

# The Graduate Ready **COMMUNITY AGREEMENT**

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Creating civic capacity  
to improve education  
outcomes and the quality  
of life in Mobile County

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An Initiative of the Mobile Area Education Foundation



# Call To Action

In 2007, the Honorable Mayor Sam Jones, City of Mobile, released the Mayors Action Plan for High School Reform. It was a compilation of a number of research findings on the status of education in Mobile County, including findings from the 2006 YES WE CAN community conversations; the High School Policies, Practices, and Programs Review conducted by the Education Trust; the Central Office Review for Results and Equity (CORRE) Report, written by the Annenberg Institute for School Reform; the Mobile County Education Association Survey; and polling data for the 2006 Mobile County Education Summit. These data points clearly indicated that while schools in Mobile County had made great progress since 2001, there was a need to focus on high school graduation in the community.

Also in 2007, the City of Mobile became one of seven cities to participate in the U.S. Department of Labor's Multiple Pathways Blueprint Initiative. The City of Mobile received a planning grant to develop a Blueprint for Multiple Pathways to Graduation in the Mobile community. This grant was the impetus that Mobile needed to finally understand and develop a plan to address graduation in the community. The project was named the Research Alliance for Multiple Pathways (RAMP). The RAMP to the future is about policy change, looking at gaps in the community, knowing the data, benchmarking other communities, studying best practices, and mobilizing the community to expect and demand better.

As a result of the work, the RAMP Taskforce made the following recommendations for creating pathways to success in Mobile:

- **Create an early warning system to identify and monitor off-track youth.**
- **Establish a shared accountability system to ensure implementation of the plan.**
- **Develop multiple pathways to guide all students to graduation.**
- **Provide individualized support services to ensure that all students graduate.**
- **Secure and align funding necessary for student success.**

No one doubts the need for high school reform as a means to reduce the dropout rate—or the need to improve access to a high-quality education with a rigorous set of standards for all students. The leadership challenge for Mobile looking forward is to:

- **Raise expectations for Mobile's future.**
- **Create multiple pathways to meet a set of high standards for high school graduation.**
- **Articulate a clear and compelling vision for education across the entire community.**
- **Develop a unified approach to providing a coordinated set of supports that ensures that every student has the opportunity to graduate ready for college and career.**

# About Graduate Ready

*Graduate Ready is a collaborative initiative of education, civic and business leaders aimed at ensuring that all students in Mobile County are:*

- **Prepared for success in college and the workplace**
- **Able to apply learning in the real world**
- **Equipped with 21st century workforce skills**

In 2011, in response to what was then a high school graduation rate of only 55 percent, the Mobile County community overwhelmingly passed a significant tax referendum to continue existing ad valorem taxes for the benefit of the county's public schools and its students.

Implied in the vote was the community's insistence on ensure that public money continued to be used responsibly and aggressively to increase educational outcomes for all of the children in Mobile County.

As they have several times since 2001, the Mobile Area Education Foundation partnered with the Mobile County Public School System to launch a countywide public engagement process designed to keep the community connected with the schools and to identify collective community expectations and aspirations for education outcomes and the quality of life in Mobile County.

Findings from those community conversations provided the foundation for a strategic planning process—co-owned by the community and the school system. That plan, called “80 by 20: Graduating Ready,” identified several essential strategies to ensure that students graduate from high school in Mobile County prepared for success in college and the workplace, engaged and able to apply learning in the real world, and equipped with 21st century workforce skills.

Through ongoing collaborative efforts among the school system, higher education institutions, civic leaders, the business community and citizens across the county, collective ideas are aligned for sustainability through an eight-year logic model, which is outlined in this document.

Mobile County citizens know that we need to transform our schools if we are to ensure that more students not only graduate from high school but also are truly prepared for the challenges they face afterward. And we know that the collective will to make the necessary changes to our schools demands that the entire community is on board and moving forward together.

