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Multi-state Education Policy Group Convenes in Chattanooga

The Columbia Group is coming to town.

The members of this eight-state network of public policy organizations are focused on strengthening schools in each of their own states, including Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, North Carolina, Georgia and Kentucky. Several of the groups have designed sweeping school reform legislation and provided leadership for major school improvement initiatives. They meet twice a year with one of the meetings convened in a city that is a leader in school innovation.

This spring the network is meeting in Chattanooga to examine the wide range of school improvement initiatives underway here. Representatives from each state group will be visiting schools throughout the city and meeting with representatives of local foundations and organizations focused on improving Chattanooga's schools.

They will meet Wednesday evening, April 16, to learn the history and get an overview of school reform in Hamilton County. Thursday morning, April 17, they will tour Soddy Daisy High School and Hamilton County (Adult) High School, followed by a meeting with community leaders who work as partners in Hamilton County school reform.

"We're looking forward to seeing Hamilton County schools firsthand," says John Dornan, Executive Director of the Public School Forum of North Carolina and convener of the Columbia Group. "Hamilton County is gaining a reputation as a place where the community, the schools, foundations and business leadership have come together to

give kids a better education and we're all excited about having a chance to learn how you've done it."

The 18 visitors will be joined by Cory Curl and Drew Kim, both advisors to Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen. The group's visit and tour of schools will be hosted by the Public Education Foundation and the Hamilton County Department of Education.

"For an important organization like the Columbia Group to hold their spring meeting in Hamilton County is a real tribute to the progress that we're seeing in Hamilton County schools," says Dan Challener, President of the Public Education Foundation. "We're delighted to welcome them to Chattanooga."

This sentiment is echoed by Hamilton County Superintendent Dr. Jim Scales: "Hamilton County is truly blessed with strong community partnerships and hard-working principals and teachers. We're pleased and proud to show off our schools to visitors like the Columbia Group."

Hamilton County's Public Education Foundation partners with Hamilton County Schools to help students succeed by offering professional training and coaching for teachers, principals and administrators; human and financial resources to promote research-based innovation; and research that promotes continuous achievement. In the past several years, PEF has helped to bring millions of dollars in supplemental, philanthropic funding to the school system.

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