

really be empowered or transfer wealth in this country? If you're going to give the last dollar to everybody, then you're not talking about leveling the playing field at all."

"Are We Not Moving Fast Enough or Is It Just Me?"

As time wore on, there was a growing sense that it was all taking too long. "We're basically trying to address the wrongs of our history and education system," said Fischer. "So, it's not like we're just collecting a little bit of data on some things and making a decision. But then, on the other side, you have the urgency of our school system failing our kids." Every cabinet member was acutely aware that children's futures were at stake, but there were no easy answers.

"The nature of these collective models is not speed," Fischer acknowledged. "What kind of leadership do you bring to these massive collective-impact models? Most of them fail, it seems to me, as I look at them around the country." Turnover in the cabinet particularly frustrated the mayor. "A lot of progress has been made about the vision and what we want. But then people start turning over and you bring in new people. So, you're getting consensus on something that there was consensus on about two years ago. I find myself wondering, 'Are we not moving fast enough or is it just me?'"

"It took me a year to figure out that Fischer would not yell at us for trying something even if it failed," said Gritton. "He would only be irritated or frustrated if you weren't moving fast enough to try stuff." Wheeler described the mayor's approach to leading the collaborative effort with a mix of amusement and empathy: "He's a businessman. He's tried to apply to a community total quality-management structures, continuous improvement models. In a single organization, you can drive those things." Collaborative governance was a different story. "This stuff's pretty messy and hard," said Wheeler. "And I'm pretty tired of it, too."

In January 2018, the cabinet laid out the essential questions around its future as a nonprofit: How many staff positions would it include? What would the annual budget be? Should there be one board or two? How would fundraising be coordinated? Who would staff the work of building the organization? What would the relationship between 55K's board and a new scholarship board be? Where would the organization be physically located? What was the timeline for getting all these questions resolved?

The cabinet divided the work of establishing the new organization among three groups: an executive director search committee, a governance committee, and a fundraising committee. Virtually everyone on the cabinet was assigned to a committee that would meet weekly. A smaller core group (called the "admin team") made up of Wheeler, Parrott, Wunderlin, Lowe, and Denise Nelson of Weiss, continued to staff and coordinate the wider initiative.

Over the next six months, the cabinet laid the groundwork for its next phase. Nelson painstakingly conducted the sensitive business of signing parties on to data-sharing agreements that would allow Weiss to carry out fiscal and educational "pathway" analytics and make recommendations. Reno-Weber kept the cabinet up to speed on Metro United Way's United Community initiative "to create a shared technology platform that removes barriers to access and enhances navigation of services by coordinating across the health, education, and human services sectors."²³ The admin team put together a creative brief for a branding initiative. The search committee spread the job description

through cabinet members' professional networks. The governance committee drew up organizational charts and—using the school district's new racial equity policy to ensure representation—began populating a board of directors, a scholarship board, and an operating committee. (See Appendix 7 for the proposed governance structure.) The fundraising committee scrambled to raise a three-year operating budget.

By the cabinet's June 2018 meeting, as Fischer looked toward a possible third term, the cabinet was at last quietly putting years of talk into action and crossing its fingers that it would find the right director and patch together enough funding to make Louisville Promise a reality, scholarships and all. A week before the start of the 2018-2019 school year, Superintendent Pollio addressed community members and JCPs staff at the Kentucky Center for African American Heritage. The school district, he said, was getting ready for what he hoped would be its *60 Minutes* moment: "I believe we will be featured as one of the best districts in America."²⁴

To realize that promise, however, the cabinet would need to find a way to leverage its partnerships to provide the individualized supports JCPs students needed. "That is work no one in the country has figured out how to do as far as I know," said Gritton. "Now you're asking the new executive director to do that, and oh, by the way, raise an endowment and build scholarships and establish eligibility rules? That's too much."

