



SOLUTIONS

FOR AMERICA

Fall 2006

News from the Pew Partnership for Civic Change

IN BRIEF



LeadershipPlenty® to Partner with Northwest Area Foundation

A new agreement with the Northwest Area Foundation will implement the Pew Partnership's LeadershipPlenty® curriculum in hundreds of communities throughout the northwest via the Horizons program. The Northwest Area Foundation was part of the original LeadershipPlenty® pilot phase. Horizon's program lead, Jean Burkhardt said, "We are so convinced of the value of LeadershipPlenty® that we are now about to offer it in more than 200 rural communities across seven states." Horizons helps communities with fewer than 5,000 residents reverse the downward cycles of population and economic decline and take positive actions for the future.



Pew Partnership Joins Kansas Health Foundation to Develop New Leaders

The Kansas Health Foundation (KHF) believes that leadership development can help individuals gain a sense of control and personal efficacy that they otherwise might not have. So do we. A year-long partnership with KHF has produced a curriculum for the very successful Kansas Community Leadership Initiative. According to KHF Vice President Steve Coen, "We need more leaders who have a stake in and who will advocate for healthier, more vibrant communities. This curriculum will allow citizens from across our state to have access to the skills, training, and relationships needed to be more effective citizens."



LEARNING TO FINISH™

Initiative Takes Aim at High School Dropout "Epidemic"

Learning to Finish™, a new national effort of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, will focus its resources and energy on the seemingly intractable high school dropout rate. Dubbed the "silent epidemic," the national average clocks one-third of American high school students leaving school before receiving their diploma.

Pew Partnership pilots will launch in October in two cities, Shreveport, LA and Jacksonville, FL. The Pew Partnership plans to roll out the program to 25 more cities by the end of 2008. In announcing the Campaign, Board Chair Alma Powell said, "Research shows clearly that preventing a young person from dropping out gives them untold opportunities for the future. Through the Learning to Finish™

Campaign we want to insure that every young person has those opportunities."

This effort will focus on academic and social interventions for eighth graders based on the participating communities' studies of what skills those students lack to be successful in high school. The program will bring together both academic and community resources to assure students complete their eighth grade year ready to tackle the challenging transition to high school. Studies show that ninth grade is a pivotal transition. Students who trip at this threshold often begin a downward spiral that results in leaving school permanently.

Working with community partners, one of the Learning to Finish™ goals will be to establish an accurate calculation of dropout

numbers, an often-unsubstantiated statistic. This will allow a community to measure the program's success by calculating how many of the students who are enrolled in the ninth grade finish four years later.

"Through Learning to Finish™, every eighth grader will know that the school and their community believes in them and is on their side," says Pew Partnership president Suzanne Morse.

An interview with Dr. Morse (opposite page) introduces readers to the Campaign and the new discussion guide available for individuals and community groups concerned about the dropout problem. For information about Learning to Finish™, as well as research reports and program descriptions on dropout prevention efforts, go to www.learningtofinish.org or contact the Pew Partnership for Civic Change at mail@pew-partnership.org

