



Cuyahoga County Council

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CUYAHOGA COUNTY COUNCILMAN PERNEL JONES, JR., EXECUTIVE ED FITZGERALD, AND THREE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS COLLABORATE TO LAUNCH CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP (CTAG) PILOT PROGRAM FOR THE 2014-2015 SCHOOL YEAR.

CUYAHOGA- County Councilman Pernel Jones, Jr., and three local school districts are launching a Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) pilot program to increase high-school graduation rates and revive a proven intervention strategy that was cut from state education funding priorities.

“Our most vulnerable students lost a valuable path to graduation,” Councilman Jones, Jr., said. “We are bringing back a successful program for youth who need extra guidance in reaching their full potential”

Ohio’s Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) initiative started in 2007. Former State Senator CJ Prentiss was the architect of the CTAG initiative. It operated in Cleveland and other school districts until it was dismantled by the 2010-11 State budget.

The evidence-based program recruited ninth grade students, primarily African-American and Latino male students, who met one or more of four risk factors. The students had failed two or more core classes, were absent 36 days or more, received five or more days of out-of-school suspension, or were held back a grade.

“High quality public education is a key to the future economic growth of Cuyahoga County” said County Executive Ed FitzGerald. “We must work to ensure that every student has access to the education they need to become successful adults.”

This year, the Garfield Heights, Maple Heights and Warrensville Heights school districts approached County Council to request assistance supporting their neediest students using CTAG. Councilman Jones, Jr., spearheaded an effort to pilot the program in these districts for the 2014-2015 school year, with the goal that the program could be replicated for other districts in the future.

Cuyahoga County will devote \$500,000 to the pilot, administered through the Family & Children First Council (FCFC).

“We invest in young people because it’s the right thing to do, but also because it pays off for everybody in the years to come,” stated Robin R. Martin, FCFC Program Director.

The program can increase graduation rates and reduce crime and social welfare costs, leading to a 3.3 to 1 return on investment, according to an analysis of the statewide CTAG initiative by Ohio Policy Matters.

Martin noted that the “learning costs” of this program have already been paid. The Strickland administration invested \$20 million over two years, funding 13 districts and 35 schools statewide. Local school partners will have access to past curriculum, evaluation, and recommendations.

Jones, Jr., joins past CTAG supporters, including original advocate, former Senator C.J. Prentiss, to champion a program that has been lauded as an effective solution to propel student achievement and improve educational outcomes for African-American and Latino children.

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