

March 25, 2013
American Graduate Meeting Notes
United Way Conference room

Attendees:

Melissa Harris—Generation Justice
Kristin Johnson—Albuquerque teachers Federation
Suzan Reagan—Nm Dept of Workforce Solutions
Bahati Ansari—Robert F Kennedy Charter/FUE
Tommy Hernandez—Big Brothers Big Sisters
Renata Witte—New Mexico PTA
Hanh Nguyen—New Mexico Health Equity Working Group
Jane Bluestein—Education Consultant
Brittini Luna—Boys & Girls Clubs of Central NM
Susan Meyerer—Independent Consultant/UNM Student Services
Mitch Ross—Washington Middle School
Vernon Butler—Families United for Education
Rose M. Poston—New Mexico PBS
Hollie Lovely—New Mexico PBS

Introduction, Welcome, and Today's Goals by Laurel Wyckoff

Content update: After a brief tour of website updates we looked at youth produced media. Daniel Ball appeared in a Public Square program on the dropout crisis nearly a year and half before Generation Justice worked produced the [video on his graduation from RFK](#). We also viewed a new piece on mentoring through [Big Brothers Big Sisters](#) that aired on New Mexico in Focus. Other new content includes Dr. Kristine Meurer interview on the APS truancy Initiative, Families United for Education ½ hour discussion on Family Engagement Policy

Save the date: The Office of African American Affairs education committee will be screening [Education under Arrest](#) by Tavis Smiley on April 20, 10am-12pm at the Albuquerque Convention Center, afterwards there will be a panel discussion on the School to Prison pipeline. Refreshments will be served.

Group discussion on sustainability.

- Have we made a difference?
- What changed for you?
- Has anything changed for families? for kids?
- Have things changed in the community?

There was general agreement that this project is worth continuing into the future. One year is not enough to make much of a dent. Partners want to keep moving ahead.

There is a growing awareness of the issue. And the solutions seem clearer in the community. We've been able to share information and been able to share it in a logical way. Our partnerships and the flow of information and communication have been reliable.

Connections among partners have been made through American Graduate. We had been working in silos and now there are new opportunities for collaboration. We are also more aware of what others are doing to address the crisis. United Way has launched their Education Initiative and we are a part of this now. The discussion has been inclusive and has engaged both young people and community based organizations. Through NM PTA we have begun to get input and ideas from parents. The next step is to engage the business community.

Discussion about school to work: *There is concern that employers are saying that they cannot find “qualified” people to hire. We need to know what they mean by this. Is it that there are people without high school diplomas? Or that they have diplomas but still are not qualified? Does it mean that they cannot find college educated workers? Or that they cannot find people with college degrees in the right fields or with the right skills sets.*

We need to engage employers so that they will not only express to us what they are looking for but also so that they can commit to joining the fight.

Is American Graduate sustainable?

Here are the themes guiding our work

- Student Engagement
- Family Engagement
- School Community Partnership

These are our partner identified priorities (things we want to sustain)

- Broadcast Documentaries, Community Conversations
- Youth Produced Media
- Early Childhood Education
- Public Awareness Campaign

With the right partnership and the right projects our partners agree that it is sustainable.

Grad Nation— (Colin Powell founded this initiative) Communities have committed to the following:

Goal: high school graduation rate 90% by 2020 with no school rating below 80%

Here are some of the strategies (many we have tackled)

- Increase cross-sector partnerships to better coordinate community resources
- Mobilize the business community to support better education & help end the dropout crisis
- Develop comprehensive and personalized student supports to ensure all young people receive the right array of services to help them succeed

- Increase the availability of high quality pre-school options
- Provide high quality out-of-school time and summer learning opportunities
- Ensure access to health care for all children and youth
- Provide community service or service-learning opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, awareness of the needs of others and a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to the larger society
- Provide opportunities for career exploration and development to expose youth to the world of work and to help young people develop career aspirations
- Increase the number of mentors and other skilled adults to provide student supports and increase connections between young people and caring adults

Small group work, Building a Case:

A case statement should cast a bold vision for a better future and invite funders to get caught up in that vision. Together we started to answer these questions:

1. What is the need? High School Graduates
2. What evidence is there that this is a pressing need? CEPR Education Landscape Maps
3. How American Graduate (Public Media) uniquely qualified to tackle this need?
4. What will be the benefits of our actions? (If we take action now, what will be the positive consequences, both big and small? What can be guaranteed, and what is possible?)
5. What are the negative consequences if we fail?