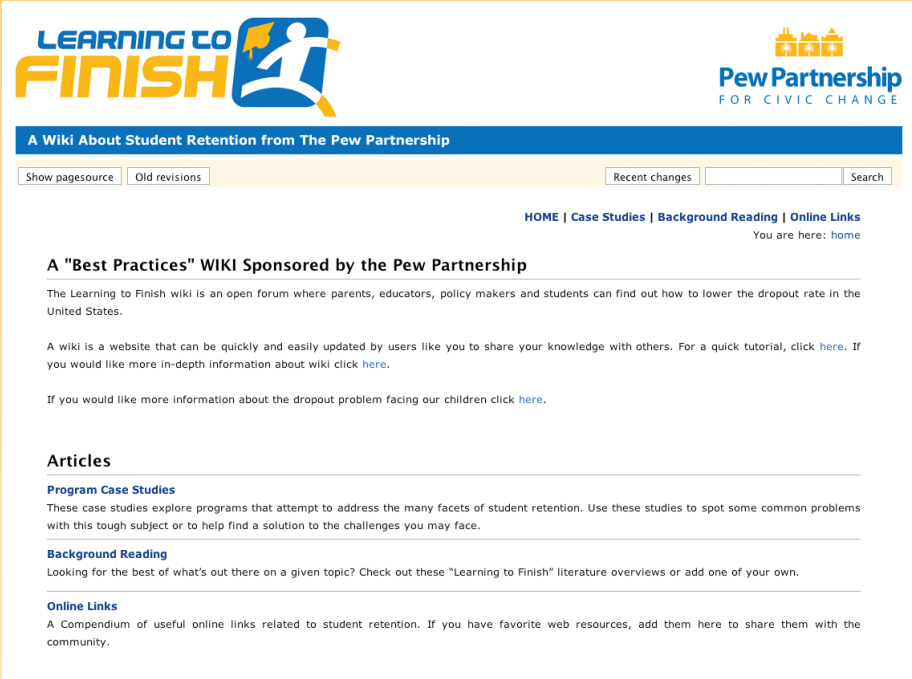
Knight Foundation Funds Learning to Finish™ Wiki

With support from the Knight Foundation's New Voices program administered by J-Lab, the Pew Partnership is pleased to announce the October 2006 launch of the Learning to Finish™ wiki — a public forum where community members can share and discover solutions to help children stay in school. The Learning to Finish™ wiki was one of only 10 programs chosen from 185 applicants nationwide for support from the foundation.

Based on the work of the Learning to Finish™ Campaign, interested citizens will be able to use this website to learn about model programs, review findings from the latest studies, and discuss possible solutions with policymakers, educators, scholars, parents, and students. The unique wiki format allows individuals with any type of computer background to share dropout prevention strategies

quickly and easily with others.

If you know of a solution that works, visit the wiki at www.learningtofinish.org to share your experience as well as learn what others are doing to address this problem. Account registration on the wiki is required but there is no charge.



LEARNING TO FINISH

Pew Partnership FOR CIVIC CHANGE

A Wiki About Student Retention from The Pew Partnership

HOME | Case Studies | Background Reading | Online Links

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A "Best Practices" WIKI Sponsored by the Pew Partnership

The Learning to Finish wiki is an open forum where parents, educators, policy makers and students can find out how to lower the dropout rate in the United States.

A wiki is a website that can be quickly and easily updated by users like you to share your knowledge with others. For a quick tutorial, click [here](#). If you would like more in-depth information about wiki click [here](#).

If you would like more information about the dropout problem facing our children click [here](#).

Articles

Program Case Studies
These case studies explore programs that attempt to address the many facets of student retention. Use these studies to spot some common problems with this tough subject or to help find a solution to the challenges you may face.

Background Reading
Looking for the best of what's out there on a given topic? Check out these "Learning to Finish" literature overviews or add one of your own.

Online Links
A Compendium of useful online links related to student retention. If you have favorite web resources, add them here to share them with the community.

First-ever dropout prevention wiki launched.

A Conversation with Suzanne Morse

Dr. Suzanne Morse is president of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change and the author of the acclaimed book "Smart Communities."



Q: What is the Learning to Finish™ Campaign and why is it needed?

In a nutshell, it is a nationwide network of communities working together to respond to one of our most urgent public problems – the high school dropout crisis. Despite repeated assertions on the part of leaders in all sectors about the importance of addressing the dropout situation, the problem today is more acute than ever. Recent reports indicate that nationally about one-third of all students who enter high school do not graduate on time if at all. Some 2,500 students leave high school every day.

Q: Isn't this just a personal decision albeit a bad one?

Hardly. For the one million or so kids who drop out each year, the prospects are dire. For the communities in which they live, the dropout rate is very bad news indeed. Each year, the toll of lost wages, taxes, and productivity that can be attributed to dropouts comes to more than \$200 billion for the nation as whole. That does not take into account the fact that more than two-thirds of the inmates in state prisons are school dropouts or that it is a turnkey issue for poverty, poorer health, and more limited prospects for the children of dropouts. It is a vicious cycle that must be broken.

