

Plainfield Promise Committee

Final Report

Presented to Mayor Adrian O Mapp

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Committee Members

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Executive Overview

The Plainfield Promise Committee was established by Mayor Adrian Mapp to investigate the potential for creating the "Plainfield Promise Program" to provide guidance and economic opportunity for Plainfield students at the kindergarten level through post-high school education.

The post-high school educational opportunities include the two-year associate program at Union County Community College, paid apprenticeship or intern programs, specialized (specific) vocational studies and four-year colleges.

Plainfield Promise represents Mayor Mapp's multi-faceted plan of action to help Plainfield children and young adults prepare for their future. Plainfield Promise strives to focus Plainfield youth and parents on college preparedness and stimulate financial literacy of youngsters and their families, including an incentive savings account for each Plainfield child assigned when entering kindergarten and awarded upon remaining a resident of Plainfield through his/her graduation from Plainfield High School.

The Committee was also given the task of evaluating the efficacy of selling two paintings by Albert Bierstadt that were given to the City of Plainfield by Dr. J. Ackerman Coles in 1919 in memory of his father, Abraham Coles. Proceeds from the sale would help fund the Plainfield Promise Program.

The paintings are entitled "The Landing of Columbus in San Salvador" and "Autumn in the Sierras". Mr. Bierstadt (1830-1902) was an American painter best known for his lavish, sweeping landscapes of the American west. His paintings are displayed at the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City; the Museum of Fine Art in Boston; and the

Corcoran Gallery of Art, the National Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C., and other lesser-known museums and institutions throughout the world.

The Committee's first step was to investigate methodology to monetize the Bierstadt paintings without selling the assets, through touring opportunities, special exhibits, and long-term loans at museums with appropriate recognition to the City of Plainfield as the owner of the works of art.

The second action was to investigate the success of similar programs. The Committee contacted the city of Oakland, California and the states of Maine, Ohio and Tennessee. With the exception of Oakland's program, the rest were unsuccessful and have been either terminated or dramatically altered from their original form. The Oakland program is still in its early years and data surrounding success and outcomes are limited at this time.

The Committee also considered the administrative responsibilities in monitoring and supervising the project in relation to:

- Student population
- Student/family participation
- Transitory nature of Plainfield families
- Newcomers to Plainfield who enter the school system
- Funding opportunities available to students
- Priority of funds for career choices

Committee Findings

Members of the Plainfield Promise Committee (PPC) were unified in their belief that a College Savings Account (CSA) program is an honorable endeavor and one that could have a significant impact if implemented and managed properly. We were not able to identify a single program that was funded through the sale of public assets, and only one program appeared to be funded directly through taxpayer revenue.

Below is a sampling of programs within the United States that provides a snapshot of areas served and how programs are funded:

Program	Area Served	Funding Sources
I Can Save Program	Mahoning Valley Ohio	Raymond John Wean Foundation
Fund My Future	Allegheny County PA	Propel Schools Foundation
Acorn Fund	Salem City, NJ	Forman S. Acton Educational Fund
Kick Start To Career	Barry County, MI	Foundations, Corporations, Private
Kindergarten to College	San Francisco	Foundations, Corporations, Private and through partnership with the 1:1 Fund
College Kick-Start	Nevada (13 Counties)	1:1 Fund
CHET Baby Scholars	Connecticut	Publicly Funded at State level
Oakland Promise	Oakland, CA	113 Foundations, Corporations and Private donations - \$25 Million raised

Obstacles to using public assets for CSA's

The Committee, supportive of the intent of the mission outlined by Mayor Mapp, found that the use of funds from the sale of public assets has significant issues with respect to the success of any CSA program. With the use of funds from the sale of the proposed public assets by some estimates in excess of \$15 Million comes:

- Lack of resources to manage a program of this size long-term

- Dedicated and fixed staffing will be required to manage day-to-day program operations. This would be incremental to any current budgets and would need to be sustained indefinitely. The Oakland Promise program has 10+ staff members coordinating activities including fundraising, program implementation, training development and management
- Governance of program using public funds is more complex and will foment more detractors than a program using private donations
 - Questions requiring further clarification in a final governance plan with the Use of public funds for a CSA would include: if a child moves away from Plainfield before graduating from High School will the funds be taken away from the child or will they be allowed to use them? What if a child moves into the community at an older age, say 12 years of age?
- Inability to guarantee that a future administration would not be able to redirect funds set aside for Plainfield Promise
 - Significant public funds will be at risk if a future administration chose to change the mission and use of the remaining assets
 - The Cuyahoga County, Ohio program failed, in part, as a result of a change in political power ending the program, resulting in a waste of taxpayer funds and resources
- No long-term accountability for the proper governance of a program supported by sale of public assets
 - Foundations, corporations and private donors, who could fund such a program, would expect reporting on use of funds, success rate of programs as well as a significant improvement in outcomes such as test scores, graduation rates and parental involvement.
 - Use of public funding has much less accountability inherently – failure of a program to be managed successfully or have meaningful results could cause an electoral change and have little meaningful weight with respect to forcing improvements to a program, or more importantly improvements within the local educational system.

