

Student Count Leadership Team Recommendations

An estimated 25,000 students who live in the city of Detroit do not attend school in Detroit. According to an MLIVE analysis in 2015-2016, 14,301 Detroit residents were lost and enrolled in other districts.

Although, the City of Detroit has faced many challenges its decline in population has not matched school enrollment. The Citizens Research Council reports that over the last 25 years the city's population has dropped 34 percent, and Detroit Public Schools Community District lost more than 50 percent of their enrollment. Indicating that there is more to the story of education in Detroit.

Contributing to Detroit's decline in student enrollment are a number of factors include the challenge of navigating the education landscape. The ebbs and flows of education in Detroit have resulted in many school closures and a lack of supply of teachers. Absence of stability and comprehensive centralized information has led many Detroit families to seek education for their children elsewhere.

The presence of choice and competition have also furnished Detroit's decline in student enrollment. The state policy around public school choice made it easier for students to change school districts and the creation of charter schools created a competition landscape. For example, the top districts attracting Detroit students include: Oak Park, Berkley, Ferndale, River Rouge, and Ferndale. River Rouge has fifteenth out of district bus routes to attract other students in the districts. Districts like these and many others market early education seats, access to English language programs, credit recovery and higher level coursework in an effort to lure families to their schools knowing these are programs that many Detroit schools do not always have available. In order to operate and stabilize our city's schools, the decreasing student count must be addressed by both the public and the charter schools currently operating in Detroit.

It is proposed that creating relevant, timely communication and assessment tools and increasing awareness around Detroit's educational opportunities and success stories are prioritized as strategies to increase student enrollment in Detroit. To help parents navigate the educational landscape of choice and competition the following are recommended as short-term actions.

Create a citywide toolkit to provide families with simple, accurate, accessible information on schools and early education opportunities. The toolkit should include a guide that profiles school's program offerings, enrollment information and other unique assets the City of Detroit offers such as The Detroit Promise Scholarship. The guide should be printed and available online. As simple as it may be to have school information collected all in one place Detroit does not currently have one site or information source that has all of the publicly funded options for Pre-K and/or K-12 options available for students, families and those who serve them to access.

Establish citywide school and community resource fairs to provide on-site enrollment for schools and community program offerings to students and families during key enrollment periods. Other school districts have made their information very easy to access and readily available via traditional marketing vehicles as well as through expensive direct outreach campaigns. Detroit schools must provide information as well not only during key enrollment periods, but throughout the year.

Establish citywide enrollment centers staffed with support personnel to help families navigate the plethora of options for educating their children. Granted, Detroit may have a confusing number

of options and complex systems, families need to be informed that among those options there is a choice that can meet all of their child's needs in the city.

Establish a citywide marketing campaign to highlight the successes of education in Detroit. The campaign should feature current students, alumni, and famous Detroiters accentuating what makes Detroit schools great. Similar campaigns have been done by The United Way. The education sector as a whole does not do a good job controlling Detroit's narrative around education, and as a result many families are continually hearing, reading and seeing only the negatives of being a student in Detroit. This will offer an alternative tale.

Although, these short-term actions will increase student enrollment in Detroit there are risks involved. Such a collaborative effort around collective school information will undoubtedly make schools and early childhood educators nervous as they view each other as competitors. However, the risk of losing more students to other cities, should Detroit schools continue to work in a vacuum, will undoubtedly grow as competitors continue to get better at effectively communicating the full spectrum of their offerings to Detroit students and families.

Incidentally, within one year of implementation of our recommendation, we would expect the following to occur: An increase in student enrollment in Detroit traditional and charter schools, and decrease in the number of students leaving the city to attend schools outside of their home district. Schools and early childhood programs working collaboratively to create easily accessible communication tools that inform students and families of all of their educational opportunities. More positive coverage of Detroit's ability to offer numerous positive educational experiences for students and their families.

Subsequently, the following long-term actions are recommended. **Establish a Detroit enrollment hotline and enrollment hubs** within existing community spaces to connect families and those assisting them to accurate information on school enrollment processes and help to resolve challenges regarding educating children. This could potentially be worked into the student and parent support work currently offered by several Detroit nonprofits. The hotline and enrollment hubs will help mediate some of the issues that take place between schools and families by involving a third party, and more effectively understand the when, where and why of how a student leaves the city. The hotline would provide data and case studies for schools and communities in Detroit to learn from as the city aims to improve the level of service offered in Detroit schools.

It is understood that schools may fear that staff operating the hotline and hubs will direct families to specific schools. However, this cannot be assumed without supporting data and the goal of keeping students in Detroit's education system has to be of greater importance than the school they attend to continuously improve Detroit's student enrollment.

With this intention, the success of the enrollment hotline and hubs should be measured by the number of families who report awareness of the hotline and the enrollment hubs. Also, the satisfaction of schools and providers should also be collected. In addition, to data and documented cases of staff successfully assisting families to stay in Detroit instead of seek a school choice at an outside district.

Establish a system for collecting and accessing anonymized student data including a **mid-year transfer policy**. This policy will ensure children are not jumping from one school to the next without understanding the reasons why. This system will help gather data on students who

transfer schools and assist those serving them in a more efficient manner. Data recorded will be used to improve all schools to better service students and help Detroit to aggregate more accurate enrollment numbers.

Resource	Source	Link
Public School Enrollment Trends in Detroit	Citizens Research Council of Michigan	http://www.crcmich.org/PUBLICAT/2010s/2016/enrollment_trends_in_detroit-2016.pdf?utm_source=Chalkbeat+Detroit&utm_campaign=ae15f7956c-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_09_15&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_ace27098d8-ae15f7956c-211301257
Detroit Educational Landscape - Suburbs	Steven Wiltse DPSCD	Basecamp https://3.basecamp.com/3756737/buckets/3771063/uploads/614309196
5Essentials Parent Survey	Eric Anderson & Walt Cook	https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1TAzENGq1EJYGAAbgvPIKJ3O8ezSlqAYSkmUtlilwo68/edit#slide=id.g2407ede200_0_3 https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1kz9YZjMESR1xP11uvy2SgrqJ7CntKiq53U_imXZ0NWY/edit#slide=id.g24485a4571_0_9
23% of Michigan public school students opt for school choice	Mlive	http://www.mlive.com/news/index.ssf/2016/08/charters_schools_of_choice_enr.html
Student exodus saps Detroit school finances	The Detroit News (2015)	http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/education/2015/03/30/student-exodus-saps-detroit-school-finances/70652450/

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