Q: What is the Pew Partnership interest and role in this?

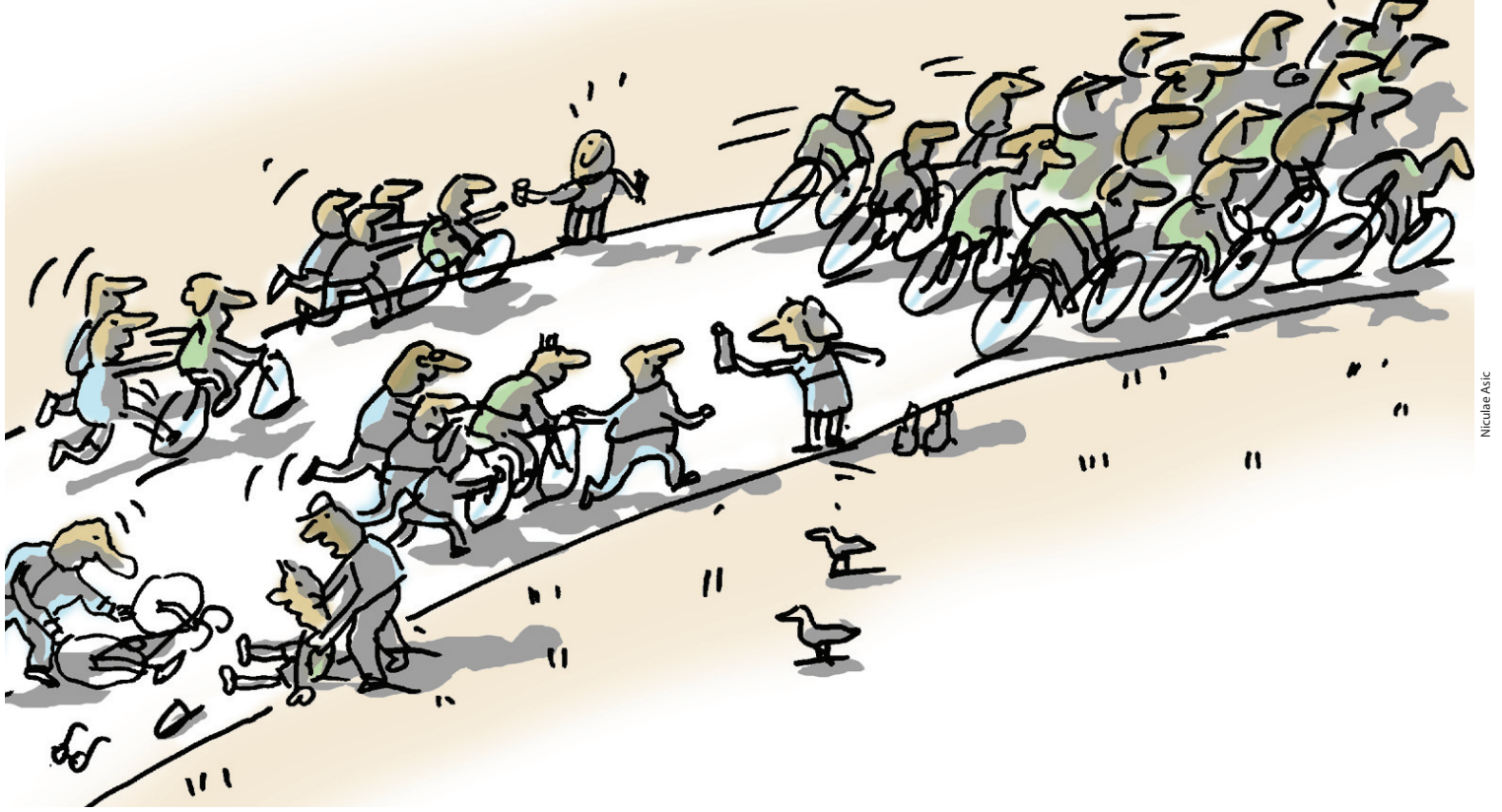
For more than 14 years we have helped communities identify solutions to their most pressing issues. This is one that affects every community and has long-term consequences. Yet despite billions of dollars of research and program money, the problem is no better and perhaps worse. We believe that this is in part due to the lack of community engagement in the issue and its solution. Learning to Finish™ starts with the premise that communities must join with the schools to tackle the dropout issue if we are to see positive change.

