

Future Vision to Address the Eight Assumptions

Post-summit meetings are being held with the stakeholder group leaders and their group members as their first-year action items are refined. Particular attention is being given to the creation of energy around what can be accomplished in the first year and the creation of organizational structures that will ensure both the sustainability of initiatives and systemic change that will positively move the metrics of the eight assumptions. The organizational structures being created include partnership development, research, volunteer coordination, and marketing.

While organizational work will precede addressing all assumption areas and each of the corresponding recognized age groups, significant activity will occur around the areas of early childhood education and reading. Those two areas address systemic change and provide the building blocks for success in school and adulthood. Each is central to improvement in the other assumption areas. Addressing early childhood education and reading will provide enhanced opportunities to engage parents and increase their access to information and services that they can effectively utilize. To that point, year-two activities will specifically address the needs of parents, as they are the front line in handling all eight assumption areas.

In preparation for the 2009 Greater Waco Community Education Summit, plans are being laid to address building a sustainable community education alliance. Subthemes will be set to revolve around early childhood education and reading readiness. Attention will also be given to other intervention strategies, such as school dropout prevention and healthcare.

The next several pages display the major steps to be undertaken to address the eight assumption areas. They take into consideration the work of the eleven stakeholder groups and show the significant first steps that must be managed. The undertaking is indeed massive. A report of progress will be given at the second annual summit in November 2009.

Next steps for the Greater Waco Community Education Alliance

1. Undertaking common activities among stakeholder groups
 - Establishing community awareness campaigns of the eight assumptions and of issues as identified by stakeholder groups
 - Managing the website, coordinating database development, and providing assistance in identifying resources as identified by stakeholder groups
2. Reviewing proposed activities of each group to filter for competing and complimentary work
3. Facilitating cross-stakeholder group collaboration on common proposed activities
4. Reviewing proposed activities for their impact on existing publicly funded entities and private enterprises and on civic and educational laws, regulations, and practices
5. Ensuring that proposed activities support the schools and educators
6. Assisting with collaboration and interaction among existing publicly funded entities
7. Assisting with the creation of linkages and partnerships among stakeholder groups and community resources
8. Establishing a clearinghouse function to recruit and refer volunteers to stakeholder groups and their activities
9. Completing the gathering of baseline data for the region for each of the eight assumptions
10. Establishing an office to coordinate the work of the Alliance

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As the stakeholder groups continue their work into the second year, the following overall framework will serve as a guide in addressing each assumption.

Assumption 1 - Ages 0–4: The most valuable and cost-effective time to invest in education is between birth and the age of five.

Community Goal: All children reach age five with the experiences they need to develop learning readiness and social skills critical to success in school and in life itself.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all residents are provided knowledge of child development issues and proper infant and child healthcare.
2. Collect baseline data on early childhood conditions in McLennan County, including population, childcare locations, and early childhood resources.
3. Gather and review standards for prekindergarten programs and services.

Future Activity

1. Take action to advance local early childhood infrastructure to be more supportive of early childhood development programs and services.
2. Enhance communitywide programs and opportunities that assist and engage parents in addressing early childhood issues.
3. Lay plans to ensure that all four-year-olds have an opportunity to participate in prekindergarten with emphasis on school readiness needs and skills.

Assumption 2 - Ages 5–8: Reading on grade level by grade 3 is critical to future education success.

Community Goal: All children will read at grade level or above by the 3rd grade.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all residents are provided knowledge of the importance of reading-readiness development.
2. Develop centralized on-line resources to provide guidance to all community-based reading programs.
3. Convene meetings of targeted providers of community-based reading programs and educators to begin both their collaboration and the promotion of best practices.

Future Activity

1. Catalog all community-based reading programs.
2. Analyze community-based reading programs for effectiveness.
3. Increase interaction and collaboration among neighborhood schools, classroom teachers, and community-based reading programs.
4. Enhance communitywide programs and opportunities that assist and engage parents in addressing reading-readiness issues.

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Assumption 3 - Ages 9–14: Mastering mathematics fundamentals through Algebra I is a minimal requirement for high school graduation and postsecondary success.

