

INTRODUCTION

MBK Community Action Resource Guide

PURPOSE

In September 2014, President Obama issued a challenge to cities, towns, counties, and tribes across the country to join the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Community Challenge as "MBK Communities." The Challenge encourages communities (cities, rural municipalities, and tribal nations) to implement a coherent cradle-to-college-and-career strategy for improving the life outcomes of all young people to ensure that they can reach their full potential.

As an MBK Community leader, you have accepted this call to action indicating your commitment to enacting sustainable change in your community across some or all of the following key milestone areas identified by the May 2014 MBK Task Force Report¹:

1. Entering school ready to learn
2. Reading at grade level by third grade
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career
4. Completing post-secondary education or training
5. Successfully entering the workforce
6. Reducing violence and providing a second chance

This guide is intended as an informational resource to support your MBK Community Challenge efforts. It introduces an illustrative sample of key principles, practices, and resources to consider in building your local initiatives. These materials are not meant as requirements and are not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. Ideas and resources may not apply equally in every community as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these complex issues. Our hope is that you will build on the illustrative examples highlighted in this resource guide, adapting them to create tailored solutions for your community.

The MBK Community Action Resource Guide series is a project of the National Convening Council, with support and technical assistance from the White House and a number of Federal agencies.

In preparing this guide, the National Convening Council is also grateful for the expertise and experience shared by National League of Cities, StriveTogether, United Way, PolicyLink, Urban Institute, and Deloitte. These groups comprise a wide variety of nongovernmental organizations, philanthropies, and academics that have studied and provided ongoing support to communities implementing cradle-to-college-and-career approaches.

These resource guides include information and examples from nongovernmental sources. These resource guides are provided for informational purposes only. Inclusion of nongovernmental information and resources does not indicate endorsement by the White House or the U.S. government of entities, their products or services, and the **information contained at referenced sites does not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. government.**

OBJECTIVES

After reading this guide, you should:

- Build a high-level understanding of milestone-specific issues, critical players to engage, and key considerations in activating your community around this issue
- Recognize evidence-based practices and examples of programmatic success that can be adapted to meet local community needs
- Conduct a detailed needs assessment benchmarking current performance on the critical metrics for each of the six milestones
- Begin to understand institutional resources available for use in launching local initiatives
- Identify outstanding questions to address when developing local solutions
- Feel empowered to drive systemic change in your community

CONTENT OVERVIEW

This guide is designed to support your planning and execution process through a series of three core steps: first, it helps you (1) **build an understanding** of the milestone-specific issue area; then it (2) **identifies several illustrative leading practices** to help inspire your approach; and finally, it provides a selection of (3) **key resources** to help guide you as you begin to take action.

(1) Build Understanding

- **Milestone Overview:** an introduction to the key drivers affecting the milestone issue area, as outlined in the MBK Task Force Report published in May 2014
- **Engaging Your Community Ecosystem:** initial thoughts on how to mobilize key stakeholders within your community to create joint accountability and a shared vision
- **Key Principles:** milestone-specific thought leadership to help provide a trusted foundation for local action

(2) Identify Leading Practices

- **Evidence-Based Practices:** illustrative set of effective milestone-specific practices included to help inspire policy and program development in your community
- **Programmatic Success from the Field:** sample of strategies and programs communities have used to improve outcomes on this milestone - demonstrating how to apply and adapt leading practices to meet local needs

(3) Take Action

- **Turning Theory Into Action – Institutional Resources:** examples of resources to help you begin to create change, organized by key drivers outlined within the milestone overview

¹ Access the MBK Task Force Report here: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/053014_mbk_report.pdf

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER
Community Challenge

Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade

STEP 1: Build Understanding

MILESTONE OVERVIEW

All children should be reading at grade level by the end of third grade — the time at which reading to learn, and not just learning to read, becomes essential.

Reading well at an early age is essential to later success in education, employment, and life. Students who are not reading at proficient levels by the end of third grade are more likely to struggle throughout their school years, which in turn leads to higher dropout rates and fewer students being college and career ready. Increasing proficiency rates and closing the achievement gap are among the most persistent educational challenges we face. Making significant progress for all children is more likely when families, schools, and communities work as partners to share the responsibility for all children reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

To drive real change in our community, we must seek opportunities to:

- Promote Family-School-Community Partnerships to Support Joint Book Reading and In-Home Literacy
- Bring Successful Evidence-Based Practices to Scale

For a more detailed explanation of these drivers, see the My Brother's Keeper Task Force Report, May 2014, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/053014_mbk_report.pdf

ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY ECOSYSTEM

A key next step toward driving change involves assessing community needs, with a focus on engaging and connecting key stakeholder groups,* including:



KEY PRINCIPLES

1. To thrive, all children must receive high-quality, evidence-informed, and continuous support for active learning. To ensure that we move the needle on child outcomes and the quality of instruction in the classroom, we must **invest in support for intensive and effective professional development** to early educators responsible for the education of young children.
2. **Family involvement is a critical element of high-quality early care and education.** Meaningful parent / family engagement in children's early learning supports school readiness and academic success in the early grades.
3. **Libraries and community-based organizations are an important component of a community's educational efforts to promote early literacy** by assisting teachers and parents in stimulating early brain development, while enhancing education, the workforce, and local businesses by providing literacy programs for youth and their parents.
4. **Evidence-based instruction** is critical for ensuring that students are properly equipped with the reading skills they need to succeed.

*These key stakeholder groups are meant to serve as an illustrative sampling, to be validated and adapted as relevant to your specific community

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER *Community Challenge*

Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade

STEP 2:

Identify Leading Practices

EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

This section is intended as an informational resource to support your MBK Community Challenge efforts. It introduces an illustrative sample of principles, practices, and resources to consider in building your local initiatives. Ideas and resources may not apply equally in every community as there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these complex issues.