The Pew Partnership will help build this network by serving as its national voice, providing assistance of various kinds to participating communities, and offering a conduit for best practices – efforts that

To Learn More ...

For more information about the Learning to Finish™ Campaign, supporting research, and ways to get involved, go to www.learningtofinish.org or contact us at mail@pew-partnership.org.

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are succeeding and deserve to be replicated and expanded elsewhere. In recent months, I have crisscrossed the country talking to community leaders who share our concern about the dropout problem and a sense that, if we work together, we can do something about it. I am struck by how many people are eager to join this effort. They want to know what has worked in other communities and how to join forces with concerned individuals and civic groups, both in their own communities and in a national effort.

Q: What do you envision for this Campaign in its next steps and over the next few years?

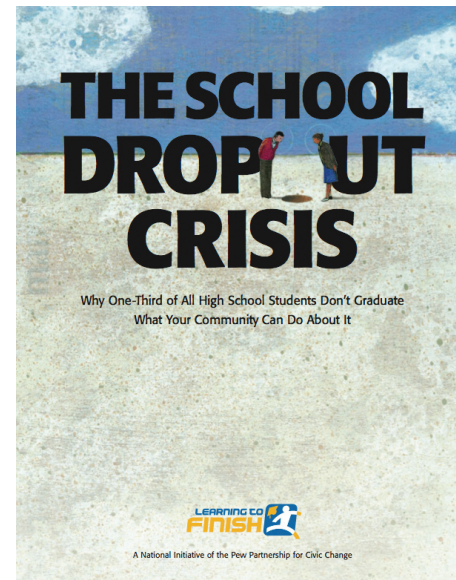
In its initial phase – in 2006 and 2007 – the Pew Partnership will identify communities that are ready to take this on as a community-wide concern. We will begin working with our two pilot communities—Shreveport and Jacksonville—and with others who are preparing to join the effort, providing them with the information, assistance, and tools they need, as well as assistance in monitoring their progress. The effort will be guided by a Blue Ribbon panel consisting of prominent and influential people who care about this problem and are ready to lend their support and expertise to help this national effort.

By 2008, we will have engaged a broad-based group of citizens and organizations in this effort in about 25 communities. Each community will move ahead with its own initiative, corresponding to its unique interests, resources, and

capabilities including an emphasis on high school transition programs that get students on track for graduation.

Q: Is there evidence showing some initiatives reduce the dropout rate?

While there is no fool-proof prescription or one-size-fits-all solution, much is known about the kinds of efforts that make a difference and key elements of successful dropout prevention programs. Our new community discussion guide and the Learning to Finish™ wiki will feature effective community initiatives that can be adapted and replicated. They also point to sources and resources that provide more information and detailed descriptions.



Q: How did you decide on the name of the Campaign — Learning to Finish™?

Actually, by watching Tiger Woods win golf tournaments. In addition to his talent and tenacity, he always has the will to

finish strong no matter where he starts. He is committed to finish with his best effort no matter what he might have done on the last round or the last hole. We want every one of our young people to have the confidence to stay in school, to see graduation as the goal, and to have the support they need to *finish* and *finish* strong.

Q: What are the main values that motivate people to take action about the dropout crisis?