"In the South we say, 'If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got,'" said Wunderlin. On the other hand, the mayor pointed out, "If you try to change too fast, things break. Would I like to have been here six months ago? Yes, because one year in a kid's life in school is too long." Asked how his choices around the Cradle to Career initiative played out in Louisville's political context, the mayor shrugged: "I don't know if I'm a good politician or not. I believe in setting noble goals, pulling people together, and working like hell to meet the goals."

Appendices

Appendix 1 Greater Louisville Education Commitment, May 13, 2010



GREATER LOUISVILLE EDUCATION COMMITMENT

EVENTS AT THE NATIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL LEVELS HAVE CREATED A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY THAT MAKES THIS THE RIGHT MOMENT TO CONFRONT THESE CHALLENGES AND THE COMING DECADE THE RIGHT TIME TO RAISE EDUCATION ATTAINMENT IN OUR REGION.

COMMITMENTS

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, A COLLABORATIVE OF BUSINESS, EDUCATION, CIVIC, AND COMMUNITY LEADERS, COMMIT TO THE FOLLOWING:

A Vision for a world-class, seamless and coordinated education system that provides ample opportunities for developing creativity and critical thinking, skilled workers, engaged citizens, and civic leaders.

A Common Purpose to galvanize education, business, faith, civic, and community leaders and organizations in support of a common agenda to increase education attainment, prosperity, and the quality of life.

A Goal to move Louisville into the top tier among its peer cities by raising education attainment so that by 2020 at least **40%** of working-age adults hold a bachelor's degree and **10%** an associate's degree.

Recognizing that achieving the Goal requires adding at least 40,000 more bachelor's degrees and 15,000 more associate's degrees, we commit to bring about the following Objectives:

- **Create and support a college-going culture.**
- **Use the business community's unique points of leverage to accelerate attainment.**
- **Prepare students for success in college, career, citizenship, and life.**
- **Make postsecondary education accessible and affordable.**
- **Increase educational persistence, performance and progress.**

We will undertake the following **Strategies** to initiate this effort with the full intention to expand the scope and scale of the effort as it unfolds:

1. Develop and deliver go-to-college themes and messages to promote positive attitudes toward education through practices such as the following:

- Use survey results and data to identify the themes.
- Develop messages for media campaigns.
- Mobilize a network of personal advocates to support students to go to college.
- Provide students with experiences to enhance college-going aspirations and understanding.

2. Create a community of education-oriented employers who will encourage education attainment through practices such as the following:

- Support employees in returning to school.
- Promote the value of education for all students.
- Develop programs that expose students to the connection between education and workplace success (internships, job shadowing and worksite visits).

Appendix 3 By All Means

The Harvard Graduate School of Education launched By All Means in February 2016, run by the Education Redesign Lab, to rethink education and child development systems. The initiative is addressing the iron law correlation in the U.S. between a child’s socioeconomic status and his or her prospects for educational achievement through several key strategies: research and dissemination, policy and advocacy, deep field work in six cities— Louisville, KY; Oakland, CA; Providence, RI; and Salem, Somerville, and Newton, MA—and a series of national convenings at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Overview

This initiative is addressing system redesign and implementation, with a focus on these questions:

- What can be done to create new systems of education and support to help disadvantaged students overcome the obstacles of poverty?
- Who must come together to do the work?
- What systems of governance are best suited to the new system?
- How do we build systems of education that genuinely prepare all children to be successful?

Asking such questions is a bold statement from a school of education, as it acknowledges that the current approach to education does not serve many of our children well and it broadens the conception of what is needed to ensure children’s success to domains not typically considered part of the education system.

The City Consortium

The goal of this work is to bring together entrepreneurial and committed city leaders, from a select group of six cities, dedicated to achieving systemic, integrated improvements in services for children, and connect them with the expertise of Harvard faculty and national leaders. Participating cities are launching ambitious plans for change that include components of the Education Redesign Lab’s strategy for systemic change: creating student-centered, customized learning experiences for students; integrating social, emotional, and health services with education; providing easily accessible, high quality expanded learning and enrichment experiences for all children; and creating governance structures that will support this integrated model of services.