Practice 1: Universal Screening

Screening is conducted to identify students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes. Universal screening assessments are typically brief, conducted with all students at a grade level, and followed by additional testing or short-term progress monitoring to corroborate students' risk status.

Practice 2: Progress Monitoring

To implement student progress monitoring, the teacher determines a student's current performance level on skills that the student will be learning that school year, identifies achievement goals that the student needs to reach by the end of the year, and establishes the rate of progress the student must make to meet those goals. The teacher then measures the student's academic progress regularly (weekly, biweekly, monthly) using brief measures.

Practice 3: Collaboration Between Special Education and General Education

Collaboration is a style of interaction between teachers voluntarily engaged in shared decision making as they work toward a common goal. When teachers work together, they share their expertise, their resources, and their support for the students. Collaboration requires that special educators become more adept in content knowledge and curriculum development, and that general educators understand their role in implementing IEP goals and objectives – that is, how to accommodate all students, including students with disabilities, within the general education classroom.

PROGRAMMATIC SUCCESS IN THE FIELD

The following programs are highlights received from organizations participating in the MBK Community Challenge. Their efforts are not sponsored, supervised, or independently evaluated by the U.S. Government.

Snapshot 1: Raising A Reader – Baltimore, MD

Raising A Reader is a national organization dedicated to engaging caregivers in a routine of book sharing with their children from birth through age eight to foster healthy brain development, healthy relationships, a love of reading, and the literacy skills critical for school success. In affiliation with Baltimore City Public Schools, Raising A Reader hosted a successful book reading and press event featuring Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and ABC News Anchor Christian Schaeffer.

Key Takeaways

- This event gave Raising A Reader and its Baltimore funder, Target, state-wide recognition, thus setting the precedent from which to launch a "Community Book Bag Movement"

Snapshot 2: Minnesota Reading Corps – Communities across MN

Minnesota Reading Corps is an AmeriCorps program that provides trained literacy tutors for children age three to grade three. Minnesota Reading Corps launched in 2003, serving preschool children in four Head Start agencies. The early results showed the program model was effective. The program quickly expanded to serve children age three to grade three in many more locations throughout Minnesota.

Key Takeaways

- Minnesota Reading Corps has grown each year to become the largest state AmeriCorps program in the country
- The program has plans to place more than 1,000 tutors in over 700 elementary schools and preschool settings during the 2014-2015 school year

Snapshot 3: Data-Driven Advocacy – San Antonio, TX

San Antonio recognized that chronic absenteeism was impacting early grade reading success. Using data, 12 schools across three districts identified that chronically absent students often lived outside the perimeter of the bussing routes, due to route changes caused by budget cuts. Community partners lobbied for change, and busses were provided to students who clearly needed them. Staff also worked with parents to develop goals for their children and enlist their support for getting their children to school to achieve these goals.

Key Takeaways

- Attendance jumped up by over 45 percent in pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade as a result of these interventions

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER *Community Challenge*

Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade

STEP 3: Take Action

TURNING THEORY INTO ACTION: INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES

Now is the time to drive impact in promoting reading at grade level, including encouraging joint reading programs and early literacy screenings.

Here are some helpful resources to get you started. *These resources include information and examples from nongovernmental sources. These resources are provided for informational purposes only. Inclusion of nongovernmental information and resources does not indicate endorsement by the White House or the U.S. government of entities, their products or services, and the information contained at referenced sites does not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. government.*

Promote Family-School-Community Partnerships to Support Joint Book Reading and In-Home Literacy

Literacy Begins at Home - Teach Them to Read: This pamphlet provides information about the Shining Stars booklet series for parents of children in preschool through third grade who are getting ready or learning to read. This brochure provides checklists for parents of toddlers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, first, second, and third graders.

Access the pamphlet here:

http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/Literacy_Home.pdf

The Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships: Framework for families, schools, districts, states, and the broader communities to build capacity for student achievement and school improvement – including three case studies in which these components were implemented.

Access the pamphlet here:

<http://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement>

How Community Groups Can Serve Children Who Most Need Help: This Department of Education article provides ideas for community groups in creating opportunities to improve reading outcomes – including tutoring programs, afterschool programs, the giving of books or resources, and much more. These may be offered by faith-based organizations, alumni groups, service groups such as Kiwanis or Rotary, or public institutions like the library.

Access the article here:

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/how-community-groups-can-serve-children-who-most-need-help>

Bring Successful Evidence-Based Practices to Scale

Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades: This guide offers five specific recommendations to help educators identify struggling readers and implement evidence-based strategies to promote their reading achievement. Teachers and reading specialists can utilize these strategies to implement RtI and multi-tier intervention methods and frameworks at the classroom or school level.

Access the guide here:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=3>

National Center on Intensive Intervention: Build district and school capacity to support implementation of data-based individualization in reading, mathematics, and behavior for students with severe and persistent learning and behavioral needs. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the site here:

<http://www.intensiveintervention.org/>

IRIS Center: Reading Instruction Resources: This IRIS Center site provides an overview of the case studies and modules that the IRIS Center has developed to support educators in improving reading instruction. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the site here:

<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/IRIS-3-Reading-Brochure-DL-100513.pdf>

First Year Teacher Self-Study Course: First Year Teacher is a self-paced professional development course for novice K-3 teachers, developed by Reading Rockets. The program provides teachers with an in-depth knowledge of reading instruction so they are prepared to guide their students into becoming skilled and enthusiastic readers. ***This is not a U.S. Government guidance document.***

Access the course here:

http://www.readingrockets.org/teachers/firstyear/fyt_program