IMPROVING STUDENT OUTCOMES THROUGH

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COLLECTIVE IMPACT

A Guide for Federal Policymakers

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KnowledgeWorks

StriveTogether
Every child. Cradle to career.

KnowledgeWorks is a social enterprise focused on ensuring that every student experiences meaningful personalized learning that allows him or her to thrive in college, career and civic life. By offering a portfolio of innovative education approaches and advancing aligned policies, KnowledgeWorks seeks to activate and develop the capacity of communities and educators to build and sustain vibrant learning ecosystems that allow each student to thrive. Our portfolio includes EDWorks and StriveTogether. Learn more at www.knowledgeworks.org.

StriveTogether, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, works with communities nationwide to help them create a civic infrastructure that unites stakeholders around shared goals, measures and results in education, supporting the success of every child, cradle to career. Communities implementing the StriveTogether framework have seen dramatic improvements in kindergarten readiness, standardized test results, and college retention. For more information about StriveTogether, visit www.strivetogether.org.

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Executive Summary

A promising approach to education reform has emerged in more than 100 communities across the country where partnerships of cross-sector leaders are using evidence based strategies and existing resources to improve outcomes for students. This approach, called collective impact, replaces competing agendas, siloed funding streams and duplicative programs with a shared vision for education reform. KnowledgeWorks and StriveTogether have developed the following definition informed by an extensive review of the success and failures of these communities:

Collective impact is a process that occurs when a broad set of cross-sector community partners come together in an accountable way to implement the following four principles for successful collective impact:

1. **Shared Community Vision -** Implement a vision for education that spans early learning through postsecondary and the workforce and communicate that vision effectively;
2. **Evidence Based Decision Making -** Integrate professional expertise and data to make decisions about how to prioritize a community's efforts to improve student outcomes;
3. **Collaborative Action -** Implement a process by which networks of appropriate cross-sector practitioners use data to continually identify, adopt and scale practices that improve student outcomes; and
4. **Investment & Sustainability -** Demonstrate broad community ownership for building civic infrastructure through committed resources to sustain the work of the partners and improve student outcomes.
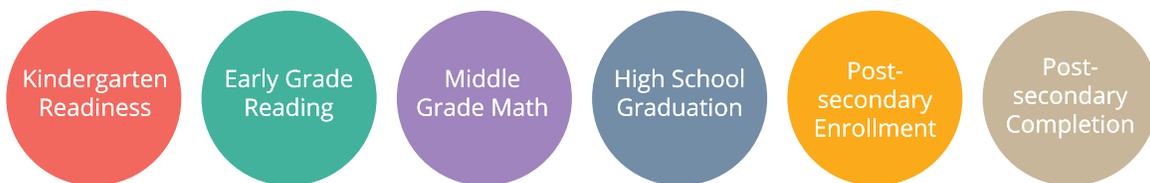
As the largest investor in the nation's education system, the federal government is in a unique position to help scale this emerging framework for reform. This will require a deep commitment across agencies to invest resources in communities that have formed collective impact partnerships and are working together to advance a shared agenda. Strategic allocation of resources combined with careful monitoring and evaluation of progress in core outcome areas will help the federal government maximize its return on investment.

We encourage the Federal Government to adopt the following practices:

1. **Leverage resources for education reform by aligning all federal education place-based grants with local collective impact efforts.** This includes the following important actions:

   - Integrate three tiers into all relevant grant programs – planning, capacity-building, and implementation – and outline clear expectations for each tier that show progress across the four reform principles listed above.
   - Base eligibility for federal grants on where a community is on its path to reform. Communities that have just begun to explore a collective impact initiative should receive smaller planning grants and those that have accomplished milestones farther along the continuum should have the opportunity to compete for larger investments. This approach will safeguard and leverage federal dollars to ensure maximum impact on education outcomes.

