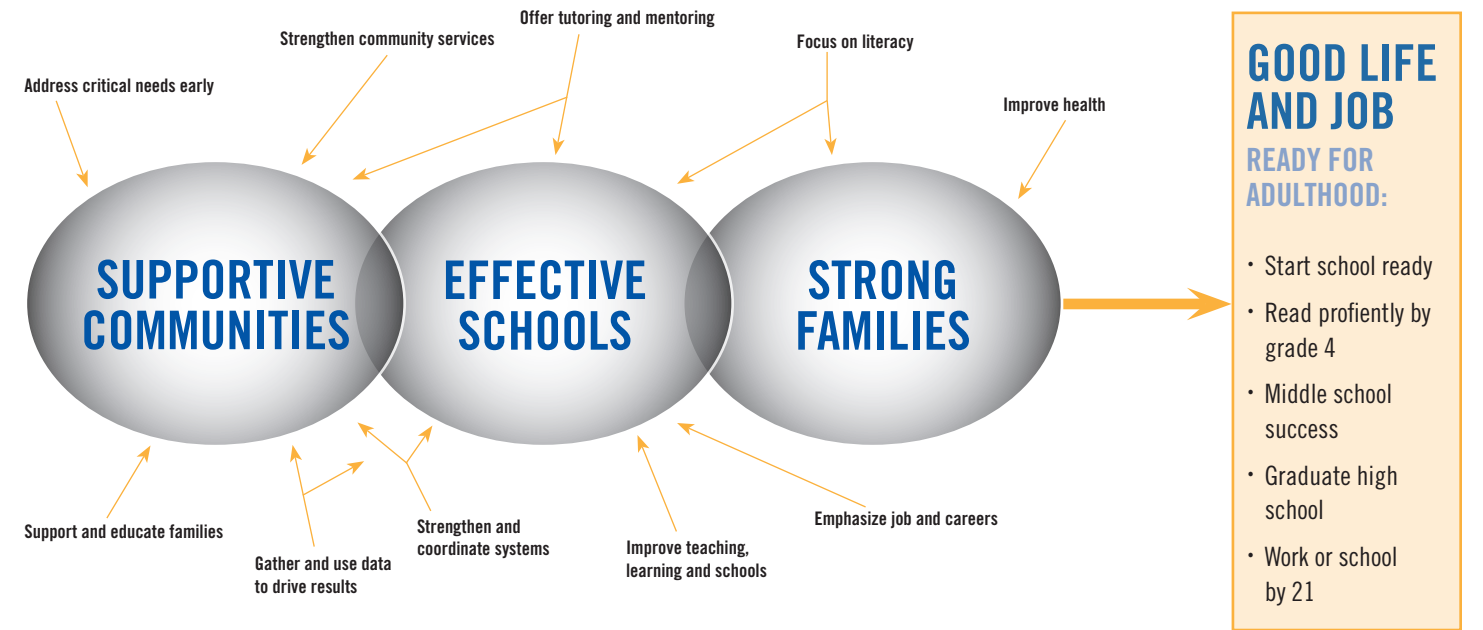
PICTURED ABOVE: Valley Youth Center in West Duluth implemented “Bulldog Buddies,” UMD students who help out after school.

“When one student drops out of school, it costs society as much as \$260,000 over a life-time which is seen in low wages, poor health and decreased productivity.”

— Children’s Defense Fund

education framework

The following evidence-based strategies were gathered by United Way Worldwide and examined by experts in the field as well as other key leaders in the non-profit and for-profit entities to ensure their effectiveness in making a difference in student outcomes and on-time graduation rates. The way in which our Greater Duluth communities approach these strategies will vary, depending on the challenges and resources in our area as well as our community’s priority in the area of education.



