January 19, 2014

Dear Engaged Member of the Community,

Last May, a group of community leaders came together to focus on improving the health, development and education of the children of Lucas County. The organization that brought us together is called Aspire and is modeled after similar groups operating successfully across the country.

Aspire is a collective impact partnership that convenes community leaders around a common “cradle to career readiness” agenda. We connect service providers, citizens, researchers, educators and business leaders with a common goal of helping children become healthy, caring, responsible adults. We all know that there are scores of organizations throughout our county striving to do similar things, so why another group? Our group does not aim to create new—our group aims to connect and align the many good initiatives already underway—to achieve lasting change in our community.

As the leader of one of the largest employers in the greater Toledo area, Owens-Illinois, Inc., I know that I speak on behalf of other corporate leaders when I say it is both our responsibility and an opportunity to support Aspire’s goals. We employ large numbers of people in this community, and we want young adults who are healthy and well educated in our workforce. We want parents who work for us to know that their children are getting proper care and a good education. We want to attract new employees to the area with the promise of strong schools. The collective impact of healthy children who are ready for school when it starts and who stay in school to obtain their high school degrees is enormous.

As business leaders, we have tools and resources available to us that other organizations may not have. This includes continuous improvement methodologies, and data driven accountability. We believe that by applying these types of resources to existing initiatives and plans, we can help our community support our children in the way that every child deserves to be supported. Aspire is and will be using continuous improvement methodologies to help ensure its success.

What follows here is Aspire’s first report to the community. We call it *Chapter One*. It outlines the five outcomes we desire, and the indicators we intend to track over time:

- Children are born healthy
- Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed
- Children demonstrate grade-level proficiency in reading and math
- Youth are prepared for post-secondary education or training, and
- Young adults enroll in post-secondary education or training.

These outcomes were chosen by the community and reflect our commitment to all youth and their desire for sustainable growth and continuous improvement. Aspire will track these outcomes and will provide an annual snapshot of our community’s collective efforts.

*Chapter One*, and the annual reports that will follow, are about the children of Lucas County. It is also about the adults, agencies, neighborhoods, schools and government organizations and what we are all doing to educate our children and to keep them healthy. Ultimately, this report is a presentation of county-wide data that can be used by a variety of people. Parents and caregivers may want to know what support is in place and how effective the systems are in protecting and educating their children. Teachers and school administrators may wish to enhance school programs or initiatives, while government officials may use it to guide policy and procedures.

The information you will find in this report is both sobering and inspiring. The data show a critical need for system improvement, especially for children of color and families with low socio-economic status. Fortunately, there are also bright spots. For years, people throughout Lucas County, in school and out, have been working to support student success. Too often though, the good work goes unnoticed or has a very isolated impact. Our task is to bring good work to scale so great results become the norm, not the exception.

We hope you will join us and the other community leaders who have stepped forward to support Aspire and the children of Lucas County.

With warm regards,

Al Stroucken
Chairman, Aspire Board of Managers
Chairman & CEO, O-I
Aspire harnesses the collective impact of our community services, organizations and leaders to guide the success of Lucas County children, from cradle to career. It was built on the foundation of the StriveTogether Network, a proven way to connect, support and facilitate a growing network of organizations working in communities across the nation.

Our approach is to hold the community collectively accountable for the successful growth and development of students, using data to drive action and decision-making.

Aspire was established as a collaborative effort of the United Way of Greater Toledo, the Toledo Community Foundation and Lucas County Family Council. It has gained the participation and support of more than 500 individuals from business, government and social services, and organizational leaders throughout our community.

Last year, 300 community members representing academia, faith-based organizations, non-profits, businesses and social service agencies began the process to determine the five outcomes that Aspire and its partners would focus on to help improve the quality of life for children throughout Lucas County. Those outcomes are a community in which:

- Children are born healthy
- Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed
- Children demonstrate grade-level proficiency in reading and math
- Youth are prepared for post-secondary education or training
- Young adults enroll in post-secondary education or training

ALL OF OUR SCHOOLS CAN BE INVOLVED IN ASPIRE

All Lucas County schools – public, private and charter – are invited to participate in Aspire. We must support all students and families from cradle to career; from birth and early learning, through K-12, and on to achieving a college degree or career credentials. Each stage of a child’s development is important. There is no shortcut to student success.
How Our Work will Make a **DIFFERENCE**

We can help support the healthy development of children in Lucas County by focusing on the following areas:

- **POWERFUL COMMUNITY VOICE.** We need our stakeholders to demand more. We need to encourage parents, community members, students and service providers to demand excellence and equity in the healthy development and education of our children.

- **STRONG DATA CAPABILITY.** Data is an impartial guide. We believe in setting targets and using data to track results and make changes as needed. We must learn what works and replicate it when possible.

- **FUNDING ALIGNMENT.** We need to use our money wisely. By using the Aspire indicators as investment metrics, private and public funders can see the bigger picture and target funding accordingly. It will help accelerate progress by supporting system-building strategies.