2. **Ensure that federal grants for place-based work help communities make strategic investments to further quality collective impact including staffing for an anchor entity to support the partnership, data access and use, facilitation and convening expenses, and the development of communication materials.**

3. **Establish a set of six essential outcome areas, or academic points along the education continuum, that will guide selection, monitoring and evaluation of all federal education place-based grants.** Grantees should report on these outcomes regularly, maintaining a public dashboard that illustrates ongoing data trends. The dashboard should communicate areas of progress and concern across the educational continuum using baseline and current data to uncover emerging trends. The public should be able to access and analyze this community-level data at any given point in time to ensure widespread buy-in and accountability for results. The six essential recommended outcome areas include:

Kindergarten Readiness	Early Grade Reading	Middle Grade Math	High School Graduation	Post-secondary Enrollment	Post-secondary Completion

Federal action on these important recommendations will help communities build the civic infrastructure necessary to sustain long term reform and improve the overall effectiveness of the education system. The potential benefits are significant for students, educators, and parents working to reform the education system and policymakers and taxpayers that hope to leverage federal resources for widespread results.

Introduction

The United States has a long history of education reform and an extensive array of federal, state and local programs designed to improve student success. But despite its commitment to a quality education for all, the United States remains in the middle of the pack on measures of international performance. American scores on the international PISA tests have stagnated for a decade with the nation ranking 26th in math, 21st in science and 17th in reading on the most recent assessments.[1] These rankings are concerning for a nation that spends more than any other developed country educating its citizens. This trend continues into postsecondary education where America's outcomes are equally troubling. Despite a more than 500 percent increase in the cost of higher education since 1985,[2] 11 countries have a higher percentage of college graduates than the United States.[3] With a rapidly changing world and increasingly diversified economy, the United States' continued prosperity rests on the adoption of a new strategy for education reform that maximizes outcomes and investments.

Fortunately, a promising approach is emerging in communities across the country where partnerships of cross-sector leaders are using evidence based strategies and existing resources to improve outcomes for students. This approach, called collective impact, replaces competing agendas, siloed funding streams and duplicative programs with a shared vision for education reform.

More than 100 communities have embraced this approach over the last five years, many of which have already celebrated significant results across the educational continuum from early learning through college and career. These communities have helped shape and refine the collective impact approach, giving rise to a carefully articulated strategy that has the potential to transform every level of the nation's education system.

The federal government is in a unique position to help scale this emerging framework for reform due to its powerful reach and extensive investment in the K-12 education system. Federal policymakers can dramatically improve national education outcomes by breaking down siloed funding streams, investing in civic infrastructure, sharing best practices for collective impact, and most importantly, advancing a shared vision for education reform that spans core outcome areas across the educational continuum. Agencies can leverage success at each outcome area by targeting investments to communities that have already implemented collective impact strategies, and as such, have built the civic infrastructure to sustain reform. Strategic allocation of resources combined with careful monitoring and evaluation of progress in each of the core outcome areas will help the federal government maximize its return on investment.

PART ONE: Understanding Collective Impact and Its Potential for Federal Education Reform

The collective impact approach emerged from work in communities to pilot, evaluate and refine a results-driven approach to education reform. One of the first efforts to exemplify this work appeared in Cincinnati, Ohio and Northern Kentucky in 2006 when StrivePartnership, with the support of KnowledgeWorks, started as the first Cradle to Career Network community. By bringing together local leaders to improve education in the region's urban core, the partnership sought to increase student success throughout three public school districts. More than 300 cross-sector representatives have joined the effort, including school district representatives, non-profit practitioners, business leaders, city officials and university presidents.[4]

These leaders have worked over the years to ensure their own agendas align with the collective work of their partners. They have adopted common goals and measurable outcomes and committed to use data to invest in what works. Despite tightening education budgets, StrivePartnership began to report significant results on a range of outcomes across the educational continuum. In just five years, the partnership celebrated positive results on 40 of its 53 outcomes. With interest from communities around the country, StriveTogether and its Cradle to Career Network were born. Today, the Network has grown to more than 50 communities.

