Golden Medallion Award Entry
Category Designation: Special Communications Projects/Campaigns
Entry Overview

**We Want You Back Campaign addresses dropout crisis**

We Want You Back is an annual, ongoing effort that focuses public attention on the dropout crisis and graduation gap in Minneapolis and combines effective strategies with community resources to resolve it. The research is clear that the consequences of not graduating from high school are increasingly serious for both individuals and society as a whole. Nearly 30 percent of Hennepin County students don’t finish high school. Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) set out to re-enroll 200 young people and put them on a path to graduation through the We Want You Back (WWYB) campaign.

MPS started WWYB with the goal of identifying recent school dropouts and doing whatever it takes to bring them back to school. With the support of the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and Youth Coordinating Board, we built a citywide campaign to train MPS staff members, mobilize community volunteers and let our young people know: WE WANT YOU BACK!

The campaign includes an annual citywide door-knocking event. Teams of community members and school district volunteers go door to door across the city of Minneapolis to help young people get back on the track of success. Large-scale communications efforts include working with youth to develop grassroots strategies to reach their peers, partnering with local celebrities in developing public messages and collaborating with co-chairs of the campaign, Mayor R.T. Rybak and County Commissioner Mike Freeman, as well as others.

MPS staff assist with the re-enrollment process, which includes looking at online classes, alternative schools and Area Learning Centers. We are pleased to report that we attracted back approximately 120 students, of which 26 have already graduated in 2011.
We Want You Back Campaign addresses dropout crisis

Research: Nearly 30 percent of Hennepin County students don’t finish high school. Minneapolis Public Schools set out to communicate with and re-enroll 200 young people and put them on a path to graduation through the We Want You Back campaign.

The MPS Office of Communications worked in collaboration with departments that support drop out recovery efforts and student attendance to identify specific households that would benefit from the campaign. Our goal was to identify students and meet face to face with them to support their re-entering educational programs.

We collaborated with MPS staff members who work closely with students who are at risk for dropping out of school to identify the communications barriers to reaching these students and families. We recognized that there was no one set reason or even group of reasons that students leave high school. Some of these reasons are external to school, such as pregnancy or homelessness, and some are education-related. Knowing the life circumstances and demographics of students was key to knowing how to best communicate with them.

Connecting with un-enrolled students and encouraging them to return to school is a job MPS cannot do alone. The Youth Coordinating Board (YCB) and its community connections are critical to mobilizing the citywide effort needed to reach young people and put them on a path to graduation.

Analysis: Through our analysis of the dropout crisis and the research we conducted, we identified key strategies to communicate with various stakeholders. We also recognized the need to involve key community partners to support the work of targeting recent dropouts and effectively sending the message: We Want You Back.

In order to have the greatest impact, we identified that we would need to rely heavily of grassroots efforts that allowed for personal and meaningful face to face communication. Our research informed us that our target audience would be receptive to messages that emphasized the school district’s intention to support and help students, provide encouragement and acknowledged the role that life circumstances and difficult challenges played in a decision to return to school. We also identified that materials shared with students and families needed to be translated into multiple languages.

To recruit students back to receive their high school diploma, we developed strategies to implement the following goals:

1. raising public awareness of the drop-out crisis in Minneapolis (and the country) and what's being done to address it; for example, more than 13,000 pieces of informational literature have been distributed in the community in 2011 and several media articles and interviews have assisted with educating the public and policy makers.
2. offering a concrete hands-on day of action — for people who want to help reach young people who have dropped out; in 2011, 185 volunteers helped with a day of door-knocking that reached 144 people referred to the We Want You Back program at MPS.
3. using a variety of outreach and recruitment strategies to reach young people, and adults, with the message that there are options available for them to complete credits and earn their diploma.
4. helping young people to find the program fit that works for them, and offering support to help them complete a program and finish a diploma.

