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PRESS RELEASE

COMMUNITY LEADERS UNITE TO ADDRESS DROPOUT PREVENTION

*Mayor Manny Diaz and Superintendent Alberto Carvalho Held Local Summit to Increase High School Graduation Rate
Miami Summit One of 100 Coordinated Nationwide by America's Promise Alliance*



Mayor Manny Diaz addresses teachers, community leaders and students, and students participate in a Youth Panel during Miami's Dropout Prevention Summit. (Photo Credit: Jorge R. Perez/City of Miami)

Miami, FL – Local elected officials, business leaders and some of the most prominent child advocacy organizations in Miami gathered September 29, 2009 to set an action plan for increasing the area's high school graduation rate in order to ensure that Miami's young people are better prepared for college, work and life.

A report commissioned by America's Promise Alliance, the nation's largest alliance of organizations working on behalf of children and youth, found that only about half of all students served by the main school systems in the nation's 50 largest cities graduate from high school. In Miami-Dade, approximately 35% of teens do not graduate with their class. Nationwide, nearly one out of every three public high school students drop out before graduation. That's 1.2 million each year, one every 26 seconds or nearly 7,000 each school day.

"Far too many young people in Miami and across the nation are dropping out of school, leaving their future and that of our community at risk," said Miami Mayor Manny Diaz. "We need to come together as a community like never before to provide the necessary support to help our youth graduate from high school, so they are prepared for college and have the skills necessary to succeed in life."

Experts agree that the well-being and prosperity of Miami and the nation is dependent upon an educated workforce. By 2010, two-thirds of all jobs will require post-secondary instruction. Yet today, millions enter the workforce lacking even basic skills for success. Young people who drop out are more likely to be incarcerated, rely on public programs and social services and go without health insurance than those who graduate from high school. Experts estimate that dropouts from the Class of 2006-07 will cost the U.S. more than \$329 billion in lost wages, taxes and productivity over their lifetimes.

“Mayor Diaz has prioritized education throughout his years of service to this community, and it is commendable to see his leadership in addressing one of our most important issues--dropout prevention. Working together, we can tackle this challenge and help protect our most vulnerable students,” said Miami-Dade County Public Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho.

Mayor Diaz and Superintendent Carvalho joined representatives from the National Dropout Prevention Center, America’s Promise Alliance, Miami Coalition for a Safe and Drug Free Community, Florida Department of Education, The Children’s Trust, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the 11th Judicial Circuit of Florida and other community and business leaders, school administrators, teachers, students and parents in the Miami Dropout Prevention Summit. In addition to providing an overview of local dropout crisis, summit attendees reviewed what local resources are currently in place to help teenagers at risk for dropping out and where there is a need for such programs and support. The gathering was a first step towards the production of a formal action plan on how to reduce the dropout rate in Miami with concrete next steps for putting this plan in place.

“The key to increasing graduation rates at the city, state and national level is to stop working in isolation and to start working together,” said Marguerite Kondracke, president and CEO, America’s Promise Alliance. “That’s why we are convening these summits. We need curriculum reform, after-school programs, efforts to improve health care and nutrition programs, increased resources and greater accountability. Most of all, we need to recognize that no one local or national entity can solve this crisis alone, but working together, we can make enormous strides to ensure our children succeed.”

Research shows that the more support youth have, both inside and outside of the classroom, the more likely they are to stay in school. Specifically, research demonstrates that the more young people experience five essential wrap-around supports, what the Alliance calls the “Five Promises” – caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others – the greater their chance for future success.

The summit is part of America’s Promise Alliance’s *Dropout Prevention Campaign*, a national effort to reduce high school dropout rates and prepare children for college, work and life. The campaign includes a series of ground-breaking, high-level *Dropout Prevention Summits* that will be held in every state and 50 communities over the next two years. The lead sponsor for the national campaign is the State Farm Insurance Company. State Farm is joined by AT&T, The Boeing Company, Casey Family Programs, Ford Motor Company Fund, ING Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and The J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation.

About the America’s Promise Alliance

America’s Promise Alliance is the nation’s largest partnership alliance comprised of corporations, nonprofit organizations, foundations, policymakers, advocacy and faith groups committed to ensuring that children receive the fundamental resources - the Five Promises – they need to lead successful, healthy and productive lives and build a stronger society. Building on the legacy of our founder General Colin Powell, the Alliance believes a child’s success is grounded in experiencing the Five Promises - caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education;

and opportunities to help others - at home, in school and in the community. For more information visit: www.americaspromise.org.

Additional Sponsors:



For more information and to learn how to get involved, visit www.americaspromise.org.

CONTACT: For all media inquiries:

City of Miami: Vivianne Bohorques at vbohorques@miamigov.com or 305-250-5317.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools: John Schuster at 305-995-1126.

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