Led by their respective mayors, each of these communities creates a Children’s Cabinet, works with a consultant funded through our Lab, establishes several initiatives in support of the theory, agrees to work on documentation and to be evaluated, and comes to the Harvard Graduate School of Education twice annually to work with national experts and the other community teams on advancing this work. Participating communities in By All Means are Oakland, CA; Louisville, KY; Providence, RI; Newton, MA; Salem, MA; Somerville, MA, and the Partnership for Resilience in Illinois.

Convenings

To accelerate the work, the Harvard Graduate School of Education is hosting a series of five convenings over 2.5 years that bring together policymakers, educators, and community leaders to re-envision public education and its governance.

Source: Paul Reville/By All Means website accessed in 2019; used with permission

Appendix 4 Say Yes

Say Yes was founded in 1987 by money manager George Weiss, who boldly promised 112 sixth graders at a Philadelphia elementary school that he would pay to send them to college if they graduated high school. Weiss also provided those economically disadvantaged students and their families with the academic and social-emotional support services necessary to seize that opportunity. He made similar promises, over the next two decades, to five additional cohorts of public school children, and in each instance, these students were far more likely than other students in the district from similar economic backgrounds to graduate high school and earn college degrees.

In 2008, Say Yes embarked on a far more ambitious effort: extending its strategy across entire communities—at scale, and in a way that would be sustainable, year after year. Public high school graduates who gain admission to in-state public colleges and universities are guaranteed free tuition—regardless of family income and after federal and state aid have been taken into account—through a locally-raised scholarship fund. Similar, “last dollar” tuition scholarships are made available to students who qualify based on family income (typically those whose households earn less than \$75,000 annually) by the more than one hundred private colleges and universities of the Say Yes Higher Education Compact.

Working with the national Say Yes organization, the local Say Yes partnerships leverage those scholarships and other incentives (including \$15 million in seed capital from Say Yes National) to bring a community’s stakeholders together to give all public school students and their families access to a menu of support services. Beginning as early as kindergarten, and continuing through 12th grade and beyond, the services may include tutoring; after-school programming; summer camp; school-based medical care and counseling; advice on college admissions and financial aid; and free legal assistance.

Say Yes also helps communities develop a pathway of milestones to post-secondary readiness — and create systems for analyzing data to ensure that students remain on track to graduate. Those who fall behind can receive support services from a range of local partners, with the goal of eliminating predictable barriers to achievement. Say Yes and its partners now provide access to support services and postsecondary scholarships to more than 130,000 public school students.

Theory of Action

Say Yes focuses on the city as the unit of change. Say Yes and its partners seek to develop dynamic, cross-sector alliances that include city and county government – as well as school districts and school boards; parents; the local business community; unions; higher education institutions, and faith-based and other philanthropic organizations. In each Say Yes community, these stakeholders meet around a common table on a regular basis, in support of moving successfully along the predictive path to postsecondary and life success.

Most strategies that have sought to improve urban schools have proved to be short-term and disjointed, lacking in infrastructure and administered in silos that do not connect the dots between developmental stages (such as early childhood, K-12, and postsecondary credentialing) or critical service areas (education, health, mental health). Say Yes seeks to promote a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable community-wide approach.

