



WHAT IS "SAY YES"?

Louisville Could be America's Next City Chosen for Groundbreaking Scholarship and Support Program

How did "Say Yes" begin? **In 1987, money manager George Weiss promised 112 Philadelphia sixth graders that if they graduated from high school, he'd pay their college tuition.** But he didn't just offer money, he also offered support so that the students were ready to make the most of that opportunity.

That program has grown into "Say Yes," a national foundation that helps entire communities – Buffalo, Syracuse, and Guilford County, N.C. – give every child in the community meaningful support toward college. Now, they are interested in bringing their model to another city and Louisville is in the running to be selected.

How does it work? Say Yes uses three mutually-supportive components to change lives:

- 1) Scholarships for All Graduates:** An endowed locally-raised scholarship fund covers college tuition for every public school graduate in the community. When we guarantee college affordability, we encourage students to dream big.
- 2) Collaborative Structure and Process:** In Louisville, every organization supporting students – from after-school programs run by the Parks department to Metro United Way services and JCS initiatives – would work together in a proven model. By aligning efforts and resources, we build a more personalized system that ensures every child gets what they need to succeed.
- 3) Support toward College and Career:** Starting in preschool, Say Yes supports "wrap around" services – empowering students with

tutoring, social/emotional counseling, legal and medical services. These supports ensure every child has a fair shot at graduating and taking advantage of these college scholarships.

How do we make this happen here? Say Yes is interested in Louisville, but we must prove we are a community that is ready and able to make this work.

- **We need community buy-in.** 55,000 Degrees is helping convene the community to prepare our response to Say Yes. The Jefferson County Public Schools Superintendent, the Louisville Mayor, local foundations and other stakeholders are getting involved in exploring what it takes to become the next Say Yes city.
- **We need a locally-run scholarship endowment** that will support the scholarship program for decades to come. Our current estimates are that we would need to raise an endowment of about \$100 million to cover the annual gap between existing financial support (scholarships, financial aid, etc.) and the money needed to pay for all graduates.



THIS IS AN HISTORIC MOMENT OF POTENTIAL. WE CAN REWRITE LOUISVILLE'S FUTURE BY SAYING YES!

