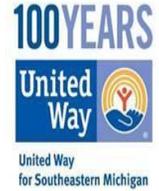




**YOUTH**  
DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
Empowering Youth Every Day



MY BROTHER'S KEEPER



## The My Brother's Keeper Success Mentor Initiative

Detroit Public Schools Community District

2016-17 Pilot Year

### Proof of Concept Reflection Paper

**Problem Statement:** The Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) leads the nation in the



number of students who miss school on two or more days in any given month. Be it excused absences, suspensions or parents choosing just not to send their kid to school, this behavior which is called **chronic absenteeism**, is a precursor to much deeper problems. Missing school in this manner has statistically been shown to lead to problems like truancy; low literacy rates; high dropout rates; and a local workforce talent pool that is ill equipped and underprepared to take on the vital jobs that will bring Detroit back to its glory days. It has been said that a well-educated populous is essential, not only to economic equality, a reduction in poverty, and improvements to child well-being, but also

to the ability to attract and retain business and promote a healthy state and local economy. As Detroit faces the challenge of rebuilding itself from what has been coined as the "most profound example of urban decline in American history". It is wise for it to consider how well it supports its children and families.



### Promising Solutions:

The My Brother's Keeper Success Mentor Initiative (MBK-SMI) is a National comprehensive evidence based initiative aimed at providing high needs students with additional supports to enable them to succeed academically and graduate from high school prepared for post-secondary success. The goal of MBK-SMI in Detroit is to help target schools address Chronic Absenteeism through a data driven holistic wrap around approach that identifies barriers, assesses internal resources and connects students, families and schools to the relationships and external supports that lead to success.

### Objectives:

Provide trained and highly skilled professional mentors to help schools address and reduce chronic absenteeism.

Identify and Eliminate Student and Family Barriers to attending school.

Support data driven and student specific interventions and support plans that eliminate chronic absenteeism and re-engage students in school.

Support schools in organizing data driven school wide initiatives that support positive attendance and student achievement.

**The Pilot:**

This year DPSCD along with community partners, The Youth Development Commission (YDC), Michigan Corporation for Community Service- AmeriCorps Program, and the United Way of Southeast Michigan came together to implement the MBK-SMI at 5 DPSCD schools (Gompers(K-8), Earhart (K-8), Ann Arbor Trail(K-8), Frederick Douglas (6-12) , and Western International HS (9-12)). These schools were chosen for their identified capacity and desire to address chronic absenteeism at a school wide systemic level. The **goals** for the work at each of these sites were to:

- Help schools align and focus their attendance efforts through the coordination and execution of regularly attendance committee meetings.
- Help schools regularly monitor attendance data, and identify target students and families in need of support.
- Help schools identify and train mentors to work with and support target students.
- Match target students with appropriate mentors.
- Help schools identify and implement school wide intervention strategies that build a culture of engagement and positive attendance.



This work was accomplished by providing sites with full time AmeriCorps Success Mentors who were deployed onsite from March 9, 2017 until June 20, 2017. Members provided case management, student/ family asset building, educational advocacy, school site based capacity building, data assessment and evaluation, technical support , and resource brokerage.

**Since Member Deployment**

*Attendance efforts at pilot schools have increased by...*

|  | <b>Ann Arbor Trail (K-8)</b> | <b>Gompers (K-8)</b> | <b>Earhart (K-8)</b> | <b>Western International HS (9-12)</b> | <b>Frederick Douglas (6-12)</b> |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Percentage Increase</b>                                     | <b>700%</b>                  | <b>150%</b>          | <b>200%</b>          | <b>350%</b>                            | <b>300%</b>                     |
| <b>Number of Attendance Focused Meetings After Deployment</b>  | 7                            | 6                    | 2                    | 7                                      | 3                               |
| <b>Number of Attendance Focused Meetings Before Deployment</b> | 0                            | 4                    | 0                    | 2                                      | 0                               |

This effort was measured by calculating the number of attendance focused meetings at pilot school sites before deployment of MBK-SMI AmeriCorps Success Mentors and the number of attendance focused meetings after deployment. Attendance teams' generally consisted of the following school site and community based members:

*-Principal or Designee - Community School Coordinator - DPSCD Attendance Agent - Department of Human Services Case Worker - School Counselor – Various Community Based Social Emotional Support Staff.*

***The number of school based mentors identified and trained at pilot schools...***

|   | <b>Ann Arbor Trail (K-8)</b> | <b>Gompers (K-8)</b> | <b>Earhart (K-8)</b> | <b>Western International HS (9-12)</b> | <b>Frederick Douglas (6-12)</b> |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Number of school based mentors identified and trained.</b> | <b>7</b>                     | <b>17</b>            | <b>0*</b>            | <b>20</b>                              | <b>3</b>                        |

*This data is reflective of teachers and or community partners identified and trained to be one on one or small group mentors to target students.*