- **INCREASING PARTNER COMMITMENTS AND BUILDING ALLIANCES.** The pace of progress will depend on the level of commitment educational institutions, youth development organizations and other key stakeholders demonstrate in achieving the community outcomes. Achieving our desired level of change will take massive and sustained effort. And success will only be possible with significant alignment and collaboration among major implementers.

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**ASPIRE VISION | MISSION | OUTCOMES**

**VISION**

Empowering Lucas County children to achieve their potential from cradle to career.

**MISSION**

Aspire unites community partners and families around healthy development and education of children, cradle to career, through a data-driven accountability system that achieves better results.

**OUTCOMES**

1. Children are born healthy.
2. Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.
3. Children demonstrate grade-level proficiency in reading and math.
4. Youth are prepared for post-secondary education or training.
5. Young adults enroll in post-secondary education or training.

Aspire was modeled after other successful programs in Ohio, including those in Hamilton, Montgomery and Summit counties.
In Lucas County, 9.8% of children are born weighing less than 5.5 pounds and are considered “low birth weight.” Studies show that low birth weight children have an increased risk for serious health difficulties and may have problems with their ability to learn and function. In the African American community, the average is an alarming 13.9%.

Our community has already made strides in this area through a coalition of medical care and supportive services geared toward positive birth outcomes. But there is more work to be done. Aspire will align our resources to address this critical community issue.

“First OUTCOME - Children are born healthy.

In Lucas County, 9.8% of children are born weighing less than 5.5 pounds and are considered “low birth weight.” Studies show that low birth weight children have an increased risk for serious health difficulties and may have problems with their ability to learn and function. In the African American community, the average is an alarming 13.9%.

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“This initiative is not just focused on education but on the healthy development and well-being of children.”

Aaron Baker
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASPIRE

PERCENT OF LOW BIRTH WEIGHT CHILDREN IN OHIO AND LUCAS COUNTY, AND CHILDREN BY RACE - 2012

State of Ohio: 8.60%
Lucas County: 9.60%

Low Birth Weights in Lucas County

White: 7.60%
Black: 13.90%
Hispanic: 8.00%

*Low Birth Weight is defined as weighing 5.5 pounds or less at birth
KINDERGARTEN READINESS – PERCENT OF STUDENTS PREPARED (BY STATE AND COUNTY) - 2012

Prepared rates based on Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) scores.

*Lucas County is compared to Summit, Hamilton and Montgomery Counties in many of the data results because these counties already have Strive networks operating in their areas and are reporting metrics in a similar manner.

Second **OUTCOME** - Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed

Cincinnati’s Cradle to Career Initiative, after which Aspire is modeled, was able to increase kindergarten readiness by 9% over four years.

Because 85% of the brain’s development takes place before the age of 5, it is critical that we begin a child’s education long before he or she begins kindergarten. In addition, Stanford University reports that 5-year-olds from low income families often lack the oral language and vocabulary skills to successfully begin kindergarten. Without good early learning opportunities, children start elementary school behind, and often they never catch up.

The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment-Literacy (KRA-L) score is used to measure whether Lucas County children enter kindergarten ready to succeed. KRA-L results show that more than 65% of Lucas County children are not ready.

Aspire will help to identify the best early learning opportunities, and help to make them available to all Lucas County children.
### Third Grade Reading Proficiency (By State and County) - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Proficiency</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucas County</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit County</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton County</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>82.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Ohio</td>
<td>87.3%</td>
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### Fifth Grade Math Proficiency (By State and County) - 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucas County</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summit County</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton County</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery County</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Ohio</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
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</table>

*Results indicate percentage of third grade reading and fifth grade math students at or above standard proficiency levels.*

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**Third Outcome -** Children demonstrate grade-level proficiency in reading and math.

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“Math education is important because it can open the door to college success, as well as numerous career pathways.”

Katie Enright  
DATA & OUTCOME NETWORK MANAGER, ASPIRE

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Students first learn to read, and then, by the end of third grade, students are reading to learn. It is critical for a child’s ongoing success that he or she gets an early start on literacy.

More than 26% of third graders in Lucas County are not proficient in reading and close to half of Lucas County fifth graders are not proficient in math. These are the best indicators for optimum performance at specific grade levels, and are key to our children’s ongoing success in school and careers.

Our children need to demonstrate proficiency in reading and math to succeed in life, and to help build a Lucas County rich with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) jobs.

Aspire aims to help create a community where students can be proficient readers by the end of third grade. Additionally, Aspire will help emphasize the importance of math education as a way to open the door to college and career success.
Fourth OUTCOME - Youth are prepared for post-secondary education or training

Nearly 90 percent of Ohio students graduate from high school. However, in Lucas County that percentage drops closer to 69 percent. And too often, our high school graduates are not ready for the demands of college or career training. Employers require better skilled workers and colleges demand that entering students possess certain skill levels. Graduation rates in Lucas County are a measure of youth preparedness for post-secondary education.

