



Taco Bell Foundation for Teens and “Graduate to Go” Fact Sheet

Despite overall progress when it comes to improving teen graduation rates, the sobering fact remains that three out of every 10 students in U.S. public schools still fail to finish high school with a diploma. That amounts to 1.3 million students lost from the graduation pipeline every year, or almost 7,200 students lost every day.¹ Although the reasons for dropping out vary among teens, the biggest obstacle teen’s face when it comes to graduating from high school is the obligation to get to a job to support themselves or their family.²

Mission

The Taco Bell Foundation for Teens (TBFT) is committed to inspiring America’s Teens to graduate from high school and become caring, educated and productive adults. We fulfill this mission by providing at-risk youth with mentors and real-world experiences that will motivate them to stay in school and achieve more in life.

Vision

Led by our **Graduate To Go** national campaign, the Foundation combines Taco Bell’s passion, creativity and determination to combat the graduation crisis through the mobilization of customers, partners, franchisees and employees. The ultimate goal is to reach 100,000 teens annually through real-world experiences and help cut the high school dropout rate in half by 2018.

About Graduate to Go and the Mark Walberg Youth Foundation Partnership

Graduate To Go is a multi-year initiative led by the Taco Bell Foundation for Teens to shine a spotlight on the high school dropout crisis and encourage teens to get their diploma. Actor/Producer Mark Wahblerg serves as the national **Graduate to Go** ambassador. The **Graduate to Go** initiative funds real-world experiences, such as job training and college preparation, proven to motivate teens to stay in school. This year the Foundation will distribute more than \$4 million in grants to nearly 350 organizations to support programs designed to provide teens with an experience of life after high school.

¹ “Diplomas Count 2009: Broader Horizons - The Challenge of College Readiness for All Students,” Education Week and the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center (June 9, 2009)

² Teen Graduation Crisis Survey” – Taco Bell Foundation for Teens (March 2009)

How the Foundation Works

- **Direct funding** – Historically, the Foundation funds grants to schools and youth organizations. TBFT is the largest teen program donor to Boys & Girls Clubs of America, giving more than \$28 million to support teen programming since 1995. In addition, TBFT provides grants to other worthy programs that are designed to help teens stay in school and on the path to graduation.
- **Convener of Solutions** – The Foundation collaborates with national organizations like the Mark Wahlberg Youth Foundation, Boys & Girls Clubs of America and America's Promise to form an even stronger alliance to tackle the dropout crisis in the U.S.

Graduate to Go Real-World Experiences

- **Graduate to Go Studios Program:** Mark Wahlberg and the Foundation are launching real music and film studios in Boys & Girls Clubs across the U.S. Teens who qualify will learn production skills.
- **Graduate to Go Business Camps:** Teach teens about entrepreneurship and specific career skills by asking them to propose their own ideas for a business. At this year's Business Camp, teens will work with Taco Bell leadership to simulate the product development process, from inventing their own Taco Bell menu items to creating a plan to promote and sell their products.
- **Graduate to Go College Camps:** These camps offer teens the chance to spend time on a real college campus, experience everyday life as a student, and learn more about the application process. By experiencing the campus itself, teens became more familiar with the rewards of attending college and were able to see the necessity of earning their high school diploma.
- **The NBA All-Star 2011 TACO BELL® Skills Challenge and Draft:** Five finalists were selected out of a pool of qualified applicants to be *Graduate to Go* Scholars for their outstanding leadership qualities. All five finalists received "A Day with the NBA" experience of a lifetime during the All-Star Saturday event and scholarships in order to learn more about athletic and sports related careers. Most recently, five deserving teens were selected to attend the NBA Draft in New York and experience a career day at the NBA headquarters.
- **The Graduate to Go Internship Program:** The Foundation is providing summer internships for teens. Teens will be introduced to careers in the quick service restaurant industry from advertising to franchising and serve as "social media reporters" during key Graduate to Go events across the country. Interns will participate in job shadowing with franchisees and Taco Bell executives, VIP trips to the Taco Bell headquarters in California and Taco Bell's annual Franchise Convention in Las Vegas, NV. Additionally, each teen will be awarded a \$10,000 educational scholarship.
- **Graduate to Go High School Tour:** The Foundation and Boys & Girls Clubs will host pep rallies at high schools in 10 markets to bring an inspirational message and local experiences to more teens.
- **Graduate to Go Scholars:** The Foundation is awarding more than 50 educational scholarships to teens in 2011.