



JOINT UrbanStudies CENTER

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A Letter from the Executive Director

In August 2006, the Joint Urban Studies Center (JUSC) released "The State of K-12 Education in Northeastern Pennsylvania and Best Practices for Improving Quality," a report providing an overall education assessment of our region. Subsequent reports focusing on different grade levels will be released in the near future, with the first report, a study on Pre-K education, to be released in September 2006. Following is an excerpt from the "The State of K-12 Education in Northeastern Pennsylvania and Best Practices for Improving Quality."

The quality of K-12 education across the U.S. has undergone more scrutiny over the past five years than ever before. From the federal government to CEOs of major corporations to the nation's governors--all have been involved in reviewing research and developing new initiatives to (i) increase the number of youths going on to higher education, (ii) increase the quality of public education to compete globally, and (iii) address the needs of those whose learning is affected by a number of social, geographical, and personal difficulties.

Researchers estimate that the "optimum learning window" begins to close between the ages of 10 and 12, therefore, the educational process between Pre-K through sixth grade lays the foundation for a child's future. The more intense the training in fundamentals, language, and music preceding ages 10 through 12, the stronger the student will be in the subsequent years.

This report analyzes and presents the status of K-12 education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, highlighting strengths and weaknesses. The geographic area of emphasis is Luzerne and Lackawanna counties, with focus on current rank, practices, and new initiatives implemented to improve public education. Further, new initiatives to improve the quality of education, recommendations, and strategies are presented. Finally, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation is examined and specific themes discussed, which impact Pennsylvania's public education system.

More and more, it is recognized that a strong K-12 system is not only a desirable quality of life factor for families and businesses deciding to locate in an area, but academic performance is also tied to a community/region's economic health. Ironically, educational performance is solely defined by standardized and state-wide tests.

This report emphasizes that the "education triad," comprised of administrators/policy makers, teachers, and parents, must assume responsibility for ensuring quality education. Administrators and policymakers must create an environment with consistent standards for each sub-





16TH ANNUAL
CONFERENCE ON THE SMALL CITY
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For more information concerning the conference, including sponsorship and registration opportunities, please contact the Joint Urban Studies Center at:

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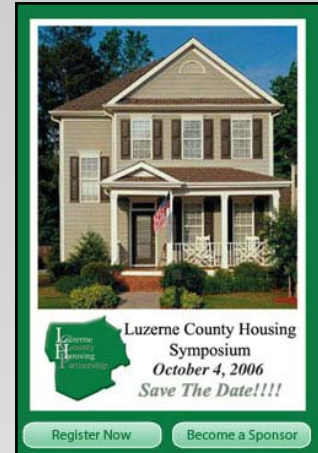
JUSC Executive Director to Speak at Housing Symposium

The third annual Luzerne County Housing Symposium is scheduled for Wednesday, October 4, 2006 at the Luzerne County Community College Educational Conference Center in Nanticoke. The symposium's theme, "Housing Trends in Luzerne County," will guide discussion on various housing topics such as housing affordability, economic indicators and internal and external influences on our local housing markets. The symposium is a full day event, which will include morning presentations and afternoon panel discussions.

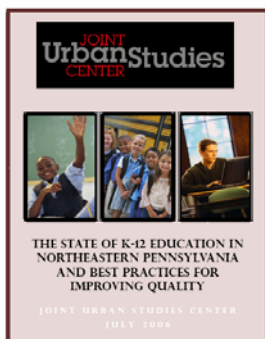
Teri Ooms, Executive Director of JUSC, will be a featured speaker. Ms. Ooms will discuss the fiscal impact of the housing market on the local economy. Her presentation will also focus on the Lackawanna/Luzerne County Indicators report—an annual JUSC study, first released by JUSC in April 2006.

Thanks to the efforts of the Luzerne County Housing Partnership (LCHP) and its sponsors, the annual County Housing Symposium is an anticipated event that is recognized as a networking tool that aids in creating a fair and predictable building environment for the communities of Luzerne County and residents. Through its efforts, the LCHP has been able to bring together a cross section of community, business, educational and government leaders in setting forth a feasible plan to revitalize the area's housing market. In addition to the symposium, the LCHP has held various seminars and housing fairs to educate and inform residents on the home buying process.

Online registration for the symposium is available at LCHP's web site at: www.lchousing.com.