The committee affirms and acknowledges that the creation of CSA's for young residents of Plainfield, in and of itself, will not have a significant impact on college or vocational school enrollment. The funds saved will be too small to affect the total cost of higher education. However, the creation of the Plainfield Promise Program could have significant effects on improving financial awareness and college preparedness skills for students and parents, increasing awareness and interest in continuing their education beyond high school and an increase in participation by parents and guardians of Plainfield youth. These are the true intentions of these types of programs but these goals come with inherent challenges for success in Plainfield. Creation and successful implementation and management of a Plainfield Promise program will require a unified effort by elected city officials and departments, school board members, teachers and union representatives as well as local non-profits and NGO's. Without a unified and cohesive approach the program will be doomed to failure and will be added to the list of initiatives that had good intentions but failed as a result of poor implementation, strategic alignment and effective management. The Healthy Plainfield report from May 2017 put it very well in stating, "Communication, coordination, collaboration and cultural competency were common themes in all focus groups, conversations and survey data. Stakeholder groups often acted in silos." Here are some of the barriers to success identified by the committee:

- Creating CSA's is straightforward – managing the program and getting stakeholders engaged long term is the challenge that must be addressed throughout
 - Program governance and leadership – independence from political influence or ability to access or divert funds for other uses
 - Day-To-Day management of the program – creation of accounts, reporting and disbursement of monies
 - Creation of financial management programs, creation of workshops for parents, tracking of participation
 - Partnership with Plainfield BOE
- Plainfield school system continues to rank at the bottom of the list within the state (most recent ranking, as of 2016, is 530th out of 556 districts in New Jersey)

- Plainfield BOE, teachers' union, parents and City Hall have disparate agendas and a demonstrated inability to solve basic issues without great public confoundment. For example, a stated need, during the 2016 school year, by parents for more after school care resulted in the BOE working with little accountability and without transparency to create their own after school program, dedicating great time and resources, holding public meetings and discounting existing resources available within the community for such services. The result was ~~and~~ a failed attempt to "reinvent the wheel" where no program was enacted and no additional after school services were provided, netting the public zero results for the effort and a significant need still unmet.
- Plainfield, not unlike many complex organizations, has mastered the art of recreating the wheel – issues not resolved by one group spur the creation of a new group to fill the void, resulting in numerous public and private entities competing for the same few funds, wasting personal and financial resources and falling far short of their intended goals
- Plainfield Promise would require a unified and coordinated effort across all stakeholders in order to implement and manage such a program successfully. This would include City Hall, Board of Education, Non-Profits and local NGO's as well as Parent/Civic organizations. Plainfield does not currently have an environment to foster such an effort.

Final Determination & Recommendation

After much dialog and soul-searching, the Committee unanimously recommends that the Bierstadt paintings be retained in Plainfield as mandated by their donor and not availed to fund a Plainfield Promise program.

The basis for this decision, as well as suggestions for alternative approaches are summarized in the sections below. The Committee reviewed numerous publicly organized College Savings Account (CSA) projects throughout the United States and found that, with very few exceptions, the programs have been funded through donations from foundations, corporations and private citizens.

The Committee concludes that the source of funding for these programs is significant as is: directly impacts the structure, management and governance of

the programs, mandates accountability to donors, continually raises funding for ongoing efforts to succeed and is predicated on a unified and cohesive program within the supported area.

It should also be noted that Governor-Elect Murphy's campaign platform included working to provide free community college education at New Jersey schools.

Alternative Opportunities

The Plainfield Promise Committee members deem that there is a tremendous need to create a youth focused entity within City Hall. The intent of this person or group would be to identify the needs of Plainfield youth and then undertake the coordination and channeling of resources towards those needs. This is not intended as another opportunity to reinvent the wheel or create a group that draws from currently available resources. This position is purely intended to harness all of the available resources dedicated to our local youth and focus them on addressing identified needs of the community. This person would need to partner with the Board of Education, local non-profits, state and local governments and parents to not only identify pressing needs and opportunities but to coordinate all available resources to address those needs. Examples of duties and issues this person could address:

- Identify after school needs in Plainfield and work to address those via coordination with non-profits, identification of available funding and partnership with the Board of Education to institute programs and promote enrollment.
- Work to increase youth participation in recreational activities available within the city through Plainfield Parks & Recreation, local non-profits like the Boys & Girls Club, Plainfield YMCA and other independent youth sports organizations. The goal is to get kids involved in activities NOT create programs that already exist.
- Create opportunities for Plainfield youth to identify career opportunities and ignite a passion that they have in a particular field and give them

access to available resources for scholarships for post high school education, including vocational training options.