Address Critical Needs Early

- » Promote early childhood screening and intervention
- » Offer special support and programs for students in need of additional assistance
- » Establish early warning systems to identify and offer services to students at risk of dropping out

Support and Educate Families

- » Connect families and caregivers to necessary resources to ensure nurturing environments for youth
- » Offer voluntary home-visiting programs to promote strong parenting, early literacy and school readiness
- » Support parent-to-parent connections and peer mentoring

Offer Tutoring and Mentoring

- » Offer targeted, trained tutoring to youth of all ages
- » Expand in-school and community-based mentoring to promote academic success and attainability of post-secondary education

Emphasize Jobs and Careers

- » Make the connection between school and work more tangible for disconnected youth
- » Provide information about work opportunities
- » Expand school-to-work programs

Improve Health

- » Provide early and regular prenatal care
- » Support children’s health and fitness
- » Address child and family mental health needs

Improve Teaching, Learning and Schools

- » Ensure high-quality early childhood education
- » Strengthen connections between schools and quality before and after-school programs
- » Link schools with community resources

Strengthen Community Services

- » Enhance out-of-school environments for youth
- » Engage those being served to help design, operate and evaluate community support programs and services
- » Establish community hubs throughout local neighborhoods

Focus on Literacy

- » Equip parents and caregivers with the skills to read interactively with children to support literacy skill building at home
- » Get more books into low-income homes
- » Provide children with literacy-rich environments at home, in after-school programs, in classrooms and in child care centers

Strengthen and Coordinate Systems

- » Influence policies and practices to support educational development
- » Support collaboration and cooperation throughout the community
- » Identify obstacles to coordinating and delivering needed services

Gather and Use Data to Drive Results

- » Establish measurement and mapping systems
- » Use data to drive investments
- » Share relevant information between schools and community partners

currentefforts

With one-quarter of our country's youngest citizens failing to graduate from high school, on-time state and local rates are also being scrutinized. Fortunately, in many communities, efforts to improve are already underway.

Utilizing the strategies outlined in the Education Framework, several local partnerships and strategic efforts are underway to increase on-time graduation rates in the Greater Duluth area. While this list is not all-encompassing and increased involvement and support from our communities is needed, we are moving in a positive direction. A brief snapshot of local efforts is provided below and can be built upon as our communities strive to improve local graduation rates over the next ten years.

OFFICE OF EDUCATION EQUITY

The Office of Education Equity is working to integrate relevant multicultural learning experiences for students and advocate for the successful achievement and development of protected students throughout the Duluth School District. The Parents and Students Succeeding (PASS) Program is a major strategy to these ends. The PASS Program includes parent involvement education and staff to provide direct support for students and parents. www.duluth.k12.mn.us

ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION

An Alternatives to Suspension grant award allowed the Proctor Public Schools to develop and implement a new approach to dealing with student behaviors that formerly resulted in suspension. This process works by having students invest in their own corrective action through a menu of restorative actions. Use of the Alternatives to Suspension process has helped reduce out-of-school suspension in the Proctor Public schools. www.proctor.k12.mn.us

PROSPERITY AGENDA

In efforts to identify and address issues that impact community health, vitality, and sustained prosperity in Duluth, the Prosperity Agenda was developed. The Prosperity Agenda is focusing on the following five key areas that affect the Duluth community: income/poverty, housing, workforce, education and business climate. Through investments and proactive approaches in the five areas, the Duluth community will see the benefits through increased educational achievements, stronger sustainable neighborhoods and strengthened community pride to name a few. www.duluthmn.gov/duluth_prosperity_agenda/

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES / FUNDERS' PARTNERSHIP

United Way of Greater Duluth, City of Duluth Community Development and Ordean Foundation teamed up with youth development agencies and the Duluth School District to build a partnership designed to collectively maximize community resources to address issues affecting youth - in school and in the community. Partners commit to fostering vital education and positive development opportunities that youth need to successfully transition through middle school and achieve on-time graduation from high school.

TRUANCY ACTION PROJECT (TAP) AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE REVIEW BOARD (SARB)

Lutheran Social Services (LSS) of Northeast Region developed the TAP project, a school-based program to help students under the age of 16 who have attendance issues. LSS also developed SARB to provide a community response to truancy by diverting cases from court and providing community alternatives. This service is primarily available for students age 12-15 enrolled in Duluth or surrounding area schools. www.lss.mn.org

SUCCESS BY SIX (SB6) EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVE

United Way of Greater Duluth's SB6 Early Childhood Initiative, made up of a multi-sector council, provides oversight to the development and implementation of high impact strategies working to ensure high-quality early care and education for children from age birth to kindergarten and is aimed at improving school readiness. www.unitedwayduluth.org