"Letter From the Executive Director" continued



ject and each grade level. Teachers must be educated, trained, and re-trained, undergoing continual professional development to keep pace with current events and technology. Teacher performance, not tenure, should determine salary and continued employment. Parents must emphasize the importance of education and must reinforce the need to study and read. Also, parents must dedicate time to coaching and challenging their children. There is no reason why two children in the same school, same grade, and different classrooms should be learning different things. Subjects other than reading and math should not be sacrificed in order to meet reading and math proficiencies.

Strong local and regional economies possess a high degree of college educated individuals, as well as a strong K-12 public education system. Higher per capita income is directly tied to education. The more educated an individual, the more income they will likely earn. This demographic group chooses where to live based on a number of quality of life factors, including a competitive K-12 public school system. Combine these variables in the region and it is quite a desirable place to live, where its cities have the capacity to provide sufficient public services and safety.

For the full report, please visit the JUSC website at: www.urbanstudies.org

For JUSC's
comprehensive
Northeastern
Pennsylvania
Education
Report, please
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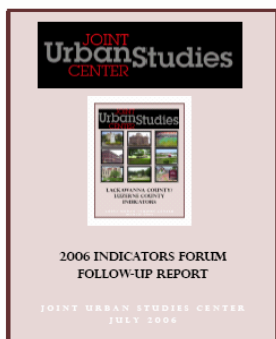
2006 Indicators Forum Follow-Up Report Released

In conjunction with the issuance of the 2006 Lackawanna/Luzerne County Indicators Report, JUSC hosted an Regional Forum. Held in April, the forum included a presentation on the year's indicators and provided participants the opportunity to participate in one of four concurrent workshops on education & workforce development, economic development, housing, and land use and transportation. During the workshops, participants were asked to engage in visioning and goal setting. Each work group then presented its findings to the entire group of summit participants.

The Indicators Follow-Up Report summarizes the discussion and goal setting in each of the four workshops conducted at the forum. The resulting dialogue will lead to a series of meetings, commencing in fall 2006, to identify strategies and organizations to achieve the goals.

In what will be an annual effort, JUSC anticipates the unveiling of next year's Lackawanna/Luzerne County Indicators Report—in the Spring of 2007.

For the full 2006 report, please visit the JUSC website at: www.urbanstudies.org



Find all reports, including the 2006 Indicators Report Follow-Up and Ethnic Changes in NEPA, on the JUSC website.

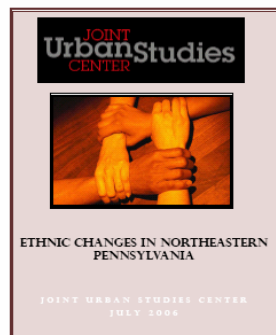
Upcoming Release: “Ethnic Changes in Northeastern PA”

The in-migration of Hispanics/Latinos (“Hispanics”) continues to occur at a rapid pace in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton Metropolitan Statistical Area, and most noticeably in the City of Hazleton (or the “City”). This specific population segment is integrating into the educational systems, business community, religious institutions, and in all areas of employment. While many in the region believe this is a rebirth for under-populated urban centers, others view it as a direct assault on the services and opportunities for established members of the community. The intentions of the majority of the new Hispanic residents to work, buy property, pay taxes, and open businesses should be encouraged. In the past, immigrants from many different countries and cultures built and populated this region. All came with hopes of a better life and a will to work, raise their families, and integrate with the community. Diverse religious institutions and thriving ethnic restaurants line the streets of Hazleton; cultural festivals and celebrations ornament City calendars as a result of this population growth.

This study examines Hazleton’s Hispanic population, summarizes changes that have occurred, and identifies topics for discussion, collaboration, and cooperation in programs and services as they impact new residents. From early 2005 to July 2006, information was gathered from secondary sources, especially local reports and newspapers, and through interviews and personal communications with associated residents, officials, activists, and program directors. In order to educate the community, the study also outlines some challenges that Hispanics may confront in trying to gain access to needed services. Scranton/Wilkes-Barre/Hazleton MSA population changes provide an opportunity to embrace diversity and to learn and grow as a thriving community.

The JUSC anticipates a September 2006 release for “Ethnic Changes in Northeastern Pennsylvania.”

For the full report, please visit the JUSC website at: www.urbanstudies.org





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JUSC Mission Statement

JUSC's mission is to assist in the revitalization of small to mid-sized cities through the utilization of the center's expertise and resources. Such resources include its member university, colleges, and their respective faculties and students. JUSC serves as a resource and consultant for effective and efficient government, best practices, preparation of applied research, strategy development, and the process for implementation. Based upon these efforts, we develop a model for replication by other small and mid-sized cities facing similar challenges.



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