Although this campaign speaks directly to un-enrolled youth, our messages had to reach many stakeholders to support the work, including current students, parents, mentors, interested volunteers, media, politicians and the general Minneapolis public.
The Youth Coordinating Board was ideally suited to mobilize community volunteers and to link efforts among the schools, the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, the Minneapolis Park Board, the Hennepin County Library and a wide range of youth-serving agencies, nonprofits, congregations and community and business organizations.

Communication: The scope of the WWYB communication and recruitment plan reached a broad public audience, as well as individuals on whom the campaign would have the greatest impact.

Although WWYB is an ongoing effort, communications intensified around the annual citywide door-knocking event. To gear up for the door-knocking event in 2010, Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and Dr. Johns on held a joint press conference announcing the initiative to students. The press event was covered extensively in the Twin Cities, reaching all four major television networks, Minnesota Public Radio and metro-area community and ethnic media.

We utilized a variety of tactics, tools and resources to spread the word about the graduation gap, gain community support for the campaign, build a volunteer base for the door-knocking event and, most importantly, get un-enrolled young people back on the track to graduation.

Below are some of the tactics used to communicate our message to the public:

- Social media campaign (school district, the City of Minneapolis, Youth Coordinating Board)
- TV and radio public service announcements, interviews
- PSAs with local celebrities developed to raise excitement about effort
  - PSA: Bernadeia Johnson & Slug from Atmosphere
  - PSA: Brother Ali and Mayor R.T. Rybak
  - Promo: Conversation with Mayor RT Rybak
  - Promo: Campaign Rally 2010
- Press event with superintendent and mayor prior to the day of action
- Grassroots efforts from volunteers stationed at citywide events, community centers, parks, etc.
- Materials translated in languages other than English to reach our diverse families
- Door hanger with campaign information to leave at unanswered homes
- Unique publication piece explaining the re-enrollment options

Evaluation: The WWYB campaign resulted in attracting back approximately 120 students, of which 26 have already graduated in 2011. The

In September 2011, we spoke with thousands of young people across Minneapolis in a high-energy day of outreach, information and resources. One hundred of them immediately signed up to speak with MPS staff about getting on a path toward re-enrollment and graduation so that they may be successful. Over 150 volunteers knocked on doors or worked in the outreach center to assist with re-enrolling students into school. We attracted back approximately 120 students, of which 26 have already graduated in 2011.

The communications research, planning, strategies and tactics played a critical role in realizing the success of the We Want You Back campaign. The over one hundred students who engaged with MPS during the outreach day indicate that the messages conveyed and the form in which they were engaged was effective. This one on one style of communication has proven to continue to be effective as we continued smaller outreach efforts with these students through the year and in many cases, prior to a decision to drop out of school.

We Want You Back is based on a successful model that is working in cities like Houston and Philadelphia. We Want You Back Campaign Chairs are Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson, Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak and Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman.
Queremos que regresen!

LAS ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS DE MINNEAPOLIS TIENEN

2 PASOS PARA VOLVER AL CAMINO A LA GRADUACIÓN

LLAMA AL 612.668.3700 para aprender sobre las nuevas opciones:

• Escuelas alternativas
• Cursos en línea
• Un portafolio para la graduación
• Cursos pre-universitarios de MCTC que no cobran la matrícula
• ¿Tienes más de 21 años? Consigue tu GED (diploma equivalente) a través de la Educación Básica para Adultos

CONECTA CON El personal de Queremos que regresen, quien te ayudará a diseñar un plan personalizado para la graduación.

¿Preguntas? Visita al www.mpls.k12.mn.us o llama al 612-668-4136 para que te envíen un folleto

La Junta Directiva Coordinación de Jóvenes y organizaciones comunitarias apoyan el programa Queremos que regresen de las Escuelas Públicas de Minneapolis. El personal del programa no volverá a tu casa a menos que pidas una visita; cualquier contacto adicional será por teléfono.