# Graduate Ready

# COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

## PREAMBLE

2013 Update

*Here are our ideas for how to improve our public schools to the level of greatness we, as a community, expect and support. These ideas are grounded in the notion that public schools play a vital role in our community and that the community must have an active role in public schools.*

## PART 1

### The Community We Want

- Better employment opportunities
- More skilled labor
- A clean safe community
- Better quality of life
- More diversity
- A strong economy with high employment
- More education opportunities for all
- Greater involvement by citizens and volunteers in our school
- More help to promote and support strong families
- More parents who take responsibility for preparing their children for school and who remain actively involved in their learning

### What We Want for Public Schools

- High school graduation for all students, prepared for college and work
- Industrial and vocational training
- One-On-One Attention
- Innovative classrooms
- Better technology
- High-quality, caring, capable teachers
- Early intervention for at risk students
- After school and summer programs that focus on prevention, intervention, recovery and enrichment
- A learning climate in each school that is welcoming, caring, and resource-rich
- A learning climate in which everyone-educators, parents, school staff, and community volunteers-does his/her part to support high student achievement

# PART 2

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## The Situation We Face

According to the Alliance for Excellence education,

*“The best economic stimulus package is a high school diploma”.*

In Mobile County, if 90 percent of the class of 2012 had earned a high school diploma, which would have been an increase of 1,900 graduates, the benefits to the community would be huge, including:

- 100 new jobs
- \$16 million *increase* in annual earnings
- \$12 million *increase* in annual spending
- \$19 million *increase* in annual gross regional product
- \$28 million *increase* in home sales
- \$2 million *increase* in auto sales
- \$2.4 million *increase* in annual federal tax revenue
- \$1.1 million *increase* in annual state/local tax revenue

# PART 3

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## What Needs To Happen

### Implementation of Four Key Strategies of Graduate Ready

The purpose of the Graduate Ready community agreement is to provide multiple personalized pathways and whole child supports for every child that ensure a better quality of life for every citizen of Mobile County.

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The four key strategies of the Graduate Ready initiative include:

- 1 *Ensuring high-quality teaching and learning from Pre-K through 12th grade*
- 2 *Transforming all secondary schools to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and career.*
- 3 *Ensuring postsecondary access and completion*
- 4 *Sustaining improvements through continued education, business and civic leadership*

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## What Conditions Need To Exist

- Inspire action to build a high quality public education system
- Partner to graduate students career ready
- Encourage innovative practices and programs that expedite student achievements

# PART 4

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## How We Plan To Fulfill Our Aspirations

- Ask the citizens of Mobile to use the Graduate Ready agreement to raise expectations for our schools and community and to undertake a long-term grass-roots effort to identify, select, and pursue strategies for improving public education.
- Align community resources for collective impact.

# Graduate Ready Strategies

1

*Ensuring high-quality teaching and learning from Pre-K through 12th grade*

We will ensure that every student in Mobile County is:

- Is ready for kindergarten through universal access to quality Pre-K
- Is reading on grade level by grade three and sustains on-grade level proficiency at grades five, eight and 11
- Will perform on grade level in math at grades five and eight and successfully completes algebra by grade nine
- Will have access to extended learning opportunities, a curriculum integrated with fine arts and learning technologies that support and enhance student-centered learning experiences

2

*Transforming all secondary schools to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready for college and career.*

We will ensure more rigorous and relevant secondary school experiences for Mobile County students by:

- Creating a Middle School Teaching and Learning Framework to jumpstart the development of high levels of staff and student performance in preparation for rigorous high school programs
- Providing connectivity and exposure to business/industry through coordinated workforce initiatives at every level
- Creating high quality career academies in all high schools
- Expanding AP course offerings and increase the number of students achieving qualifying scores
- Providing back-on-track programs for at-risk high school youth
- Increasing the number of students taking ACT and COMPASS college entrance exams
- Increasing the number of students achieving and ACT composite score of 21

# Graduate Ready Strategies

3

## *Ensuring postsecondary access and completion*

We will increase employability and college-going rates in Mobile County by:

- Increasing the high school graduation rate to 80 percent by 2020
- Providing scholarship opportunities for local students
- Decreasing the percentage of students in remedial courses
- Increasing the percentage of students graduating from college with two- and four-year credentials and degrees

4

## *Sustaining improvements through continued education, business and civic leadership*

We will create a civic culture of continual improvement by:

- Establishing the entry-level skills needed for Mobile's workforce and partner with schools to increase the number of students who graduate prepared for high wage, high demand careers
- Ensuring 80 by 20 results by designing, managing and improving the efficiency and effectiveness of district and community work systems
- Collaboratively building human capital competencies aligned with performance-based assessments
- Securing funding and align resources to support innovation in career and college programming

# Mobile Area Education Foundation Board of Directors

The Mobile Area Education Foundation has served as an advocate and activist for public schools in the Mobile community for more than 20 years. Our beliefs and values are an integral part of everything we do.

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Graduate Ready is an initiative of the  
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