Driven by a commitment to quality collective impact, these communities are working together to identify the practices and elements critical to their success so they can begin to scale the work at home and in other communities eager to improve the efficiency of their education systems. By solidifying what quality means in this new approach, KnowledgeWorks and StriveTogether hope to expand their reach so every level of the system is aligned and committed to improving outcomes for students.

A Quality Definition

Before exploring its potential for shaping national education policy, it is important to define collective impact and distinguish its success from other collaborative efforts. KnowledgeWorks and StriveTogether have developed the following definition informed by an extensive review of its Network's success and failures. This definition underpins all of StriveTogether's support services, ensuring communities have a clear understanding of what it takes to achieve sustainable educational reform.

Collective impact is a process that occurs when a broad set of cross-sector community partners come together in an accountable way to implement the following four reform principles:

1. **Shared Community Vision -** Implement a vision for education that spans early learning through postsecondary and the workforce and communicate that vision effectively;
2. **Evidence Based Decision Making -** Integrate professional expertise and data to make decisions about how to prioritize a community's efforts to improve student outcomes;
3. **Collaborative Action -** Implement a process by which networks of appropriate cross-sector practitioners use data to continually identify, adopt and scale practices that improve student outcomes; and
4. **Investment & Sustainability -** Demonstrate broad community ownership for building civic infrastructure through committed resources to sustain the work of the partners and improve student outcomes.

While each element of the definition is singularly important, a quality collective impact initiative must integrate all four principles. Communities should ensure rigor by incorporating each of these principles into their own implementation process. This comprehensive definition will help communities transcend previous attempts at collaboration, which may have dwindled, disbanded, or lost momentum, to ensure maximum results. StriveTogether has developed a Theory of Action[5] framework that highlights specific phases or "gateways" of work related to each of the four areas in the definition as sites progress from early to later stage work.

Communities that have embraced these principles and StriveTogether's quality collective impact approach have made progress in building civic infrastructure and have seen emerging progress on student outcomes. This framework also provides a useful lens for policymakers who want to direct federal resources to communities on a path to reform.

A Closer Look at the Four Principles for Successful Collective Impact

The four principles of collective impact are central to StriveTogether's Theory of Action framework, which helps communities establish quality collective impact partnerships and improve outcomes at scale. These four principles and their defining characteristics outline a rigorous process instead of a specific "model" for reform. While the federal government should look for communities that have engaged in each step of the process as they select grantees for federal programs, communities should have the flexibility to develop their own strategy and path to education reform. Although the process is common, there is no single model for using collective impact to improve educational outcomes for students.

1. Shared Community Vision

Communities must pull together a broad cross-section of stakeholders including representatives from the early learning, K-12, higher education, business, non-profit, civic and philanthropic sectors to develop a unified vision for education reform. All stakeholders must support this vision and agree to work together, dedicating resources and individual strengths and talents to accomplish the vision. A shared accountability agreement or set of operating principles details how partners will interact with each other, hold each other accountable for commitments, and improve outcomes over time. This agreement prevents stakeholders from publicly blaming partners as problems emerge. For example, a drop in the high school graduation rate is not just the school district's problem. It is a challenge for every stakeholder in the partnership. Once stakeholders agree to a vision, they must also engage in strategic communications to ensure the community has a consistent understanding of the vision. This should include multiple methods of communication as appropriate for different audiences.

Spartanburg County in South Carolina is an excellent example of a community that has rallied behind a shared vision for education reform. The community, shaped by generations of a textile-driven economy, began its journey in 2008 by focusing on one goal: raising the county's rate of adults 25 and older with bachelor's degrees from 19.2 percent to 40 percent, consistent with regions that have dynamic economies. After launching a nonprofit to lead the work, it became apparent that a holistic approach was necessary to improve the entire education system. The Spartanburg Academic Movement[6] emerged in late 2013 consisting of seven school districts, seven postsecondary institutions and 67 other partners from business, government, foundations, faith communities and individuals throughout the county. Instead of focusing on isolated points along the continuum, the partnership established a list of core outcomes and indicators to track from cradle to career and communicated their goals to the public with a new brand and messaging strategy.

