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THE OFFICIAL WEEKLY NEWSPAPER OF YONKERS
Formerly *The Home News & Times*

Education Summit 2009 Highlights America's Promise to Keep Kids on Graduation Track

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Published: Friday, May 8, 2009 11:04 PM EDT

Yonkers youth were well represented at last Friday's Education Summit, co-hosted by the Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers Partners in Education (YPIE) and America's Promise Alliance Dropout Prevention. Public dignitaries from the city, county and state showed up to contribute to the conversation of dropout prevention, but the true guests of honor were the several dozen Yonkers public high school students who presented, performed and offered great insight during the breakout sessions that marked the mid-morning events.

The second Annual Education Summit brought some 300 people together to discuss solutions to the problem of students dropping out of school prior to receiving their high school diplomas. "Education Summit 2009 was a thrilling day! It was a wonderful opportunity to have students, educators, community and business leaders and youth-serving organizations in one place to discuss how the community can work together to keep kids in school. Dropping out of school is a community problem that requires a community response, and the summit enabled us to begin this important conversation," said YPIE Executive Director Wendy Nadel.

Seven thousand students drop out of school every day and, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education, the projected income lost by the dropouts of the 2008 class alone adds up to \$319 billion throughout their lifetimes. State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins pointed out that third-grade literacy rates are one of the indicators used by the State of California to project the need for prison construction.

The problem of student retention is societal; however, the factors that lead to students' struggles to stay in school and be successful there can be uniquely personal. During the summit, several students spoke of the challenges and successes they encountered in making it to graduation day.

Of central focus throughout the day were the Five Promises illuminated by America's Promise, an organization committed to seeing that children experience the fundamental resources they need to succeed, including caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, an effective education and opportunities to help others, at home, in school and out in the community.