- Develop mentoring programs or work with existing organizations to make sure that local youth have access to available programs to assist them with their current educational needs as well as their future career goals

One recommendation is to expand the position of Director of Parks & Recreation to include all youth outreach and services – a title like Director of Parks, Recreation and Youth Services. This person, working independently or in conjunction with a Youth Task Force of local citizens, could identify areas of focus and develop a roadmap for implementing and expanding participation in youth-based programs throughout Plainfield. It is important to reiterate that the intent of this position is NOT to create programs that already exist but to work with local organizations to expand participation by our area youth. The goal is increasing local participation in extra curricular activities and not to create a fiefdom within city hall where numerous programs are created that compete with existing local options.

Existing Programs/Opportunities to Leverage

Below are some existing programs available within New Jersey that could be leveraged in Plainfield to support segments of the Plainfield Promise program without the sale of any city assets.

The Future Project

Based on The Future Project data (www.thefutureproject.org), 7 out of 10 young people say they are uninspired and unmotivated, 5 out of 10 say they are not hopeful about their futures. Most aspects of today's public schools in America were designed in 1893. Students lose more than 90% of their creative capacity during their school years. 65% of students will be employed in jobs that don't exist yet and for which schools are not preparing them. Only 55% of students are engaged in learning at school. 2 million students drop out of American high schools every year (that's 7000 each school day). Suspension rates have more than doubled in the past four decades, contributing to a strong school to prison pipeline.

The Future Project is part social entrepreneur, part community organizer and part transformative coach. Dream Directors guide students and school communities through The Dreamer's Journey, the process of discovering a dream that lights you on fire and building a Future Project that brings that dream to life.

After conducting a school-wide Possibility Audit, Dream Directors recruit a Dream Team of students and staff, which create a school change strategy and build Future Project to implement it, enrolling hundreds along the way. Dream Directors provide coach, offer courses, and apply culture-change techniques to create impact on two levels: building will and skill in students and improve the culture of the school.

Dream Directors recruit and train a team of diverse leaders from across the school in the skills of Dream Directing. They then offer a robust curriculum of courses, sometimes facilitated by expert guests, to train students in the 21st century, social-emotional, and project building skills. Dream Teams launch projects to increase student engagement, transform the physical environment of their school, and shift attitudes amongst students and adults. They expose students to dozens of new fields and career paths, and help them build the critical skills to achieve their dream.

AVID

Advancement Via Individual Determination is a college readiness program designed to help students develop skills that they need to be successful in college. The program has elementary and middle school components, which serve as foundational experiences and support the overall mission which is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness. Personnel in schools where AVID exist are regularly trained to respond to the three proficiency gaps, achievement, opportunity and expectations that impact students and their learning.

At the high school level, the program places special emphasis on growing writing, critical thinking, teamwork, organization and reading skills. Students usually begin their high school AVID experiences at the ninth or tenth grade levels where AVID is taught as an elective. Students explore different careers, learn about the college application process, explore financial aid options, attend college fairs and some programs are able to take students on college visits.

Foster Grandparent Program

Senior Citizens serve as volunteers in various schools after applying, being trained and approved for participation. They may serve in a variety of ways such as classroom aides, teacher helpers, office workers, cafeteria aides or wherever they are needed. While on duty, mentors are identified by their special t-shirts that they wear. They develop mutual friendships with students and receive personal rewards, worth, usefulness and satisfaction for their service and everyone benefits from this worthwhile low cost program.

Elementary Summer School

Children in Pre-K through grade 3, who are "at risk" of failure and or grade retention due to contributing factors such as migratory status, being economically and or academically disadvantaged, homeless or have limited language proficiencies might be candidates for an Elementary Summer School Program. The goal of the program is to assist children in benefitting from an integrated program aligned with the core content standards that will complement and NOT duplicate the school's curriculum. The program is planned in advance by reading and math specialists and is complimentary, but DIFFERENT in terms of the materials used in the school's regular program during the school year. This type of program is remedial where needed as well as including advanced skill instruction. The general perception is that this program is cost effective in that students whose needs are met early at the primary level might not need "basic skills" classes in the future.

Reading Recovery Program

RRP is a nationally acclaimed supplemental reading program aimed at teaching low achieving students to become independent, efficient readers and writers. The goal of the program is to provide an intensive short term intervention for students in the lowest 20% of the grade one population. The five key elements of the program consists of an instructional program designed, using research based components of the way children learn to read; two levels of in service training for teacher participants in terms of the education model to be used; a set of professional materials and trade books for students to use; continuing education for trained Reading Recovery Teachers; and program monitoring, research and evaluation that ensures the long range effectiveness of the program. Students have regular reading sessions during the school year as part of their weekly reading experiences.

