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Montgomery Delegation Visits Hamilton County Schools

Representatives of Montgomery County Commission, City Council, Chamber of Commerce and Schools look to Hamilton County as a model for high school reform

The Public Education Foundation is pleased to welcome an important group of 20 visitors from Montgomery, Alabama, on Thursday evening, April 3, and Friday, April 4. Led by the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce and the A+ Education Foundation, visitors include School Superintendent John Dilworth, City Council members Charles Jinright and Tracy Larkin, County Commissioners Todd Strange and Elton Dean, Chamber of Commerce members Daniel Hughes, President of Summit Corporation, and Keith Karst of Alabama Power Company, and representatives of the Montgomery Education Foundation. The trip is sponsored by Bob Young of Frazer Lanier Company.

After hearing much about successful high school work in Hamilton County, Montgomery Chamber representatives asked to visit and learn more about Hamilton County's progress and policies. On Thursday evening they will meet for dinner and an overview of the high school reform work. On Friday morning, they will tour Red Bank High School and Howard School of Academics and Technology.

"We've heard a lot about the impressive work going on in Hamilton County," says Caroline Novak of A+. "We're interested in learning more about the specifics of high school reform work, as well as the details of the partnerships between the school system and community partners like PEF."

“The strong community partnerships that we find in Hamilton County have led to real progress in our schools,” says Hamilton County Superintendent Dr. Jim Scales. “It’s a real tribute to those partnerships and to the hard work of our principals, teachers and students that visitors from around the country want to learn more about how we do things here.”

High school reform began in Hamilton County in 2001 with an \$8 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation to the Public Education Foundation and Hamilton County schools. PEF raised another \$6 million for a total of \$14 million over 5 years. Goals of the work focused on increasing student literacy, improving graduation numbers, and helping more students go on to college. Results have been strong:

- 94% of students passed the English II Gateway exam in 2007 with the percentage of students scoring “advanced” rising from 50% in 2003 to **66%** in 2007 – a 32% increase.
- From 2003 to 2007, the number of diplomas earned increased **24%**, although the number of high school students grew only 3%.
- Of May 2007 graduates, **73%** enrolled in college for the Fall 2007 semester.
- Hamilton County (adult) High School opened in the fall of 2004 to serve students who had fallen behind or dropped out. As of May 2007, Hamilton County High School had graduated 527 students, **31%** of whom have enrolled in college.
- Eleven high schools feature career academies for specialized academic training in subjects such as business & technology, education, engineering, environmental sciences, global studies, health sciences, and transportation.

“We’re proud of this work and our role in it,” says Dan Challener, President of the Public Education Foundation. “We understand the challenges of high school reform and we’re happy to share lessons learned with others who are embarking on the same journey.”

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.