WE WANT YOU BACK

MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAS

2 STEPS TO GET BACK ON A PATH TO GRADUATION

CALL 612.668.4128 to learn about the new options:

• Alternative schools
• Online courses
• Graduation portfolio
• Tuition free pre-college classes with MCTC
• Over 21? GED with Adult Basic Education

CONNECT With We Want You Back staff who will help you put together a personalized learning plan.

Questions? Visit www.mpls.k12.mn.us or call 612.668.4136 to have a brochure mailed to you.

We Want You Back, a program of the Minneapolis Public Schools, is supported by the Youth Coordinating Board and community partners. Program staff will not come to your home again unless you request a visit; any additional contact will be by phone.
Peb Xav Tau Nej Rov Qab!

TSEV KAWM NTAWV NROOG MINNEAPOLIS MUAJ
UAS YUAV COJ ROV QAB LOS RAU TXOJ KEV KOM KAWM TIAV KEV KAWM THEEM SIAB

HU
612.668.1836 kom tau kev qhia txog tej kev muaj tshiab no:
• Alternative Schools
• Online Courses
• Develop a portfolio of skills
• Tuition free pre-college classes
• Over 21? GED nrog Adult Basic Education

MUS THAM
Nrog cov neeg ua hauj lwm rau qhov peb Xav Tau Nej Rov Qab, lawv yuav pab koj npaj txoj kev kawm kom haum rau koj tus kheej.

Muaj lus nug?
Mus siab ntawm [www.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us)
los yog hu rau 612-668-4136 kom tau ib daim ntawm qhia xa tuaj rau koj.

We Want You Back!

DUGSIYADA DADWEYNAHA MINNEAPOLIS AYAA KUU HAYA
OO AAD UGU NOQON KARTO MARINKII QALIN JABINTA

WAC
612.668.3700 si aad u barato ikhyaarada cusub:
• Alternative Schools
• Online Courses
• Kororso Xirfado isku lakaban
• Casharro Lacag la’aan ah ee Kulli yad ka hore ee MCTC
• Ka weyn 21? Shahaadada Dugsiga sare ee Waxbarashada Dadka waaweyn

KU XIRNOW
Shaqaalaha We Want You Back
kuwaasoo kuu diyaarinaya barnaamij qalin jabin kuu gaar ah

Su’alo?
Booqo [www.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us) ama wac 612-668-4136 si laguugu soo diiro war barraahis.

We Want You Back, barnaamij dugsiga Dadweynaha Minneapolis, waxaa taageeray Golaha Xiriirinta Dhallinyarada iyo Wadaageyaasha Bulshada (Youth Coordinating Board and community partners). Shaqaalaha barnaamijku aqalkaaga ma imaanayaan, ilaa aad codsato in lagu soo boogdo ama aqalka laguugu yimaado; wixii kale oo xiriir ah waa telefoon.
WE WANT YOU BACK

ALTERNATIVE HIGH SCHOOLS

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA PHOENIX HIGH SCHOOL

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA SALT HIGH SCHOOL

MERC

MPS ONLINE

DEVELOP A PORTFOLIO OF SKILLS

TUITION FREE PRE-COLLEGE CLASSES WITH MCTC – PYC
We want you back, a program of the Minneapolis Public Schools, is supported by the Youth Coordination Board and its many community partners.

Getting your diploma is possible. New, flexible options are available.

Inviting un-enrolled young people to “Come Home to Minneapolis” and choose a path to graduation.

WE WANT YOU BACK
MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS HAS TO GET BACK ON A PATH TO GRADUATION

CALL 612.668.4136 to learn about options.
New choices allow you to learn at your own pace and to customize your learning by blending online and educational experience.

- Alternative Schools
  - Volunteers of America Phoenix High School
  - Volunteers of America SALT High School
  - MERC
  - PYC
- MPS Online
- Graduation portfolio
- Combination of credits and learning experiences
- Tuition-free pre-college classes with MCTC
- Over 21? GED with Adult Basic Education

PLYMOUTH YOUTH CENTER ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL

PYC Arts and Technology High School is a friendly and safe community that promotes student achievement. Teachers integrate art and technology in classrooms to increase student engagement and academic growth in all subject areas.