There are several shared convictions among those of us who are coming together in the Learning to Finish™ Campaign. For starters, we are convinced that dropout rates at their current level are by no means inevitable. We believe that every teenager who drops out represents not just an individual failure to achieve what is widely regarded as the minimum educational credential but also a community failure. Every nine seconds in America a student becomes a dropout. This a national disgrace and at the same time a call to action.

The Learning to Finish™ Campaign begins with a shared belief that much more can and should be done for at-risk kids, that this needs to be a priority concern, and that much of what needs to be done can be done best by community partnerships working with the schools. Keeping kids in school can change the future of our communities — and it is a shared problem we can do something about.

Q: How do communities get involved in Learning to Finish™?

Learning to Finish™ is open to communities of all sizes who are willing to do three key things: 1) invest in an evaluation system that documents the problem and measures success; 2) identify ways that community resources of all varieties can be used to support young people in their education; and 3) involve the community in understanding the issue and in finding solutions to the problem. We have tools to support our community partners in doing all three and more.

Q: What is the bottom line for this Campaign?

This work can change the future of literally millions of kids over the next five years and change the future for our communities and our nation. This is a call to action that every American must answer.

Public Allies Wins 2006 Civic Change Award

The Pew Partnership for Civic Change announced this summer that Public Allies is the winner of its 2006 Civic Change Award. Founded in 1992, Public Allies has built a strong model for identifying, training, and supporting talented and diverse young adults to lead positive community change.

Since 1997, this award has gone to outstanding individuals and organizations demonstrating an extraordinary commitment to improve civic life.

Public Allies is only the second organization to receive this honor.

“Public Allies’ commitment to developing the leadership of diverse, young people in communities and then supporting this leadership for a lifetime of community service truly exemplifies the spirit of our Civic Change Award,” said Dr. Suzanne Morse, president of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change.

Headquartered in Milwaukee, WI, Public Allies operates programs in 10 communities across the country and plans to grow to 35 communities by 2011. More than 2,000 Allies have completed the program to date with 80 percent of those continuing their careers in the nonprofit and public sectors.

For more information about Public Allies’ work go to www.publicallies.org. More information about the Civic Change Award is available at www.pew-partnership.org/civic_award.html.



Virginia Tech and Pew Partnership Offer Series

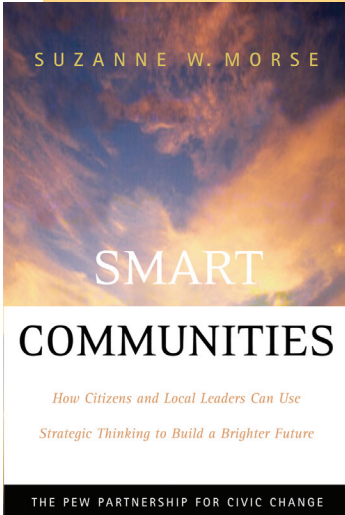
The Pew Partnership for Civic Change, in conjunction with Virginia Tech and the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center, announces two new training opportunities that will complement development efforts in communities of all shapes and sizes.

As a recently named fellow at Virginia Tech's Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement (COTA), Pew Partnership president Suzanne Morse will offer the Smart Communities Competitiveness Series in January 2007, March 2007, and May 2007. The seminars use the Partnership's

Smart Communities model to allow participants to devel-

op the skills and vision for the future that position them at the cutting edge of the global economy. One recent seminar sponsor and executive director of the Mankato, MN YWCA, Anne Ganey, said, "The visit from Suzanne Morse jumpstarted our community visioning process ... the Smart Communities strategies set the stage for community change and laid the groundwork for a successful process." Visit www.cpe.vt.edu/actcom/ for more information and to register.

The Pew Partnership's nationally recognized LeadershipPlenty® program will also be offered at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center in May, 2007. This intense three-day LeadershipPlenty® train-the-trainer session is recommended for nonprofit organizations, businesses, local governments, and neighborhood organizations who want to build the assets and capacities for action in their communities. For more information and to register go to www.cpe.vt.edu/lpinstitute/.



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FOR CIVIC CHANGE

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