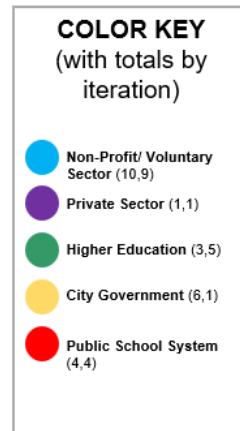
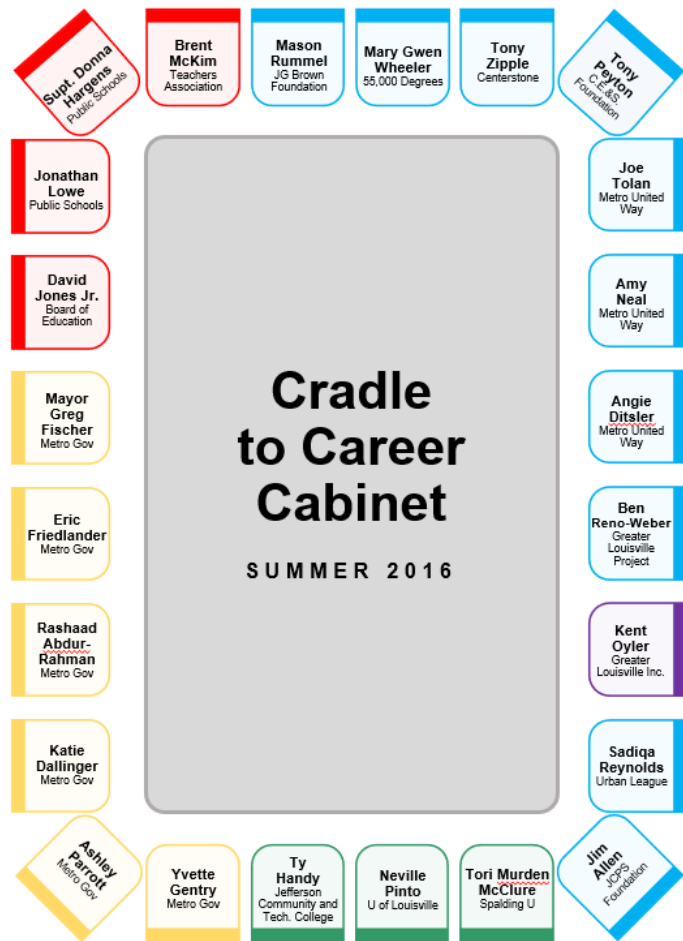
The Say Yes community-wide strategy is built on the following five principles:

- Postsecondary Access and Success for All
- Data-Driven Continuous Improvement
- Pathway to Success (Prenatal to Career)
- Cross-Sector and Cross-Government Collaboration
- Scale and Sustainability

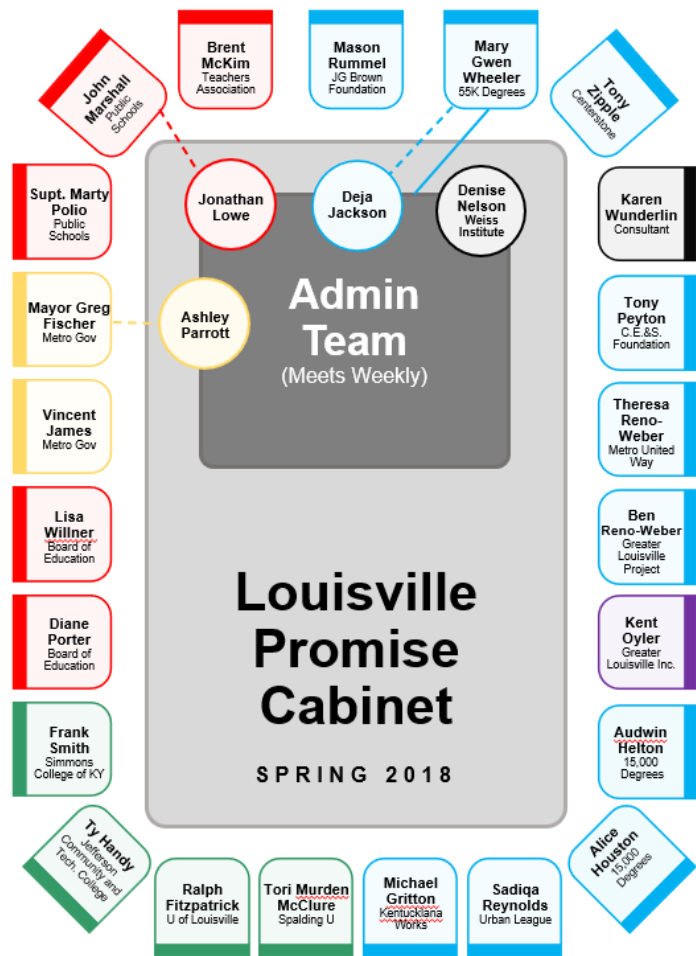
Source: Say Yes website accessed in 2019; used with permission