CURRICULUM FOCUS/COURSES

Classes offered meet Minneapolis Public Schools graduation requirements and are designed to meet individual students’ needs. PYC strives to infuse technology, art and service learning into curriculum and offers after school programming to aid in credit make-up for students who are behind in their graduation requirements. Seniors work intensively with staff in establishing post-secondary plans and preparing for success after high school.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Every student works toward goals in a Continual Learning Plan that is designed by the student and her/his academic advisor. Each plan emphasizes student work toward academic and behavioral success, as well as full and healthy community participation. Smaller class sizes, with group work and individual attention, offer the support many students need to achieve both their academic and personal goals.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Small classes.
- At PYC, all students set and achieve goals to prepare themselves for college and their future careers. You don’t have to be an artist; you just need to care about creativity and success.

An initial meeting allows students to understand expectations and learn more about resources and supports. To schedule a meeting, contact Crystal Ruiz at 612.643.2018.

Plymouth Youth Center
2240 Oliver Avenue North, Minneapolis, MN 55411
612.522.6501, Fax 612.522.2519
www.pyc-mpls.org
Grades: 9-12; Ages 14-21
School Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 2:45 p.m. daily or hours by arrangement through independent study
TUITION-FREE PRE-COLLEGE CLASSES WITH MCTC

Jump Start to College at Minneapolis Community and Technical College
A tuition-free program offering pre-college classes that count toward high school graduation

Courses are held on the college campus and are co-taught by a high school teacher and a college faculty member.

COURSES
Pre-college skill-building curriculum in Reading, English, Math and English as a Second Language. Students are also eligible to receive academic support in each course.

SCHEDULE
Fall and spring courses: Between 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.
Summer courses: Between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m.

ELIGIBILITY
• You must be enrolled in a Minneapolis public or alternative school.
• Eligibility is based on your Accuplacer test results.
• You will only be able to sign up for these classes at three specific times during the year.

CONNECT
With We Want You Back staff who will help you put together a personalized graduation plan.

Questions?
Visit www.mpls.k12.mn.us or call 612.668.4136.
DEVELOP A PORTFOLIO OF SKILLS

Develop a portfolio of skills that shows what you have learned through life experiences, such as parenting or working. This is known as a “Competency Portfolio.” The skills and concepts in your portfolio would include:

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- Read with understanding
- Convey ideas in writing
- Speak so others can understand
- Listen actively
- Observe critically

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS
- Solve problems and make decisions
- Plan
- Use math to solve problems and communicate

PROGRAM STRENGTHS
- Emphasis on relationship and trust building to foster a safe learning environment
- Careful credit monitoring to ensure that students stay on track for graduation
- Instructional styles that meet students’ needs
- Intentional instruction focused on developing reading and math skills
- Time for electives and student support incorporated into the daily schedule
- Focus on literacy
- After school programming and tutoring available

SPECIAL FEATURES
- Small class size
- One-on-one assistance
- Credit make-up
- Reading and writing assistance
- Basic Standards and GRAD Test help
- Computer classes
- College and career preparation
MPS ONLINE

Using technology to personalize your learning experience and meet your individual goals.

The MPS Online center is open extended hours with licensed teachers available at all times to provide support and assistance. Students may learn at the center full-time or part-time and do additional work off site. An individual plan to get you your high school diploma will be designed for you and will be unique to your needs. Credit will be given based on all available sources.

MPS Online is designed to increase your options to complete your education!