The future of Lucas County depends, in part, on our ability to prepare our youth to successfully compete in the job market or in higher education.

Aspire will create a network that focuses on helping students graduate from high school, and assists them to be prepared for the rigors of a college education or other post-secondary training.

Results indicate percentage of Ohio students who graduated from high school in four years. *Lucas County is compared to Summit, Hamilton and Montgomery Counties in many of the data results because these counties already have similar networks operating in their areas and are reporting metrics in a similar manner.

By re-engaging drop-outs and increasing the number of graduates receiving academic honors diplomas, another similar effort in Indiana has increased its high school graduation rate from 69.7% to 82.2% in six years.
Fifth **OUTCOME** - Young adults enroll in post-secondary education or training

Research shows a correlation between higher levels of education and higher earnings for all racial/ethnic groups and for both men and women. Higher levels of education also correspond to lower levels of unemployment and poverty.

College graduates have lower smoking rates, more positive perceptions of personal health, and lower incarceration rates than individuals who have not graduated from college.

Higher levels of education also correlate with higher levels of civic participation, including volunteer work, voting and blood donation.

Additionally, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Policy Report, within the next 10 years, the need for employees with college degrees will be greater than the number of workers available.

Only 45% of Lucas County students enroll in Ohio colleges after graduation from high school. Of that number, 75.6% attend four-year institutions and 24.4% attend two-year institutions.

Aspire will strive to create networks where pathways to post-secondary education or training become the norm for all young people.

Despite the progress we have made in improving educational opportunities, participation in higher education and training differs significantly by family income, parental education levels and other demographic characteristics.

![First-time post-secondary enrollment in Ohio public higher education - 2012](chart.png)

Of those who graduated, this chart indicates the percentage of Lucas County students who enrolled in two-year or four-year post-secondary programs in Ohio. Data for students enrolling in schools or advanced training programs outside of Ohio is currently unavailable.
We are at the beginning of our journey. Our goal is to track progress on our stated outcomes and targets, and adapt our work accordingly. We may need to revise some of our indicators of student success as better data and research become available. We will publish annual reports to share our results and spotlight examples of significant system success so that work can be expanded. We will also strive to share our work on an ongoing basis with the community and all our stakeholders. We expect that we will make new discoveries by tracking system-wide data, and that we will adapt a culture of continuous improvement in our quest to improve the health and education of our children.

COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY
Aspire is building a new type of collective accountability for Lucas County. We do not believe in blaming institutions, parents, teachers, principals or the legislature. This is not about blame or excuses. This is about data and action. We want every institution that impacts our children’s growth, cradle to career, to feel that they are accountable and part of the solution. Being accountable doesn’t mean being perfect. But it does mean being willing to look at results and, if necessary, trying something different to help assure students’ success.

What’s NEXT?
Aspire networks are currently being formed around each of the outcomes. Their responsibility will be to define the obstacles standing in the way of achieving each particular outcome, and then to determine what actions can be taken to eliminate these obstacles. We will report the activities of these networks to the community on a regular basis.

<table>
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The Aspire BOARD OF MANAGERS

January 19, 2014

NAME | TITLE | AFFILIATION
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*Chair, Aspire Board of Managers.

Learn more about Aspire—and how you can help our children succeed from cradle to career—by visiting [www.aspiretoledo.org](http://www.aspiretoledo.org).

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Staff

AARON BAKER
Executive Director

Aaron Allen Baker is the Executive Director of Aspire. He is a graduate of Maumee Valley Country Day School and the University of Toledo with two degrees: A Bachelor’s degree in English Literature and an Executive Master’s degree in Business Administration. Aaron has also completed doctoral work at Vanderbilt University, focusing on Educational Leadership and Policy.

Formerly, Aaron served as Assistant VP for Government Relations at The University of Toledo, where he forged and facilitated relationships between the University and state and local legislators.

KATIE ENRIGHT
Data & Outcome Network Manager

Katie Enright is the Data and Outcome Network Manager of Aspire. She is a graduate of Bowling Green State University with a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Business Administration from Heidelberg College.

Katie is a loaned executive from Owens Corning to help build the foundation of the program through data collection, network development and continuous improvement methodology. She has had various roles at Owens Corning and brings a background in continuous improvement, project management and finance.

BOB HARMAN
Director of Continuous Improvement

Robert Harman is director of global Lean Six Sigma for Owens-Illinois, Inc. (NYSE: OI). He is based at the company’s worldwide headquarters in Perrysburg, Ohio, and is responsible for the leadership and strategic direction of O-I’s continuous improvement programs globally.

Harman joined O-I’s plastic operations in 1980. In the subsequent 25 years, he held leadership roles in operations and engineering, including multiple assignments as plant manager, new product development manager and industry quality manager in various locations across the United States.

Harman is coaching Aspire in the collection and use of data for use in identifying key actionable factors and measuring their progress against the desired outcomes.

AGENCY PARTNER

COMMUNICA.