Appendix 5 Cabinet Configurations

2016-2017

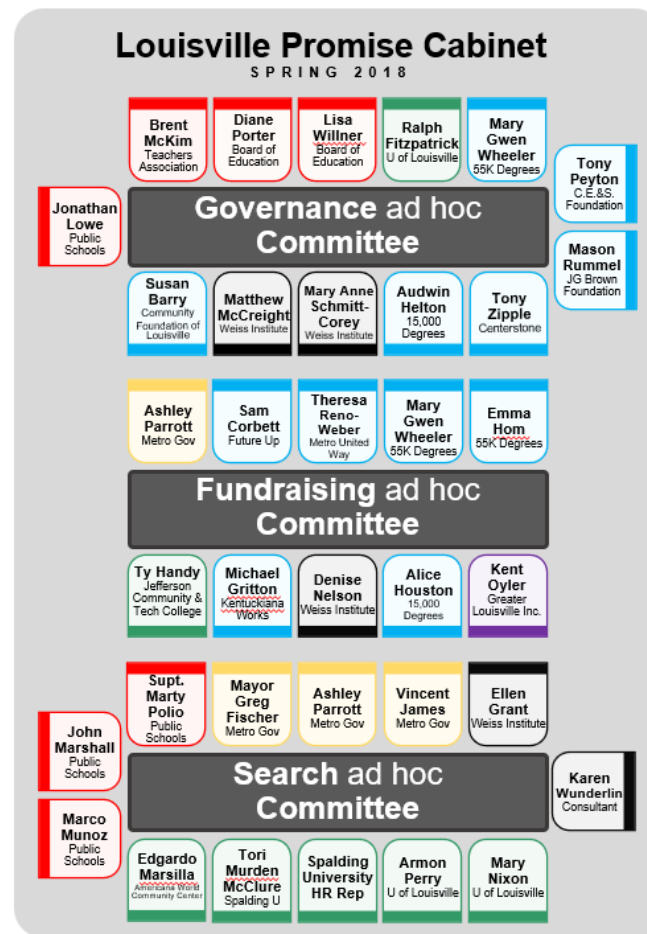


Spring/Summer 2018



COLOR KEY
(with totals for cabinet and committees, top to bottom)

- Non-Profit/Voluntary Sector (10,6,6,0)
- Private Sector (1,0,1,0)
- Higher Education (4,1,1,5)
- City Government (2,0,1,3)
- Public School System (5,4,0,3)
- Consultant (1,2,1,2)



