



## Bridges Out of Poverty: A Community Resource for Understanding Generational Poverty

One of the challenges Aspire P-16 has recognized when addressing kindergarten readiness, high school graduation, and post secondary education and training, is engaging parents in the processes. The Bridges Out of Poverty Initiative in Clark County offers the community a way to understand how to gain the involvement and support of parents, specifically those who experience generational poverty.

In the next few months, Bridges Out of Poverty will offer the community several opportunities to build the capacity of business and education professionals to understand generational poverty. Two of those opportunities are: Fred Keller's keynote at the Management Leadership Forum, hosted by the Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, and poverty simulations available to school districts or businesses.

### Fred Keller and West Michigan Team

Fred Keller, CEO of Cascade Engineering in Grand Rapids, Michigan will be the keynote speaker at this year's Management Leadership Forum on April 29th at the Courtyard Marriott. Fred Keller is the founder of Cascade Engineering which has grown to 1000 employees and 12 facilities world wide. A strong advocate for "sustainable" business practices, Keller has emphasized the key role business can play in building financial, social and ecological capital, often through partnerships with government and community agencies. Keller instituted the 'Welfare to Career' program nearly ten years ago which has averaged a monthly retention rate around 97% for the past five years. From 2000 to 2008, turnover costs were reduced by \$3 million as a result of Cascade's workplace redesign, influenced by the Bridges Out of Poverty work.

The West Michigan Team has taken the structure implemented at Cascade and elsewhere in Western Michigan to help business communities implement workplace practices that increase employee retention. The West Michigan Team will be a resource to Clark County employers who wish to adapt these best practices, taking advantage of collaborative opportunities locally.

### Poverty Simulations

Children in poverty face challenges that may be personally unknown to principals and teachers – challenges from both obvious and hidden sources. Think Tank, Inc., the lead agency on the Bridges Out of Poverty and Circles Campaign, offers poverty simulations for schools designed to broaden awareness of socioeconomic realities impacting children and their parents.

Following poverty simulations, book studies or training can be offered to teachers to further deepen their knowledge and explore practical strategies for increasing achievement. Last fall, Schaefer Middle School teachers participated in a book study on a *Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Currently, Clark Middle School teachers are studying *Under Resourced Learners*. Both books were authored by Ruby Payne, former teacher and public school administrator who has helped thousands of educators around the country become more effective with children from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Questions/Comments? E-mail [karenstiles@aspire16.com](mailto:karenstiles@aspire16.com) or call 937.206.8289

Feel free to forward this newsletter to others. Contact us if you would like to be added to the mailing list.



Management Leadership Forum  
Featuring Fred Keller  
April 29, 2009



Clark County Leadership Academy  
participates in a poverty simulation



Clark County Circles Campaign  
(birthed out of the Bridges Out of  
Poverty movement) joins people  
together across class lines for the  
purpose of ending poverty.

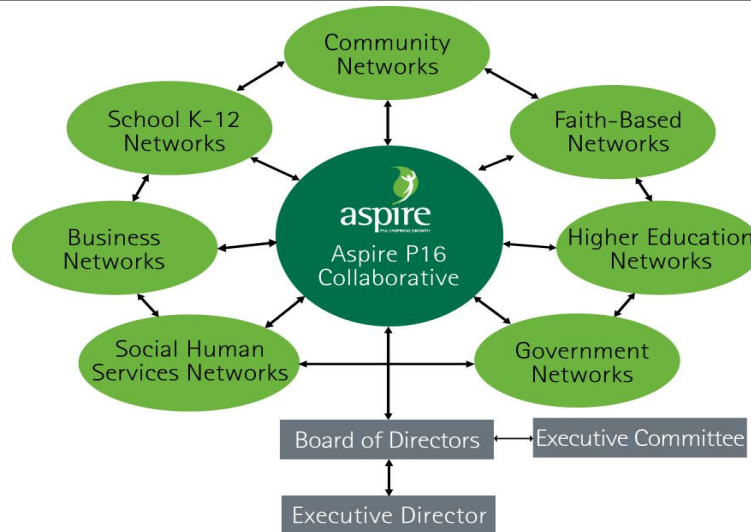
For more information go to  
[www.thinktank-inc.org](http://www.thinktank-inc.org) or  
contact Marlo Fox at  
937.727.9119

# Aspire P-16

www.aspire16.com



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