2. Evidence Based Decision Making

The partnership must develop the capacity for shared data collection, disaggregation of data to eliminate disparities, and the connection of out-of-school partners with in-school data. By identifying community-level outcomes and participating in ongoing data analysis with professional expertise, the partnership will be able to determine which practices and strategies have the biggest impact. This will help communities realign their collective resources behind the strategies that work. Outcomes must be accessible to the public in real-time to ensure accountability for results. The power of evidence based decision making is evident in Portland, Oregon, where community members are working to close the achievement gap between white students and students of color. A group of committed cross-sector

leaders conducted an analysis of the region's demographic and education data dispelling widespread myths that the vast majority of Portlanders were white and that the education system was doing just fine. The data proved otherwise, showing that one in two students was a person of color and there were significant gaps in school success. In every school in the community, African-American, Latino and Native-American students lagged behind their white peers.[7]

Portland leaders boldly decided to address this data head-on. The All Hands Raised Alliance[8], a StriveTogether Network partnership consisting of education, business, nonprofit, philanthropic and civic leaders, identified key indicators for reform, establishing overall goals and accelerated targets to help close the gaps impacting students of color. District leaders adopted policies making data analysis of achievement gaps part of standard practice. Portland Public Schools hired a chief equity officer to implement effective strategies and guide professional development. Superintendents from the six participating districts launched a shared action plan with community leaders of color to identify and address systemic inequities.

After three years of implementing a collective impact process, the partnership saw the graduation rate gap between white students and students of color close from 16.5 percent to 10.3 percent. In several large high schools, the gap is gone.

3. Collaborative Action

Within the collective impact approach, smaller collaborative action networks can help advance comprehensive education reform. These networks bring together interested individuals, parents, students and practitioners who will work together to impact a shared community-level outcome. For example, a collaborative action network focused on improving the high school graduation rate might include guidance counselors, school district representatives, mentoring coordinators, church leaders and other partners who engage with students at risk of dropping out of high school. These partners would adopt a common process to use data to continually identify, adopt and scale practices that improve student outcomes. This should include charter and action plans outlining the roles, responsibilities and timelines for scaling the identified practices.

Collaborative action networks are central to Milwaukee Succeeds'[9] philosophy for education reform. As a StriveTogether Network partnership with broad-based community support from parent groups, education institutions, businesses, philanthropy, faith groups, nonprofits and other community stakeholders, Milwaukee Succeeds launched a series of networks to focus on specific elements critical to the educational success of the city's children. These networks, ranging from immunization to third-grade reading to postsecondary/career success, bring together providers and stakeholders from throughout the community to develop a plan for improving common outcomes.

Each network meets monthly and is led by a coach with a background in Six Sigma, a data-driven approach to improving processes. Participants look at what programs and resources are available within the community, how

those resources are or are not meeting needs, and then what can be done collectively, either through new or existing policies or programming, to increase the chances for success. The Quality Early Care and Education Network, for example, focuses on and invests in early care and education programs that meet high quality standards and are sustainable and available to all children birth to age 5. The network is led by representatives from the local children's hospital and the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association and includes a long list of member organizations including youth and family centers, the public library, the children's museum and parent organizations.

4. Investment & Sustainability

Long-term results are dependent on broad community ownership for building the civic infrastructure and resources to sustain the work of the partnership. Important milestones include regular engagement with the community around strategies for improving agreed upon outcomes, commitments from public and private funders to align available resources behind priority strategies and action plans, and the involvement of a self-sustaining anchor entity to support the partnership as it continues to build the infrastructure to support its vision.

Tracking the Movement

Since its start in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky in 2006, communities in 37 states and the District of Columbia have embraced StriveTogether's quality collective impact approach. Even the international community has expressed interest with inquiries from Australia, Canada, Columbia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. This heightened interest indicates a tipping point for education reform. Communities around the globe have started engaging in different conversations about investing resources in the education system and using data in powerful ways to tackle unique challenges in their communities.

