

Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline

A ZIP code shouldn't determine a child's destiny

Most North Texans probably shudder at the idea that a child's ZIP code can determine his or her destiny. The whole American dream is based upon a Horatio Alger-like rise to greatness. Children work hard. They go to school. They get out of college. They make it in the world.

But not always.

Sobering data from the Stand for Children-Dallas organization highlights a cradle-to-prison pipeline in some parts of our city. The research reaffirms why the Dallas school district must tackle the issues that affect neighborhoods as well as schools, which is one of Superintendent Mike Miles' top priorities.

The cradle-to-prison pipeline is a term that experts use to describe the odds a child has of ending up in prison based upon neighborhood. In Stand for Children's study, researchers looked at which parts of the city account for the most inmates in state prisons and discovered, based on 2008 data, that 10 Dallas ZIP codes account for 3,100 prisoners.

The study then examined the students in those 10 areas who graduated from high school in 2011 and found that an astonishingly low number of those graduates were ready for college. Incredibly, of the 3,000 freshmen in those ZIP codes who began high school in 2007, only 26 graduated college-ready in 2011. Yes, you read that right: 26. Of those high schools, all but one are in southern Dallas.

Mitchell Savage, executive director of Stand for Children-Dallas, says that these numbers won't improve if the state continues to cut funding for public education. This newspaper agrees, which is why we hope legislators this year make amends for the deep cuts they made in K-12 education during their 2011 session.

But money that flows into struggling campuses needs to be invested strategically, not in a scattershot manner. Do these schools need interventionists? Tutors? Better equipment?

We particularly like Miles' push for funds for his feeder pattern initiative. The superintendent wants to focus on the high schools, middle schools and elementary schools that serve a neighborhood. He has plans for 22

Troubling numbers

The stark contrast between the number of residents from these ZIP codes who were imprisoned, as of 2008, and the number of youths in the same areas who achieved "college-ready" graduation status reflects the desperate need for attention in these neighborhoods.

ZIP Code	Inmates	High schools	College-ready grads
75216	681	South Oak Cliff	2
75217	465	Samuell/Spruce	2
75215	374	Lincoln/Madison	3
75241	321	Hutchins	N/A
75228	260	Adams	9
75212	280	Pinkston	1
75211	260	Molina	1
75232	198	Carter*	6
75203	132	Adamson	2
75224	131	South Oak Cliff	2

*Some Carter students also live in 75224.
SOURCE: Stand for Children-Dallas

feeder patterns; for now, he's starting with Pinkston and Lincoln high schools and the campuses that feed into them.

Those are among the high schools that Stand for Children found extraordinarily far behind in prepping kids for college. In 2010, Pinkston had only *one* graduate who qualified as ready for college. The same was tragically true for Lincoln.

Miles is exploring how to flood the high schools with strong teachers and principals. He wants mentors and tutors. He's considering a longer school day. And he wants to include the surrounding communities in the improvement efforts.

That last part is hard, but efforts such as the Harlem Children's Zone show that schools can improve when neighborhoods are part of the strategy. That includes investing the appropriate services in those communities, whose ZIP codes shouldn't determine the destiny of their children.



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