



## **OnTrack Greenville Middle Grades Success Initiative Key Messages/Talking Points**

### ***Eliminating barriers to success is critical.***

- Students often come into the classroom with lots of needs outside of school that may prevent them from doing their best. Poverty. Hunger. Family issues. The obstacles facing our students can be overwhelming.
- While schools and teachers are passionate about providing quality education, they cannot do it alone.
- Eliminating the barriers that block our kids from achieving the successful future that we want for every child in our community requires the partnership of schools, the community, families, nonprofits, businesses, local government and others working together in support of our students.
- Working together is our best hope for their future, and our best hope for the future of our community.

### ***The Middle grades matter.***

- Middle school is a time when too many students start to disengage with school and take the first steps on the path towards dropping out of high school, putting their futures at risk.
- Research shows that attendance, behavior and course performance in middle school are key factors in predicting a student's odds for success when they reach high school.
- Sixth-graders with one or more of the following indicators were found to have a 75% chance of dropping out in absence of effective interventions: 1) attended less than 80% of school days; or 2) received poor final behavior grade in core course; or 3) failed Math or English.

### ***The OnTrack Greenville Initiative will address each student's unique needs.***

- Fueled by a federal Social Innovation Fund grant, United Way of Greenville County, the Greenville Partnership for Philanthropy, the Riley Institute at Furman University and nonprofit partners have teamed up with Greenville County Schools to transform our community's ability to help middle school students stay on track, graduate and build a successful, thriving future.
- *OnTrack Greenville* is focused on implementing an Early Warning and Response System.
- Piloted effectively in other communities around the country, *OnTrack Greenville's* Early Warning and Response System will utilize real-time data to identify students beginning to disengage from school as indicated by attendance, behavior, and course performance.
- Once a student is identified, a coordinated team of educators and community experts develop a customized plan to match the student with the right response interventions and then monitor his/her progress over time.

### ***Starting in the White Horse community now helps our entire community later.***

- *OnTrack Greenville* will begin with a targeted focus on the high-need schools serving students in the White Horse community: Berea, Lakeview and Tanglewood middle schools, and Greenville Early College.
- Goals for *OnTrack Greenville* will be demanding. The three-year goals in the White Horse community include a 25 percent increase in math and English/language arts proficiency, a 75 percent reduction in chronic absenteeism and a 50 percent decrease in disciplinary referrals and suspensions.
- To help ensure progress toward achieving the goals, Furman University's Riley Institute will provide research and data analysis, continually evaluating what's working and tracking results.
- The long-term goal is to build on the successes and lessons learned over the next five years in the White Horse community to provide an effective model that can be expanded to other schools and other communities.



***The Social Innovation Fund provided the fuel to accelerate our efforts and helped unite the philanthropic community together around middle grades success.***

- *OnTrack Greenville's* strategy has inspired an unprecedented response from a variety of stakeholders, beginning with a \$3 million grant from the Social Innovation Fund.
- As a program of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Social Innovation Fund positions the federal government to be a catalyst for impact—using public and private resources to find and grow community-based nonprofits with evidence of strong results. It focuses on overcoming challenges confronting low-income Americans in the areas of economic opportunity, healthy futures, and youth development.
- When the Social Innovation Fund grant was awarded for our middle grades initiative last fall, it triggered an immediate response from Greenville County's community of philanthropic organizations looking to make a collective impact. Led by our United Way, Hollingsworth Funds and the Community Foundation of Greenville, the newly formed Greenville Partnership For Philanthropy has committed support for OnTrack Greenville from: The Daniel-Mickel Foundation, Fluor, Gilreath Family Fund, The Graham Foundation, John I. Smith Charities, Jolley Foundation, Lockheed Martin, Piedmont Health Foundation, and ScanSource Charitable Foundation and Wells Fargo.
- The total investment over five years could reach \$15 million.

***Program interventions begin in the summer and fall of 2015.***

- After a rigorous application process, Social Innovation funds are being invested in five programs that will form the nucleus of the coordinated response system at each White Horse community middle school:
  - BELL (Building Education Leaders for Life) will provide a summer program to help rising sixth graders who are struggling academically;
  - Communities In Schools will expand case-management services to provide a coordinator for each grade level within each middle school;
  - Greenville County Schools will hire mental health specialists and provide a teen leadership class for each participating school;
  - Greenville Health System will implement health clinics at each school; and
  - Public Education Partners will provide specialized literacy training to teachers.
- The first program begins this summer, with all five programs in place and operating by the start of the 2015-16 school year.

***How you can help***

- Whether it's through contributing dollars or time, or lending your voice in support of this important community issue, we need your help.
- Keep up to date with *OnTrack Greenville* at [OnTrackGreenville.org](http://OnTrackGreenville.org).