A collective impact partnership in Fort Bend County just outside Houston, Texas, for example, emerged after a close look at the school district's data revealed a troubling trend in math performance that stemmed from the fifth grade. The partnership, part of a regional collective impact initiative called the Houston All Kids Alliance,[10] pulled together a cross-sector group of stakeholders to develop a strategy to increase the number of fifth-grade students scoring at the advanced level on the statewide standardized test. Partners, including district math supervisors, business representatives, civic leaders and university faculty, helped train math teachers and identified strategies that worked in two of their standout elementary schools. The partnership has now recommended scaling these strategies to nine additional elementary schools in the district.[11]

Nearly 50 communities nationwide have already made a bold commitment to join the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, adopting the rigorous definition of quality collective impact and achieving critical early quality benchmarks in StriveTogether's Theory of Action. Each of these communities is focused on how to sustain improvements on student outcomes over the long-term and across the educational continuum. StriveTogether also continues to provide strategic assistance to a number of additional sites, helping communities establish a rigorous work plan and accomplish quality benchmarks. With sustained progress, these sites may soon join the growing Network, increasing the number of communities committed to building a sustainable civic infrastructure. Although these communities are at various stages of implementation, their commitment to the collective impact process represents a growing urgency to approach education reform in a different way.

The following map illustrates the growing interest from communities all around the country to launch collective impact efforts similar to those in greater Cincinnati and Houston.

StriveTogether Network Map

Alaska
  Anchorage
Arizona
  Phoenix
California
  Fresno
  Marin County
  San Diego
  Santa Barbara
  Sonoma County
Connecticut
  Norwalk
  Waterbury
Idaho
  Boise
Illinois
  Chicago
  Macon County
  Quad Cities
Indiana
  North East

Iowa
  Quad Cities
Kentucky
  Covington
  Newport
Louisiana
  Shreveport
Maine
  Portland
  Westbrook
Massachusetts
  Boston
Michigan
  Grand Rapids
Minnesota
  Itasca
  Northfield
  Red Wing
  Twin Cities
Missouri
  Columbia

Nevada
  Las Vegas
New Mexico
  Albuquerque
New York
  Albany
  Clinton County
  Rochester
  Yonkers
North Carolina
  Winston-Salem
Ohio
  Cincinnati
  Columbus
  Dayton
  Summit County
  Toledo
Oklahoma
  Tulsa
Oregon
  Multnomah County

South Carolina
  Charleston
  Spartanburg County
Tennessee
  Memphis
Texas
  Austin
  Bexar County
  Dallas County
Virginia
  Richmond
Washington
  Bellevue
  South Seattle
  Spokane
  Tacoma
Washington, D.C.
Wisconsin
  Green Bay
  Milwaukee
  Racine

PART TWO: How Can the Federal Government Align Resources to Support Collective Impact?

As an increasing number of communities turn to collective impact partnerships to improve educational outcomes for students, federal policies should align to support this promising approach to education reform. The federal government can play an important role in scaling this work by helping expand the reach of existing collective impact partnerships while driving future education investments to communities interested in adopting this approach.

Federal support for collective impact would result in significant benefits for policymakers, taxpayers and the general public. In addition to improving student outcomes across the educational continuum, a strategy to scale collective impact would improve the effectiveness of the education system in the following ways:

• **Alignment of Goals and Outcomes:** Despite efforts by the U.S. Department of Education (USED) to establish goals, outcomes and performance measures in the agency's National Strategic Plan, the landscape of federal education grants remains disjointed. Applicants must continually write to different priorities depending on the program, and reporting requirements are not standardized throughout the agency. USED should gather feedback from communities to identify a consensus on the most critical and consistent outcomes for advancing education reform, adopt these outcomes agency-wide and then make every effort to align programs in a way to maximize impact on the core outcome areas. When possible, USED should also work to align these efforts with other agencies administering related programs. This will help the federal government work toward a shared vision for education reform. See "Part Four" of this paper for a list of recommended outcome areas for policymakers to integrate into competitions to maximize impact.