Community Goal: All children will be proficient in math through Algebra I by their graduation from high school.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all residents are provided knowledge of the importance of the mastery of mathematics fundamentals.
2. Develop centralized on-line resources to provide guidance to all community-based mathematics programs.
3. Convene meetings of targeted providers of community-based mathematics programs and educators to begin both their collaboration and the promotion of best practices.

Future Activity

1. Catalog all community-based mathematics programs.
2. Analyze community-based mathematics programs for effectiveness.
3. Increase interaction and collaboration among neighborhood schools, classroom teachers, and community-based mathematics programs.
4. Enhance communitywide programs and opportunities that assist and engage parents in addressing mathematics mastery issues.

Assumption 4 - Ages 14–18: All students must be prepared for postsecondary success by the time of their graduation from high school.

Community Goal: All students will be prepared for postsecondary education while in high school.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all residents are provided knowledge of the entry-level requirements of area jobs and the availability of local education and training programs that are aligned to career options.
2. Convene a meeting of career and technical education professionals, workforce development professionals, and business leaders to develop a plan for connecting students to local career pathways.

Future Activity

1. All community groups that provide job and career services have access to a common resource guide and database of information established for the Waco community.
2. Develop a community resource system to assist career counselors and other providers of career guidance services.
3. All students are provided community experiences in a range of career pathways.
4. Address issues of parental involvement and the participation of parents in their children's postsecondary education decision-making.

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Assumption 5 - Ages 14–18: All youth must graduate from high school, overcoming challenges that discourage academic engagement.

Community Goal: All students must be supported and encouraged to stay in school through successful high school graduation.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all residents are provided knowledge of the area high school graduation rates and the economic impact on the individual and the community of various exit points from formal education.
2. Convene a meeting of school and public officials involved with dropout prevention programs to analyze current efforts and issues.
3. Gather information from the National Dropout Prevention Center as a resource for additional planning.

Future Activity

1. All community groups that provide dropout prevention programs will coordinate their services with local high schools and with one another to ensure the greatest coverage and reach.
2. Directly engage parents in dropout prevention programs and services to equip them with both assistance and access to solutions for their children.

Assumption 6 - Ages 14–18: Parents and students should be aware of available high-school-to-postsecondary paths and financial aid options.

Community Goal: All parents and youth will know about, plan for and seek access to postsecondary options and to financial aid if needed.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all parents and students are aware of postsecondary programs and career options and their associated entry requirements, costs, and financial aid options.
2. Develop a resource guide and common database of postsecondary options that displays a cross-reference to career choices.

Future Activity

1. Consult area public secondary and postsecondary school districts concerning the additional resources needed to expand their career counseling capabilities and services and develop an ideal model of services.
2. Set plans to assist the public secondary and postsecondary school districts to reach the ideal range of services.

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Assumption 7 - Ages 18 and above: Financial resources should not be a barrier to postsecondary success.

Community Goal: The community will ensure that scholarship opportunities are known and supported.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all parents and students are provided knowledge of all scholarship and company tuition opportunities that allow for postsecondary enrollment in education and training programs.

Future Activity

1. Identify financial barriers to postsecondary enrollment and compare them to available programs and services that address the barriers; develop a gap analysis of barriers and solutions to guide the design of additional programs and services.
2. All community residents will have access to a common resources guide and database of scholarship and company tuition opportunities.

Assumption 8 - Ages 18 and above: The community should understand the region's secondary and postsecondary success rates and develop support programs to encourage the highest rates of successful completion.

Community Goal: All youth will complete postsecondary education leading to chosen career opportunities.

First Steps

1. Begin an awareness program to ensure that all residents have access to data on local high-school-to-postsecondary enrollment, including numbers attending, success rates, and the economic impact on both the individual and the community of postsecondary education and training achievement.
2. Conduct a study of reasons for noncompletion of postsecondary programs, including a review of available literature and its comparison to local conditions.

Future Activity

1. Support programs will be developed to address local “barrier” issues.
2. Develop opportunities for parental involvement and participation in activities designed to address parental “barrier” issues.