



[Back](#) [Home](#)

Share: [ShareThis](#) [Print](#) [Comment](#)

Stark Education Partnership celebrates 20 years of reforming education

By **Edd Pritchard**

CantonRep.com staff writer

Posted Sep 18, 2009 @ 09:28 PM

The goal 20 years ago was to improve education in Stark County.

The challenge has been met, and now the Stark Education Partnership's new goal is to make Stark the most educated county in the country.

"We realize it's a huge goal, but we're very serious about accomplishing that," said Adrienne O'Neill, Stark Education Partnership president.

In 1989, four local foundations set aside \$3 million to finance a coordinated effort to improve education in Stark County. It began as the Education Enhancement Partnership and became the Stark Education Partnership in 2000.

The foundations — Stark County, Deuble, Hoover and Timken — teamed with the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, the Stark County Educational Service Center and Canton City Schools to launch the education reform project.

It's one of the oldest local education reform organizations in the nation, said Joseph Rochford, the partnership's vice president. Different community groups have collaborated to promote changes that have advanced education around the county, he said.

It's a long list of improvements, said Larry Morgan, Stark County Schools superintendent, who spoke during a program celebrating the partnership's 20 years. The program is airing this weekend on Canton City Schools Television.

Morgan cited improved graduation rates and the increased number of the county's high school graduates who enrolled in higher education programs. The partnership had found hundreds of grants to help county schools.

"There's been a true commitment to improve education," Morgan said. "They've been a significant partner."

O'Neill cites the development of dual credit programs, early college and focus on education from kindergarten through college.

She also noted new programs that teach students how to use the things they have learned. "They are using that knowledge to create new knowledge," she said.

RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

Over the past 20 years, the Stark Education Partnership has helped county school districts achieve a number of improvements.

- 12 of 17 Stark County school districts surpassed a 95-percent graduation rate in 2006-2007, compared with on two of 17 districts in 2000-2001
- There were 23,184 county residents enrolled in college classes in 2007, compared with 16,696 in 2000, a 38.9-percent increase.
- Students enrolled in dual credit programs jumped to 1,298 this past school year from only 65 in 2006-2007.
- 53 percent of Canton City School's Early College graduate earn an associate's degree, compared with 33 percent of students in similar Ohio programs and 10 percent of students in national programs.

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

The Stark Educational Partnership marked it's 20th anniversary this summer and celebrated at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Sept. 9. The dinner featured comments from former Ambassador to Germany W.R. "Tim" Timken Jr. and Stark State College of Technology President John O'Donnell, among others.

The program will be broadcast on Canton City Schools Television, Channel 11 this weekend. Times are:

- Saturday and Sunday at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.
- Monday and Tuesday at 7 p.m.

Copyright © 2009 GateHouse Media, Inc. Some Rights Reserved.

Original content available for non-commercial use under a [Creative Commons](#) license, except where noted.