• **Coordination and Integration of Funding Streams:** The federal government spent $138 billion on federal education programs in 2013,[12] and while there are some success stories, overall student achievement remains largely unchanged. Siloed funding streams and lack of coordination make it challenging for all levels of the system to impact education in a significant way. Federal agencies should establish a more cohesive education system by talking to each other, aligning related programs within agencies and encouraging grantees to align local initiatives with similar educational goals.

• **Introduction of Shared Accountability:** While the federal government holds grantees accountable for results, there is little to no incentive at the local level for partners to engage in cross-sector, collective impact partnerships that will ensure coordination of efforts toward common outcomes. Federal agencies should improve the effectiveness and sustainability of their investments by incentivizing shared accountability agreements at the local level to ensure grant applicants are not only engaging stakeholders in the application process, but also throughout the implementation, continuous improvement and evaluation process. These agreements should illustrate local buy-in for the vision and a commitment to realign practices to maximize impact.

- **Adoption of a Continuous Improvement Culture:** The monitoring and evaluation of federal education investments could improve significantly if grantees were asked to demonstrate how they use data for continuous improvement. Simple data collection and reporting does not encourage grantees to use data to make improvements to ongoing practices. The federal government should replace the compliance-based culture of data collection with a culture of continuous improvement, prioritizing grantees use of data not just to report on impact, but to share what they are learning from the data and how they are applying it to ensure they constantly increase the overall return on investment.

- **Commitment to Scale What Works:** USED has taken important steps to dedicate innovation dollars to the identification and scale of impactful practices. The federal government should build on this approach, encouraging all applicants for federal place-based education grants to identify and scale local initiatives and practices that have a track record of reform. A community commitment to scale what works is central to the success of collective impact initiatives. Policymakers should also explore strategies for incentivizing greater alignment of local philanthropic dollars to support the most impactful practices.

In order to reap these benefits, the federal government must adopt a new investment strategy that aligns with the emerging work on the ground. This will require a deep commitment across agencies to invest resources in communities that have formed collective impact partnerships and are working together to advance a shared agenda. The size and scope of these investments should align closely with a community's current stage of reform, ranging from planning to capacity building to full implementation. This tiered approach will ensure federal dollars support sustainable reform and create pathways for communities designing and implementing comprehensive strategies for education reform. Federal policymakers should ensure that each tier outlines clear expectations for potential grantees so they use quality practices to shape their work.

The following continuum provides a guide to help policymakers restructure the federal grantmaking process to support this new approach to education reform. The continuum, which is based on StriveTogether's detailed Theory of Action framework, outlines three recommended tiers for federal education grants – planning, capacity building and implementation – as well as four essential elements of reform that underpin quality collective impact partnerships. Eligibility for federal place-based grants at USED and related federal agencies should depend on where a community is in its path to reform. Communities that have just begun to explore a collective impact initiative should receive smaller planning grants and those that have accomplished milestones farther along the continuum should have the opportunity to compete for larger investments. This approach will safeguard and leverage federal dollars to ensure maximum impact on education outcomes.

