

The Kirkland Promise Committee Report

To the Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce

March 5, 2015 as Approved by the Board on May 12, 2015

Background.

The Kirkland Promise Committee was initially driven by the ideal that each high-school graduate would be guaranteed tuition and costs to attend state schools. We were looking for a way to mitigate the fact that taxpayer support for our state colleges is declining while the debt load of college graduates is increasing.

The Committee, formed by the Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, first met on September 12, 2013, with the purpose of studying the Kalamazoo Promise—a scholarship program for all high school graduates in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Our goal was to gather information about Promise programs, the Washington State educational systems, and Lake Washington School District. In November 2013, three representatives from the Kirkland Promise Committee attended the annual PromiseNet conference in Kalamazoo. They learned two important things:

1. Most school districts that embrace Promise Scholarships are losing students in economically depressed areas. In Kalamazoo, 60% of the students are on free and reduced lunch. That is not the case in our district.
2. While many Kalamazoo students graduate from high school, they don't have the skills and grit to perform well in college. So the Promise Scholarship is an incentive, but student success is not guaranteed without learning essential skills.

This led us to look at the research on preschool as an economic stimulus—the idea that high-quality preschool lays the foundation for children as adults to make a positive contribution to the economy and attracts and retains families in the community. We then looked at research on the benefits of early childhood education—from birth to age five. This is the period of a child's greatest brain development, as 85% of the brain is developed.

So what began as a focused look at one scholarship program has now become a consideration of the multiplicity of needs and actions that will give our children their best chance at not only affording college but succeeding in college. It is clear that this effort must start even before preschool: at birth. Thus, we aim to address the continuum of education from age 0 through 18. We view this in four stages: from birth to age three; early childhood education, at ages three to five; kindergarten through high school; and post-secondary education, whether at technical colleges, community colleges, four-year colleges, or universities. A child's progression through each stage should be seamless.

Our new goal:

Foster the world’s best educational system—from birth through post-secondary education—in Kirkland, Lake Washington School District and Washington State.

Given the breadth of this goal, we recommend a new funding mechanism that will help build a stronger, smarter and more cohesive Kirkland community, encompassing more than just education – the creation of the Kirkland Community Foundation.

We recommend actions to be taken, short-term, mid-term and long-term.

Birth to Age Three.

- Parents are children’s primary educators. Extensive study into how children learn, much of it done at the University of Washington, has revealed many ways for parents and family and community to interact with babies to prepare them for a lifetime of learning and the development of a growth mentality.
- Former Seattle Times editor Tracy Cutchlow has synthesized some seventy scientific findings into an unusually easy-to-read, visually captivating, and informative book for new parents called “Zero to Five: 70 Essential Parenting Tips Based on Science.” We believe its compelling presentation can make a difference in parenting education.
- Parenting education is the primary and most cost efficient way we can make a difference to help children start well so they don’t get on the down escalator to poverty and worse.

Action Steps:

1. Instill an attitude in children, parents and the community that all children will go on to post-secondary education. We will say to children: “When you go to college...”
2. Foster parenting education for expectant and new parents:
 - a. Encourage case managers at Attain Housing, Hope Link, Friends of Youth, Sofia’s Way, Imagine Housing and the parent educators at Evergreen Health to use Tracy Cutchlow’s book in their work with parents; with those programs’ Foundations providing funding for the book;
 - b. Fundraise and purchase Tracy Cutchlow’s book to distribute to the 85 early child education providers in Kirkland and to others;
 - c. Make parents , grandparents and others aware of its availability at the King County Library, Park Place Books and Simplicity ABC;
 - d. Work with pediatricians in Reach Out and Read;
 - e. Assist Tracy Cutchlow in translating her book into Spanish, through the Kirkland Grupo Español that meets at the Grape Choice;
 - f. Publicize Vroom from Bezos Foundation, which texts parents with easy activities that boost kids’ brain development.
3. Identify and inventory home-visiting programs. Help them work in Kirkland. Leverage Master’s Degree candidates in Social Work, Welcome Baby Programs.

Short-term goal: Items 1 & 2; mid-term: 3.

Ages Three to Five.

- We want to bring all learners up to the level of our higher-performing children.
- An investment in early learning results in more college graduates, fewer persons in our criminal justice system, fewer persons on welfare, more persons involved in civic and charitable activities, and a more vibrant economy and city.¹
- A dollar invested now returns on average \$7 later.
- The average annual cost to house an inmate in Washington was \$46,897 in 2010 according to the Vera Institute of Justice.
- We want to invest smart money now.

Action Steps:

1. Policy Recommendation: Request the Chamber Board to direct the Public Policy Committee and its representatives to the East King County Chambers of Commerce Legislative Coalition to continue to work for increased funding for early childhood education and ultimately make it part of basic education;
2. Policy Recommendation: Support the Early Start Act in the 2015 Washington State legislature that is now before the House Appropriations and Senate Ways and Means Committees, Rep Ross Hunter and Sen Andy Hill;
3. Communicate with other Chambers regarding the importance of Early Childhood Education;
4. Create the itch for Early Childhood Education with a communications plan;
5. Create a Child Care and Early Learning Directory in book form, and place the information on the Chamber and City of Kirkland web sites;
6. Get Tracy Cutchlow's book into pediatricians' offices, and possibly sell them at Kirkland Cinema for moms and infants, Studio East, Kirkland Art Center, Summer Concert Series for Children, Church Sunday Schools and Vacation Bible Schools, outside Safeway and QFC, Little League. Encourage gifting by grandparents, aunts and uncles to young marrieds and parents.