COURSES

- English 9-12
- Science: Environmental Science, Biology, Physical Science and Chemistry
- Math: Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II
- Electives
  - Art
  - Spanish
  - Health Science and Physical Education

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

- Environmental field studies take place at locations including the Superior Hiking Trail, Wolf Ridge, The International Wolf Center, Boundary Waters Canoe Area, YMCA Leadership Camps and many others including out-of-state locations.
- High adventure activities include backpacking, rock climbing, canoeing, dog sledding, running club, ultimate Frisbee and urban orienteering adventures.
- All classes feature state-of-the-art computers and instruction.
- Visual arts program includes photography and videography.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Daily advisory periods offer students support on attendance and progress toward individual goals
- Special Education and ELL services are available
- Post-Secondary Education Options (PSEO) and other opportunities challenge gifted and talented students

Volunteers of America SALT Hig School
924 – 19th Ave S
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612.375.0700
Hours: 8:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Call Andy Cook or Aaron Carper at 612.375.0700 to schedule an initial meeting.
MERC | MINNEAPOLIS EMPLOYMENT READINESS CURRICULUM

MERC Alternative High School emphasizes attendance and respect. Staff will help you get your diploma and set goals for your future.

COURSES
Courses include English, Social Studies, Math, Science, Speech, Psychology, Drama, job preparation, college preparation, computer skills, life skills and more.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS
Our strengths include a safe, caring environment; small class sizes; a counselor; a dedicated staff; and mentorship.

MERC MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM
We can help reconnect with families and students seeking an educational program in which students in grades seven and eight will feel welcome and accepted.

Our supportive staff connects with students, encourages them to stay in school and believes they share responsibility for their education.

SPECIAL FEATURES
- Small classes, maximum 16 students.
- Parents/guardians contacted daily when students are not in school.
- Relationship building and behavior modification are part of the daily schedule.

An initial meeting allows parents and students to understand expectations and learn more about resources and supports. To schedule a meeting, contact Program Manager Sandy Reicher. Parent or guardian must accompany student for initial meeting, which includes an application and interview.

MERC
2539 Pleasant Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
612.872.2777
Hours: 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Bus tokens provided for qualifying students.
VOA SALT is an experiential and environmental themed program that focuses on leadership development and community-based service learning. If you prefer hands-on learning, have a passion for outdoor adventure and environmental activities or feel like traditional classrooms are not for you, then consider SALT High School.

COURSES
- Math, English, Social Studies and Science
- Electives: Environmental Studies, Visual Arts, Technology and Holistic Health Education
- Field studies, labs and experiential/service learning trips incorporated into all classes
- Seniors complete a service learning project, scientifically-based environmental project or community action/research project of their own design
- Independent study offers flexible scheduling and one-on-one support

PROGRAM STRENGTHS
- Flexibility
- Provide a way for accelerated credit makeup
- Meet special needs due to schedule conflicts
- Careful credit monitoring to ensure that students stay on track for graduation
- Time for electives and student support incorporated into the daily schedule

SPECIAL FEATURES
- Small class size
- One-on-one assistance
- Credit acceleration
- Basic Standards and GRAD Test help

MPS Online (Wilder Complex)
3345 Chicago Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55407
612.668.4136
VOA Phoenix serves students in need of credit make-up and offers a flexible schedule and an educational setting smaller than traditional high schools.

COURSES
- Science, Math, English and Social Studies
- Electives: Art, Creative Writing and Physical Education
- Students who qualify will also have the opportunity to make up credits with additional classroom or online classes
- Multiple grading periods within each quarter provide students with flexibility

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS
- Cooperate with others
- Guide others
- Advocate and influence
- Resolve conflict and negotiate

LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS
- Take responsibility for learning
- Learn through research
- Reflect and evaluate
- Use information and communications technology

COMBINATION OF CREDIT AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Through this option, you and an advisor can customize a way for you to earn your diploma. You would sit down with an advisor to discuss the credits you have already earned in school, the credits you need to graduate and your life experiences that may qualify for credit. Life experiences, sometimes called “experiential learning,” include activities like private instruction, performing groups, internships and community service.

Visit the MPS online center at http://online.mpls.k12.mn.us to develop a plan.