

# Great Ideas for Great Public Schools

## ALABAMA

### Community pulls together, cuts dropout rate in half

No additional revenue had been invested in the Mobile County School District for nearly 40 years when, in 2001, voters approved an unprecedented property tax tied to public education. That same year, the Mobile Area Education Foundation (MAEF) began a three-year project to build an informed coalition that would demand higher standards for—and greater accountability from—public schools. The foundation engaged the school district, the Mobile County Education Association, Mobile County Education Support Professionals, and the community in the largest collaborative campaign ever attempted in the county. Some 1,500 people participated in 48 community conversations over a 14-week period. The **Yes We Can Community Agreement** spells out goals for public schools and ideas for reaching them.

#### Positive results

- Over a three-year period, the number of schools making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) tripled—increasing from 27 to 83 schools. All student subgroups made AYP.
- Some 95 percent of teachers meet federal “highly qualified” criteria.
- Mobile now leads the state of Alabama in reading and mathematics.
- Mobile’s dropout rate has been cut in half—declining from 16 to less than 8 percent, well below the state average of 11 percent.
- MAEF has helped to transform Mobile’s five lowest performing schools by offering performance-based pay incentives to teachers and administrators.

#### Power of community

- Yes We Can is an innovative, grassroots, citizen-run campaign that brings teachers, parents, business people, church congregations, and civic organizations together to discuss and undertake school-improvement efforts in the Mobile area.
- Goals are set for each school in the areas of student achievement, district and school leadership, communications, governance, and equity.
- The foundation works with system administrators to help each school identify obstacles, address them, and reach goals.
- Yes We Can is expanding to Birmingham, Alabama; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Columbia, South Carolina.

#### For more information:

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*Great Public Schools for Every Student*