All short-term goals.

Kindergarten through Grade Twelve.

- We are fortunate that Kirkland resides in one of the best school districts in the state. We have worked with Superintendent Traci Pierce to understand the involvement of the District in early childhood education and the statistics on the District's high performance in graduating 92% of our students from high school, with 81% going on to post-secondary education.
- We note the need to assist the 8% who don't graduate and the 19% who don't go on to further education. High school counselors advise 506 students each and need assistance.

¹ See "From Preschool to Prosperity", by Tim Bartik, © 2014, Upjohn Institute – this is downloadable for free.

- Our District has failed to pass two of the last three levies. The Kirkland Chamber Board has supported these bond levies by passing board resolutions by an overwhelming majority, but it should do more.
- The District created a process for greater citizen involvement in evaluating the schools and the need for facilities and their design. Jon Pascal is the business community representative who has met with the Public Policy Committee.
- We estimate costs of a Promise Scholarship Program for the District at \$1.8B and for Kirkland’s four high schools at \$650M.

Action Steps:

1. Policy Recommendation. The Chamber should engage in the process of developing bond and levy proposals that have broad support and improved outcomes.
2. Policy Recommendation. Request the Chamber Board to direct the Public Policy Committee and its representatives to the East King County Chambers of Commerce Legislative Coalition to continue to work for increased funding for full day kindergarten and full funding of basic education;
3. Assist the schools (LINKS – Looking Into the Needs of Kids and Schools) in identifying volunteers, lunch buddies, mentors, and internships for students, including matching seniors in assisted living with students. Research mentor and volunteer software;
4. Encourage businesses to hire high school students to give them real-life work experience;
5. Support the Lake Washington Schools Foundation with a table each year and more;
6. Work with the schools and College Success Foundation to provide mentors, tutors and opportunities for students who are struggling in school to become successful and be prepared for post-secondary education ;
7. Review the effectiveness of www.washboard.org, finaid.org and fastweb.org as directories of scholarship opportunities for post-secondary education. If they are not complete, create a directory;
8. Increase the expectation that all students will go on to post-secondary education: “When you go to – LWIT, Cascadia or NW College or UW Bothell, etc.”
9. Policy Recommendation. Form the Kirkland Community Foundation, after meeting with Kirkland business leaders, City, parks advocates and others. This can encompass charitable giving to help Kirkland in many areas, including student scholarships and early childhood education;
As recommended by Public Policy: Explore forming etc.
10. Establish Kirkland Promise Scholarships for Kirkland students as a long time goal.
11. Explore the effectiveness and differences of the International Baccalaureate and Cambridge Programs and Project Lead the Way.

Short-term: 2, 4, 7, 8, 9; Mid-term: 1, 3, 6; Long-term: 10 & 11.

Post-Secondary Education: Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges.

- We have studied the funding of education in the State of Washington with assistance from Representative Ross Hunter. The State used to pay 70% of the cost of college, now only 30%.
- The Washington legislature balanced the state budget since 2008 on the backs of our state schools, community and technical colleges, and universities.
- Students graduate with too much debt and need ways to work through college, pay affordable tuition, and receive scholarships.
- One in twenty students ages 25 to 34 whose parents do not finish high school have a college degree.²
- Some forty percent of students cannot afford to attend four year colleges or universities.
- Those who do graduate carry too much debt, which limits their future job choices, prevents them from purchasing a car or house, or going on for graduate work.
- Without post-secondary education, students are more likely to live a life of poverty with all of its attendant health and societal risks.
- We have two excellent schools in our area that provide excellent post-secondary education and training, Cascadia Community College and Lake Washington Institute of Technology. They are an affordable alternative to or start on a four-year degree. They need our support.

Action Steps:

For all college students

1. Policy Recommendation. Request the Board to support increased funding for post-secondary education.
2. Share the scholarship database created under K-12 and make students and college counselors aware of Masonic Scholarships for the third and fourth year of college;
3. Help identify mentors, internships and work study jobs;
4. Establish Kirkland Promise Scholarships for Kirkland students as a long term goal, unique to Kirkland's needs and in conjunction with other scholarship programs, such as the College Success Foundation of Washington.

For two-year college students

5. Policy Recommendation. Encourage increased federal support and expanded state support for community and technical colleges for a better trained workforce;
6. Support the Lake Washington Institute of Technology Foundation at its breakfast;
7. Support the Cascadia Community College Foundation;
8. Encourage at Cascadia an Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (as done at the City University of New York);
9. Encourage the development of a Job Fair Center at LWIT and Cascadia CC;

² Promise and Failure of Community Colleges for Upward Mobility, Eduardo Porter, New York Times, February 18, 2015, Section B1 & 2.

Short-term: 1, 2,5-7; Mid-term: -3, 8, 9; Long-term: 4.

Kirkland Promise Committee Active Members. Dave Asher, Kathy Feek, Doug Davis, Samantha St. John, Bill Vadino for Jane Hague, Dr. Amy Morrison Goings, Peg Hunt, Rev. Marian Stewart, Steve Leahy, Dr. Terry Byington, Bruce Wynn, Walt Krueger (Chair).