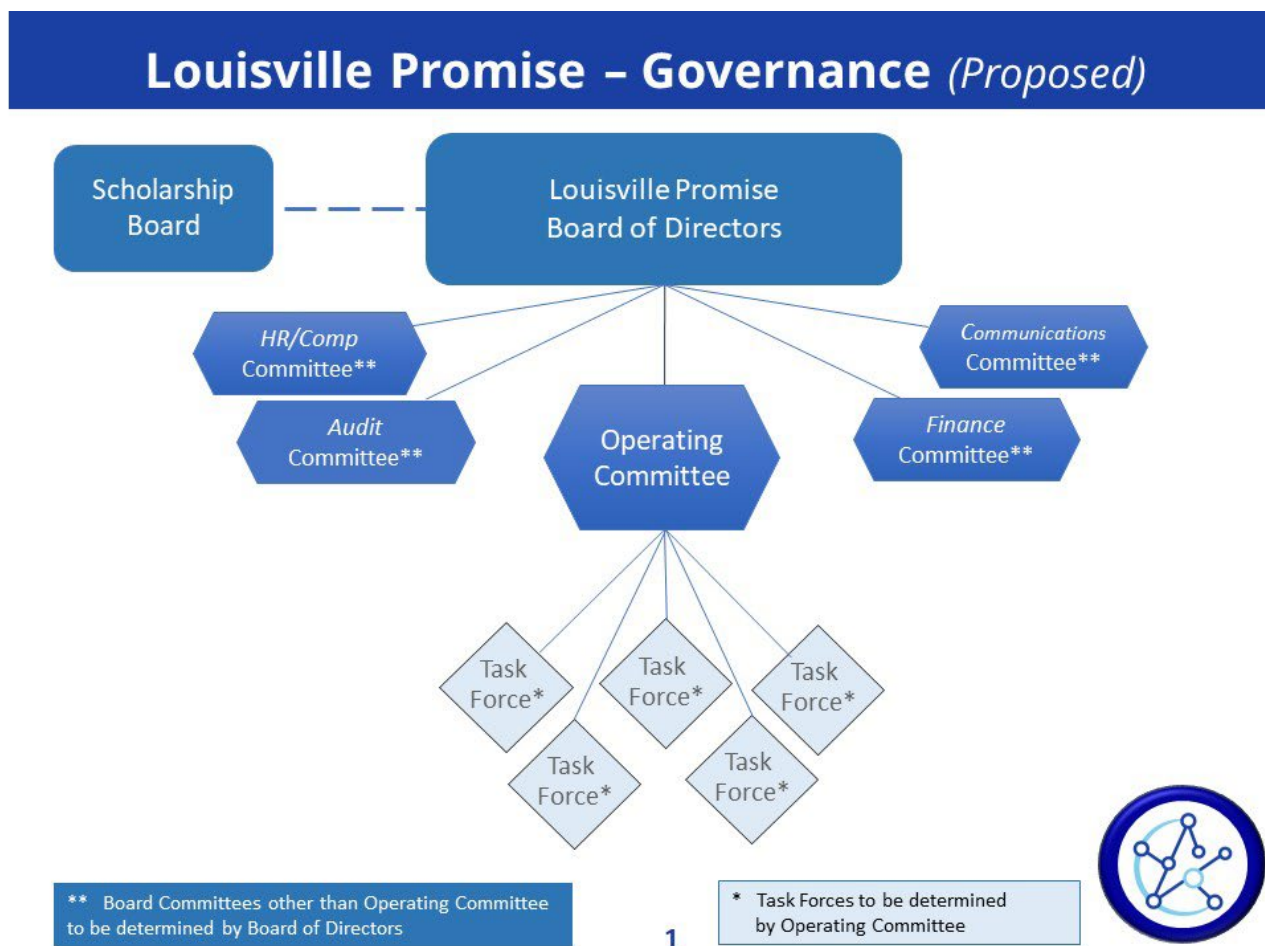
Source: Images created by case writers based on information from Mary Gwen Wheeler, 55,000 Degrees, and the Louisville Promise Cabinet