DULUTH-PROCTOR-HERMANTOWN THRIVE INITIATIVE

As a result of the Minnesota Thrive Initiative, the Northland Foundation started the Duluth-Proctor-Hermantown Thrive Action Team to develop a Reflective Practice Pilot Project in response to young children in early care and education displaying behavior issues related to their social and emotional development. Reflective Practice helps early child care and education providers gain effective strategies to support young children's social and emotional development. www.northlandfdn.org

CREDIT POLICY

Hermantown High School operates on a credit policy where students are required to pass an established amount of credits each year in order to advance to the next grade level. This strategy provides continuous appraisal of students' credit levels and allows for early remediation, resulting in a higher level of on-time graduation rates. www.hermantown.k12.mn.us

KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL INITIATIVE

The Keeping Kids in School Initiative's philosophy is to provide appropriate intervention as early as possible with appropriate intensity to make the greatest difference by integrating community resources with existing school programs and services to address barriers to learning.

calltoaction

We need the help of community members like you to join together to identify local strategies and to set a measurable 10-year goal for our community's on-time graduation rates.

Together we must commit to strategic investments that pave the way for children's success and community prosperity. Each of us shares and bears responsibility for improving educational outcomes for our young people. Parents, teachers, school administrators, business leaders, community organizations, philanthropic institutions and others all have an important role to play. United Way's focus is to bring these diverse stakeholders together—to engage them in dialogue about public education and how they can be part of the solution.

To have an impact on educational improvement and achieve our 10-year goal of increasing on-time graduation rates, our Greater Duluth community must draw on the strength of our existing partnerships, relationships, programs and strategies, work collaboratively and invest in our children. From measuring school readiness to providing support systems as children progress through elementary, middle and high school, on-time graduation is the ultimate measure of community success.

Living united means being a part of the community-wide effort. It takes everyone in the community working together to create a brighter future.

Give. Advocate. Volunteer.

LIVE UNITED.



GET INVOLVED

Be inspired. **We need the help of community members like you to join together to identify local strategies and to set a measurable 10-year goal for our community's on-time graduation rates.**

TAKE ACTION:

- » Invite a group of students to your place of employment to help educate them about different vocations.
- » Make a difference in a child's life. Become a tutor or a mentor.
- » Volunteer at a local school or after-school program.
- » Join a community group or club working on improving the lives of children.
- » Read a book to a child.
- » Contribute to the United Way's annual fundraising campaign. Doing so creates opportunities for our funded agencies and initiatives that work with children ages birth to 18 in our community.

For more information:

Call Emily Serrano Rivera, Director of Community Impact, at (218) 726-4747 or email: eserrano@unitedwayduluth.org to learn how you can get involved.

SOURCES

And 10-10-10 March for Children and Youth Because All Children Need a Quality Education. Children's Defense Fund Minnesota. 2010.

Florit, Marianna and Rachel Perry. United Way's Education Strategies: Improving Success for Children and Youth. United Way Worldwide, Virginia: March 2010.

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"Saving Futures, Saving Dollars: The Impact of Education on Crime Reduction and Earnings." Alliance for Excellent Education. Aug. 2006. 5 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.all4ed.org/files/SavingFutures.pdf>>.

To access more information regarding the current efforts outlined in this report:

Office of Education Equity, www.duluth.k12.mn.us

Alternatives to Suspension, www.proctor.k12.mn.us

Prosperity Agenda, http://www.duluthmn.gov/duluth_prosperity_agenda/

Truancy Action Project (TAP)/School Attendance Review Board (SARB), www.lssmn.org

Success By Six Early Childhood Initiative, www.unitedwayduluth.org

Duluth-Proctor-Hermantown Thrive Initiative, www.northlandfdn.org

Credit Policy, www.hermantown.k12.mn.us

To view this report online,
please visit www.unitedwayduluth.org

We Exist to Improve People's Lives. And We Get Results.

United Way is working to advance the common good by focusing on critical needs in the Greater Duluth area. Meeting these needs provides the building blocks for a good life—a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family, and good health. Our goal is to create long-lasting changes that prevent problems from happening in the first place. We do this by researching, identifying, analyzing and reporting on our community's most pressing issues. We strategically invest in local programs and high-impact initiatives that achieve measurable outcomes and demonstrate results. We unite our efforts with community partners to achieve positive community change and together—united—we inspire hope and create opportunities for a better tomorrow.

LEAD A UNITED EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITY BY MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO IMPROVE PEOPLE'S LIVES.

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LIVE UNITEDTM

