



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Educators and business community unite for education,  
establish target graduation rate for community-wide initiative**  
*Common Goal will graduate students, develop future workforce*

**INDIANAPOLIS** –Marion County school superintendents and the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce have established a four-year aim rate for high school graduation that will put Marion County among the top performing urban areas in the country when it is achieved.

The community-wide initiative, Common Goal, will involve a wide range of interested parties, from civic institutions like United Way, Center for Leadership Development and the Indianapolis Urban League, to the Mayor's office, guidance counselors, parents, teachers and students, all of whom will work collaboratively to raise the countywide rate from its current 70.7 percent to more than 80 percent by 2011.

Common Goal is forecasted to decrease the number of high school dropouts from 7.7 percent to 5 percent in the same four-year window, equating to helping more than 2,000 students graduate from high school.

"This initiative is reflective of how we get things done in our community," said Roland M. Dorson, president, Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. "It is collaborative, it is affirmative and it is focused on outcomes."

The initiative will include – among other things – "interventions" to engage the business community and partners in creating solutions for graduation success. The Common Goal Task Force, consisting of all 11 Marion County superintendents, partners and business leaders, will spend the summer developing these intervention programs with a campaign launch planned for August, in conjunction with the kick-off of the 2007-2008 school year. Interventions could include:

- Developing a meaningful county-wide credit recovery program
- Placing a Common Goal coordinator in each school district to assist at-risk students and coordinate the engagement of volunteers
- Providing job shadowing opportunities
- Offering field experiences to help students learn more about the workforce
- Engaging mentors from the business community
- Identifying tutors to help students with their studies
- Increasing the number of college and university partnerships

The Common Goal Task Force, chaired by William Corley, President, Community Health Network, also plans to provide support for Marion County school districts by:

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- Researching best practices for implementation in area schools
- Identifying current interventions activities in each school district
- Developing an interventions database for the community to increase volunteer engagement
- Offering guidance and support in fundraising activities
- Developing a campaign to engage the community in implementing these interventions and increasing the graduation rate.

“Our hope is for Common Goal to inspire all Indianapolis residents to join Marion County school districts in declaring war on low graduation rates,” said Dr. Eugene G. White, superintendent, Indianapolis Public Schools.

“A well-prepared and educated workforce is critical to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” said Dr. Michael Copper, superintendent, Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township. “This community collaboration will help children realize the value of a diploma, increase opportunities for post-secondary education and increase economic development opportunities for the region. We are honored to be a part of this effort and we believe that Common Goal will become a national model of excellence.”

“This initiative represents our commitment to helping more than 2,000 children graduate from high school,” said Corley. “For years, we’ve invested many dollars into our juvenile justice system. Now we must reverse that trend and dedicate our time and talent to assist these students who represent our future. Indianapolis must invest in human capital to create a better tomorrow.”

While initially targeting high school-age students, the Common Goal initiative ultimately will serve students at all grade levels.

*\* Marion County’s 11 school districts are: Beech Grove City Schools, MSD of Decatur Township, Franklin Township Community Schools, Indianapolis Public Schools, MSD of Lawrence Township, MSD of Perry Township, MSD of Pike Township, School Town of Speedway, MSD of Warren Township, MSD of Washington Township, and MSD of Wayne Township.*

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*Founded in 1890 by Colonel Eli Lilly and a group of Indianapolis business leaders, the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce is the voice of the central Indiana business community. Today, with a membership of more than 4,000 businesses, the Indianapolis Chamber is still a voice of progress and improvement, bringing together businesses for a thriving community. For more information on the Chamber, visit [indychamber.com](http://indychamber.com).*