Appendix 6 Louisville Promise Cabinet Members

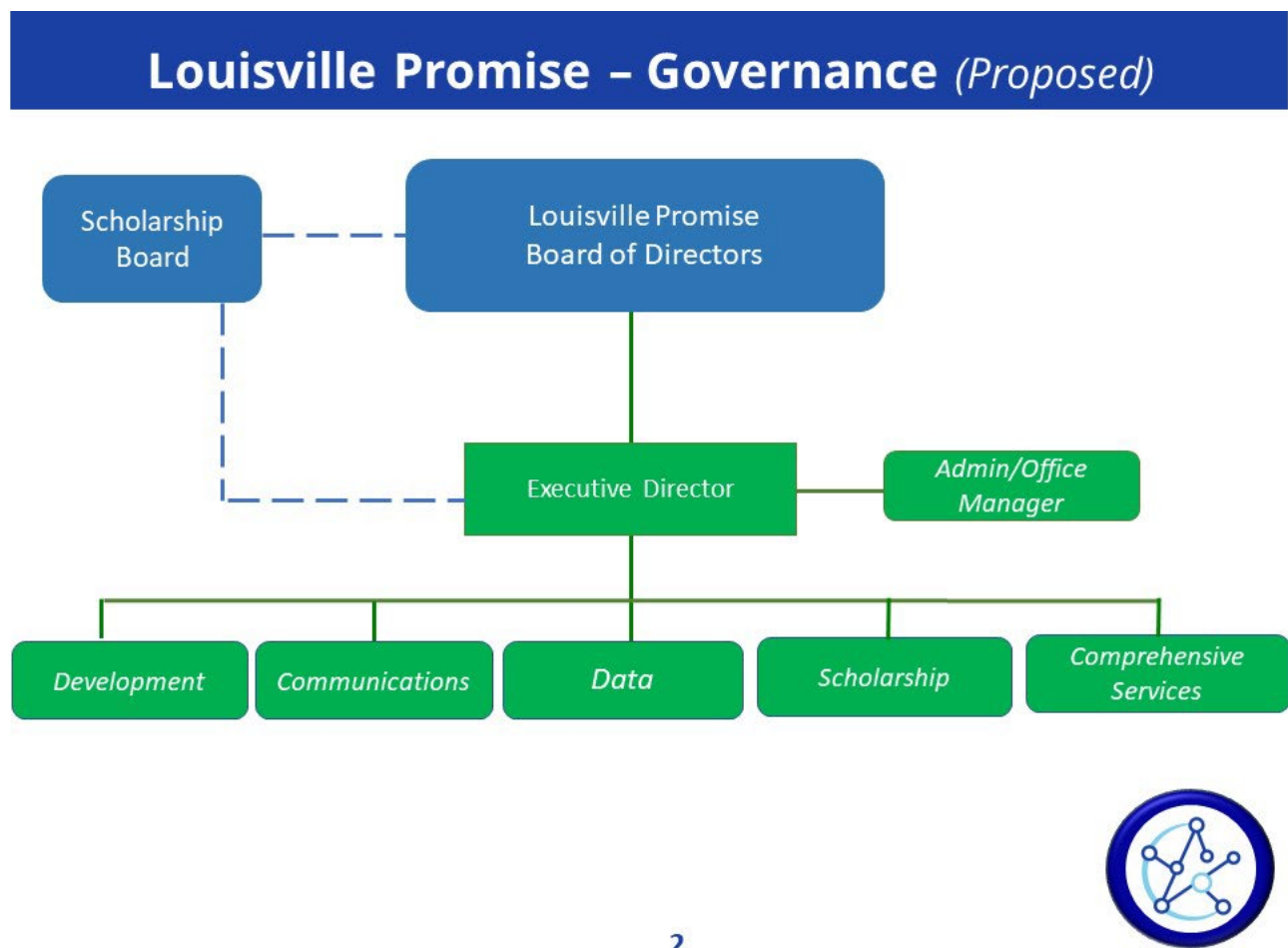
Jefferson County Public School District	Marty Pollio, Superintendent (Jonathan Lowe, Director of Strategy)
Louisville Metro Government	Greg Fischer, Mayor (Ashley Parrott, Senior Policy and Development Advisor)
Jefferson County Teachers Association	Brent McKim, President
15 th District Parent Teacher Association	Autumn Neagle, President
Metro United Way	Theresa Reno-Weber, President/CEO
55,000 Degrees (55k)	Mary Gwen Wheeler, Executive Director
Centerstone	Tony Zipple, CEO
Kentuckiana Works	Michael Gritton, Executive Director
James Graham Brown Foundation	Mason Rummel, President/CEO
C.E. and S. Foundation	Tony Peyton, Program Director
Community Foundation of Louisville	Susan Barry
Jefferson Community and Technical College	Ty Handy, President/CEO
University of Louisville	Ralph Fitzpatrick, Associate Vice President for External Affairs
Simmons College	Frank Smith, Executive Vice President
15,000 Degrees Initiative	Audwin Helton, Co-Chair Alice Houston, Co-Chair
Greater Louisville, Inc.	Kent Oyler, President/CEO
Spalding University	Tori Murden McClure, President
Louisville Urban League	Sadiqa Reynolds, President/CEO