*\* Due to staffing concerns at Earhart this measure was not addressed at these schools.*

**Number of chronically absent students identified and matched with mentors**

|   | <b>Ann Arbor Trail (K-8)</b> | <b>Gompers (K-8)</b> | <b>Earhart (K-8)</b> | <b>Western International HS (9-12)</b> | <b>Frederick Douglas (6-12)</b> |
|---|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| <b>Number of chronically absent students identified and matched with mentors.</b> | <b>28</b>                    | <b>69</b>            | <b>0*</b>            | <b>68</b>                              | <b>20</b>                       |

Criterion for selection of chronically absent student designation was that of 10 or more absences from the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year until March 1, 2017. All students meeting this threshold were targeted for some sort of intervention, with priority given to those whom were closer to having missed only 10- 15 days of school. These students were then matched with available mentors keeping a 1 to 3 ratio.

**Number of logged mentee/ mentor interactions**

|  | Ann Arbor Trail (K-8) | Gompers (K-8) | Earhart (K-8) | Western International HS (9-12) | Frederick Douglas (6-12) |
|--|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Number of logged mentee/ mentor interactions | 336                   | 828           | 0*            | 816                             | 240                      |

This data is reflective of bi weekly mentor mentee interactions at each site for six weeks. Beginning April 24, 2017 until June 9, 2017. Mentors were encouraged to check in a minimum of twice a week with their mentee. The MBKSMI – Success Mentor was responsible for tracking and logging interactions through a variation of tracking measures which included both digital and hard copy tracking logs.

**A Profile of Success- Ann Arbor Trail Magnet School**

Perhaps one of the most influential lessons learned from the pilot schools this year was the impact and power of implementing school wide initiatives to promote a culture of engagement and positive attendance. Ann Arbor Trail is a testament to this very fact.



*Ann Arbor trail by the numbers*

**271 Students in a K-8 configuration. Before deployment the school had an average daily attendance of about 230 kids at the end of June their average daily attendance was 242 kids.**

**Here’s what worked...**

**The Give Me Five and Perfect Attendance Award Campaign.**

- Beginning the week of May 1, 2017, the attendance team lead by the Community School Coordinator and the MBK SMI AmeriCorps Success Member implemented the “Give ME 5 Perfect Attendance Campaign”.
- Motivational talks and positive ad posters were delivered to every student in the school telling them the importance of attending school all 5 days of the week. The phrase “Give me 5” with a high five was quickly adapted throughout the school and was often shared between students, teachers and support staff as a positive affirmation of attending school.
- To support this initiative a school wide perfect attendance race was implemented in which a large display highlighting the attendance of each grade level was posted in the main corridor of the school, with weekly popcorn parties and certificates given to the class and grade level with the best attendance.
- The school soon became ablaze with healthy competition to be the best class with perfect attendance.

- Watching the initiative take success, the team at Ann Arbor Trail saw its attendance numbers go up on a consistent basis, giving on average 121 perfect attendance certificates during its first weeks to an average of 151 by the end of the school year.
  - The lesson here was that by creating a positive and engaging culture around attendance the students will propel the culture on their own.
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### **Other Lessons Learned...**

The information gathered from all the pilot schools was quite insightful, and has the potential to help shape DPCSD efforts to more systemically address Chronic Absenteeism. Here are some of the most pertinent factors we discovered:

- **Principal and Whole School Buy-In** (Principals must be completely brought in to the ideal of being intentional and strategic not just reactive to the problem of Chronic Absenteeism. Not just in lip service but in dedicated man power and focused time and space to collectively and collaboratively address the salient issues).
  - **Community School Coordination** (Through the pilot we have found that working within the community school framework. (i.e. being intentional and strategic in aligning community partners and resources to meet global needs of students and families) to be most impactful. Especially in instances where a dedicated Community School Coordinator is present to work in tandem with the MBKSMI AmeriCorps Success member and help spear head the initiative.)
  - **Accurate and Relevant Data** (We discovered that the districts data collection and reporting around attendance can sometimes be miss leading and inaccurate. Systems and protocols at both district and school site level are needed to help clarify misrepresentations and more timely and accurately identify problems or discrepancies in individual student issues.)
  - **Parental and Community Support and Buy-In** (As with many initiatives, parental engagement was identified as both major barriers and a key factor to the initiatives success or failure. Continued strategies to effectively engage and connect parents and families to the school and their child's education are needed and require commitment, flexibility and ingenuity to achieve.)
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### **Next steps...**

Work will continue in pilot schools in the 2017-18 school year. We will continue to collect summative data to measure the quantifiable impact of mentorship on target students' attendance, behavior and academic performance. Add, in addition to the 5 schools involved this year we will increase participation to 9 additional schools applying the lesson learned from this year and forging new ones in year 2.