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Cradle to Career an impressive start

Premium content from Portland Business Journal

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There's a reason why America's education system is always in dire straits: Business, government and education interests rarely communicate.

That's why a public-private partnership under the auspices of the **Portland Schools Foundation** is critical to this region's future.

The Cradle to Career partnership is an intense focus on education, from birth all the way through college and a career. It consists of top business, government and education leaders, with an emphasis on measurable outcomes throughout the process.

Uncoordinated school agendas, racial and geographic disparities and a lack of resources create barriers to success.

The statistics are sobering.

- The 2010 graduation rate for **Portland Public Schools** is an anemic 54 percent.
- Only 33 percent of ninth-graders in Oregon who finish high school go on to college.
- More than 40 percent of students in Multnomah County don't earn a diploma on time.
- Almost 12,000 students didn't graduate from Oregon high schools in 2010. Lost lifetime earnings exceed \$3 billion, according to an analysis by the Alliance for Excellent Education.

As staff writer Wendy Culverwell reports in her story on page 5, business executives are stepping up to the challenge.

Yesterday, **U.S. Bank** donated \$120,000 to the cause. Late last month, the PGE Foundation chipped in \$50,000.

The money's important, but the most impressive part of the program is communication. Cradle to Career consists of the six metro-area district superintendents, Portland Mayor **Sam Adams** and Gresham Mayor **Shane Bemis** and numerous business executives, including **Trail Blazers** Chief Operating Officer **Sarah Mensah**, NW Natural CEO **Gregg Kantor** and **Lisa Sedlar**, CEO of **New Seasons Market**.

Aligning priorities among disparate government, business and education organizations is the only way to reform education.

It's early, but Cradle to Career is off to a promising start.