Appendix 7 Proposed Governance Structure for New Organization

Board and Committees



Board and Organizational Chart



Source: Louisville Promise Cabinet and 55,000 Degrees; used with permission

Endnotes

- ¹ Ryland Barton and Roxanne Scott “Kentucky’s Interim Education Commissioner Calls for State Takeover of JCPS,” *WFPL News Louisville*, April 30, 2018, <https://wfpl.org/kentuckys-interim-education-commissioner-calls-for-state-takeover-of-jcps/>.
- ² Greg Fischer, meeting of the Louisville Promise Cabinet, June 4, 2018 (author’s notes).
- ³ The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, *Beyond Merger: A Competitive Vision for the Regional City of Louisville* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2002), 39. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/louisville.pdf>.
- ⁴ Greg Fischer, interview by authors. Unless cited otherwise, all quotes from Greg Fisher are from interviews by authors on May 15 and June 5, 2018.
- ⁵ Lynne Sacks and Jessica Boyle, *Building City-wide Systems of Opportunity for Children: Initial Lessons from the By All Means Consortium* (Cambridge: The President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2018), 21.
- ⁶ Mary Gwen Wheeler, interview with authors, June 5, 2018. All further quotes from Wheeler are from this interview.
- ⁷ Karen Wunderlin, interview by authors, May 15, 2018. All further quotes from Wunderlin are from this interview.
- ⁸ Sadiqa Reynolds, interview by author, July 17, 2018. All further quotes from Reynolds are from this interview.
- ⁹ Louisville Promise, “What is Louisville Promise?” <http://louisvillepromise.org/>, accessed May 10, 2020.
- ¹⁰ Theresa Reno-Weber, interview by authors, June 5, 2018. All further quotes from Reno-Weber are from this interview.
- ¹¹ “Our Strategy,” Say Yes to Education, accessed December 27, 2018, <http://sayyestoeducation.org/strategy/>.
- ¹² Ashley Parrott, interview by authors, June 4, 2018. All further quotes from Parrott are from this interview.
- ¹³ Jonathan Lowe, interview by author, July 3, 2018. All further quotes from Lowe are from this interview.
- ¹⁴ Brent McKim, interview by authors, June 4, 2018. All further quotes from McKim are from this interview.
- ¹⁵ Caitlin Bowling, Boris Ladwig, and Joe Sonka, “By Invitation Only: Meet Louisville’s Power Brokers,” *Insider Louisville*, January 29, 2018, <https://insiderlouisville.com/education/by-invitation-only-meet-louisvilles-power-brokers/>.
- ¹⁶ “Mayor Greg Fischer ‘Opposed to State Takeover’ of Jefferson County Public Schools,” Mayor’s office, video, 0:46, <https://www.courier-journal.com/videos/news/education/2018/04/27/mayor-greg-fischer-opposed-state-takeover-jefferson-county-public-schools/559786002/>.
- ¹⁷ Diane Porter, interview by authors, July 2, 2018. All further quotes from Porter are from this interview.
- ¹⁸ Audwin Helton, interview by authors, June 5, 2018. All further quotes from Helton are from this interview.
- ¹⁹ Alice Houston, interview by authors, June 27, 2018. All further quotes from Houston are from this interview.
- ²⁰ Tony Zipple, interview by authors, June 5, 2018. All further quotes from Zipple are from this interview.
- ²¹ Kent Oyler, interview by authors, June 5, 2018. All further quotes from Oyler are from this interview.
- ²² Michael Gritton, interview by authors, June 5, 2018. All further quotes from Gritton are from this interview.
- ²³ Metro United Way, handout, June 4 meeting.
- ²⁴ Mandy McLaren, “Marty Pollio: Dramatic Changes Ahead for JCPS,” *Louisville Courier Journal*, August 9, 2018, <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/education/2018/08/09/superintendent-highlights-changes-jcps-takeover-deal/946120002/>.