Some people wanted to spend time and email their answers.

Here is a compilation of case statement work so far.

1. **What is the need?** High School Graduates – with High School Diplomas that are recognized by the community, higher education and employers as demonstration of a respected skill level. (I add the extra because if students are socially promoted then there is little value seen in a high school diploma. However, high school drop outs are even more stigmatized as employers think what is wrong with the person that they couldn't even finish HS or a GED.)

Diplomas to Degrees, Awareness Resources, how to utilize degrees for 21st century careers

2. **What evidence is there that this is a pressing need?** CEPR Education Landscape Maps – Labor Market Information showing wage data by education level – Census poverty data showing highest education level attained.

High School and college graduates are not being hired. Not enough qualified workers. What do employers want? Expect?

3. **How American Graduate (Public Media) uniquely qualified to tackle this need?**

Driving awareness, creating connections, sharing knowledge - elaborate on each.

We can use media to bring attention to the issue and making sure it remains on people's minds. NMPBS is creating connections to help with future work.

Before changes can occur, all the stake holders need to recognize there is a problem and start a discussion. Providing information (Public Media) on the problems that speaks to all stake holders at different levels encourages public involvement. I believe that American Graduate program has started to bring together all the "Stake Holders" and has started the discussion.

There are many programs that are addressing individual aspects of the high school dropout rate. In some cases programs that deal with assisting students to graduate are aligned but in many cases programs work alone in providing assistance. Bringing us all together to discuss the issues and identify common or unique problems we face has a great value. The most important aspect of building communication across programs is that the communication needs to be actively maintained. I view the American Graduate program as a good place for this communication/dialog to take place. It provides a neutral proctored environment. It also makes clear that all people in the room are there because we want similar outcomes for students even if we have differing views on the solutions. Over time programs change due to funding or even individuals moving on to different positions. This makes Public Media an important part of providing information on changes and keeping the communication ongoing. Ultimately for NM students to be successful in school and out of school all stake holders need to be providing not only the quality support but also the same message to the student that education is important.

Provides access to communities at large and to those without access to cable/satellite. Provides a forum for diverse voices that can be broadcast. Providing a forum for social service agencies to talk with one another, to collaborate and to start conversations with the public. American Graduate is the bridge or the hub for this work.

Public media can tell stories of successes and challenges. The business community can be engaged and connected with the education community and they can discuss their needs and how to get them met.

4. What will be the benefits of our actions? (If we take action now, what will be the positive consequences, both big and small? What can be guaranteed, and what is possible?)

New Mexicans take responsibility and pride in our education system and as a community work together for the best outcomes for all students. Graduation rates rise, higher education is able to increase enrollment from NM high school graduates with less

remedial training, and employers view High School Graduates as part of the qualified workforce.

Building community resources partnerships to pool resources and build collaboration. Learning from community will allow us to work with community. NMPBS can build community awareness of qualified graduates, both high school and college. We will start to see growth and economic stability and sustainability. Positive awareness can be transferred to the next generation through media.

Positive attitudes, people employed, family life rebuilt. NMPBS can create more awareness of the issue and a bigger community collaboration working on it. With continued American Graduate work we can close the achievement gap, poverty will decrease and we can start to fix the infrastructure and economy.

5. **What are the negative consequences if we fail?** There will be cooperation breakdown and reversion to silos of inefficient resource use and service provision. Continued graduation decline. Discouraged graduates. Continued economic instability. The social structure is being fractured by this crisis. New Mexico may cease to exist. Continuing to feed into system wide failure.

NM does not make improvements in educating our youth. Economic development remains difficult and job growth continues to be slow for New Mexicans. Ultimately, the most negative consequence would be for NM to continue having high poverty rates and all the issues that come with poverty. Finally, not taking steps now insures that the same discussions will be held again in 1, 2, 5, 10, 15, 35 years from now.

We can say at least we tried!

Next meeting will be April 29, United Way of Central NM, 10 AM second floor training center.

Thanks to everyone for your time and willingness to partner with New Mexico PBS.

*****Meeting concluded*****