“Mini” Gifted and Talented Programs

“Mini” G/T programs offers children who show a “spark” in one particular subject area in grades three through eight, the opportunity, for one marking period to receive special attention and instruction in areas in which they have demonstrated interest or above average competence. Students are recommended by the classroom teacher in the area where the “spark” is shown. Instruction in the Mini G/T program is more than/ on a higher and more in depth level/ different from what the student would experience in the regular classroom. This “mini” program is a good way to encourage learning and to nurture academic interest.

ROBIN

Retired Older Buddy Is Needed is an intergenerational learning through volunteerism program whose goals are to instill positive views about aging and to increase individualized instruction for students while encouraging positives attitudes toward education in seniors who might no longer have opportunities to interact with school age children. ROBIN volunteers serve as classroom and library aides, trip chaperones, tutors in the schools or workers in various school offices. Volunteers are selected after visits to their homes, references are submitted and a background check and finger printing are done, free, by the local police department. Initial training is conducted by the “coordinator” of the program along with sessions conducted by school psychologists and or guidance counselors. Sessions where the program’s handbook and the program’s policies are thoroughly taught are also included. After these sessions, the handbook and policy guidelines are given to the volunteers. Volunteers spend in the school anywhere from a couple hours per week to much more as part of their accepted responsibilities. Informal and formal evaluations are done by the coordinator of the program. A yearly luncheon/dinner for the volunteers is usually given and is paid for by the district.

Building Trades Program

A three-year program, which affords high school students the opportunity to learn the concepts of housing design, engineering, planning and permitting as well as hands on building trade experiences. The district buys property or is “given” property by the municipality which might be subdivided into building lots. Students select a housing design from existing catalogues (just as a potential homebuyer would do) and the students participate in all phases of planning, material purchasing, sub-contracting and construction of a 1600-1900 square foot house. During the first year of construction, the students do the

framing and exterior work and during the second year interior finishes are completed. The district competitively bids any work that requires licensed trades. Upon completion, the house is sold at competitive auction and the money goes into the district's general fund and will be used for the next house to be built. The American Builders' Association certifies the program's curriculum which is taught throughout all phases of the Building Trades Program.

The Jason Project

This program enables elementary school students to communicate through technology with some of the best scientists in the country and to receive input on topics related to the scientists' areas of expertise. Through email and satellite down links, students are able to become involved in projects ranging from ocean exploration to "virtual visiting" the Amazon Rainforest. The JASON PROJECT is a cooperative effort with the National Geographic Society.

RIME—Raritan's Introduction of Minorities to Engineering is part of a national organization that has chapters throughout the United States. Students participate starting at the seventh grade level and continue through high school. The program is designed to stimulate interest and to motivate students to pursue engineering careers. The purpose of RIME is to design, implement and support adjunct programs to increase the number of minorities entering the engineering profession. In school districts where this program exists, the district's Counselor for seventh graders, participates in the early identification of talented and interested students. Curriculum, projects and experiences for student participants are designed by the national organization and are adapted to meet local needs. One aspect of the program for high school students involves "shadowing" local engineers. The Rutgers School of Engineering is a contributor and supporter of this program in the state of NJ.

The Cooperative Learning Project (CLP)

A partnership through which Allied Signals Technical Services Corporation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) work with schools nationwide to encourage students to pursue careers in science, engineering, mathematics and the space industry. The program usually starts as a "club" experience and grows to where students are involved in an in school five credit elected course. Text material for this course is the training manual used by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory for new employees. CLP students in some school

districts have visited Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland and many have attended CLP National Conferences. Scientists and engineers come to the district four to six times a year to give lectures and answer questions. In CLP'S Advanced Composition Explorer (ACE) satellite program participants design, construct, launch and test satellites.

PROJECT 2000

Encourages executives to be engaged as teachers' assistants in elementary school classrooms, for a half day each week. This program is based on the concept that positive attitudes toward the school environment and academic achievement in inner-city male youngsters can be nurtured in these school experiences through positive male role models. The volunteer executives work one-to-one or with small groups of students. This program has now been expanded with an outreach program to include female executives who work with both female and male students at the middle grade level. They spend two half days a month in the school where emphasis is placed on self -esteem, decision making and coping skills. Not only do these executives serve as role models but some also serve as mentors.

Final Note From Committee

The Plainfield Promise Committee wishes to thank Mayor Mapp for his efforts at continuing to improve the lives of Plainfielders both young and old. We would also like to thank him for the opportunity provided to us to participate in this process and will make ourselves available to answer any questions that he or others in the administration may have.