Recommended Tiers for Federal Place-Based Grants

	TYPES OF GRANTS		
Principles of Reform	**Tier 1:** **Planning**	**Tier 2:** **Capacity Building**	**Tier 3:** **Full Implementation**
Shared Community Vision	A partnership develops an accountability structure, which includes a cross-sector leadership team and work teams, working with a common vision for education reform and communications and engagement plans to broaden ownership.	Partners communicate effectively internally and release a baseline dashboard to the public with disaggregated data aligned to its vision to inform priorities and build awareness.	All partners are engaged, executing clearly defined roles and shared accountability for improving outcomes. The partnership communicates progress, successes, and challenges regularly to the public, and incorporates feedback for improvement.
Evidence Based Decision Making	The partnership selects accountability metrics including community level outcomes and related indicators.	The partnership begins to collect and disaggregate data across all indicators, prioritizing a smaller subset for initial work, based on a clear and transparent set of activities.	The partnership refines indicators and collects, analyzes, and shares data across partners (both in-school and out-of-school) to inform teaching practices and programmatic work focused on improving outcomes.
Collaborative Action	The partnership adopts a continuous improvement process they will use consistently to ensure programmatic/service delivery level data is used to inform actions by partners.	The partnership establishes and/or engages collaboratives of stakeholders committed to using local data to identify actions in order to improve specific outcomes.	Using a continuous improvement process, collaboratives work to improve outcomes, removing barriers and identifying high-impact activities and practices that clearly align with prioritized outcomes. Partners work together to spread high-impact activities and practices through the partnership.
Investment & Sustainability	The partnership identifies an anchor entity to provide dedicated staff to facilitate the partnership and develops a financial plan to cover necessary expenses over the long run.	The partnership secures assets to address all capacity needs including data access and use, facilitation and engagement with the community. Public and private investors begin to work to align assets and resources behind what works.	The partnership engages community members in a comprehensive strategy to align dollars, time and talent with the highest impact activities and practices, and to change local, state or federal policies to improve community level outcomes.

PART THREE: Getting the Most Bang for Your Buck

Strategic Investments the Federal Government Can Make to Help Communities Expedite Progress

One of the most compelling attributes of the collective impact approach is it relies on the reorganization of existing resources to maximize impact on student outcomes. Collective impact partnerships around the country are already leveraging millions of dollars in existing resources to improve opportunities along the educational pipeline. Their success is not contingent on expensive start-up grants but instead on a community-wide commitment to realign existing public, business and philanthropic resources behind what works. This approach is invigorating for communities that once felt paralyzed by budget cuts and uncertainty.

While these partnerships work to leverage existing resources, they do require modest start-up and operating costs. These costs generally include staffing for an anchor entity to support the partnership, data access and use, facilitation and convening expenses, and the development of communication materials. Collectively, these expenses represent a small fraction of the resources leveraged to support impactful education strategies. Communities that dedicate funds to these start-up and operating activities see a much greater return on their overall investment.

The federal government can play an important role in this process by helping communities cover some of these strategic investments. Below is a list of potential expenses beyond programmatic-related costs for scaling that communities often face as they launch and maintain a collective impact partnership. These activities are divided into three categories that align with the paper's proposed tiers for federal investment in education reform.

Potential Expenses for Communities by Proposed Funding Tier	
Planning	
Activity	**Estimated Cost**
Secure access to data from external sources such as the National Student Clearinghouse	$1-10K
Provide training for partners and practitioners on how to use data and related reports to inform practice around a specific outcome	$20-30K
Fund research and analysis to establish a baseline on community level outcomes when data is not easily accessible	$10-20K
Implement assessment tools for measuring non-cognitive competencies at scale	$50-100K

Potential Expenses for Communities by Proposed Funding Tier	
Launch policy and advocacy campaigns to support the adoption and implementation of assessments such as kindergarten or workforce readiness measures at the state or local level that are critical for the preparation of annual reports, progress monitoring, and continuous improvement	$5-10K
Develop a communications plan and materials for public dissemination including a website, newsletters, and collateral	$20-30K
Provide facilitation, planning and meeting support for the community engagement work that builds ownership for the vision and outcomes	$15-25K
Capacity Building	
Publish annual or semi-annual public dashboard (print and digital)	$10-20K
Purchase a data aggregation tool to more easily gather community level data on an ongoing basis	$12,500 for 2 years
Hold an event to launch the partnership and engage the community	$2-5K
Train core staff on adaptive leadership so they can help partners make necessary changes within their own organizations based on the work of the partnership	$35-50K
Full Implementation	
Provide external consultants for facilitation and convening of collaborative action networks focused on improving a specific outcome such as college enrollment, retention or completion	$55-65K annually for 3 collaborative action networks
Support mobilization campaigns to engage the community around the practices that maximize progress on community level outcomes	$30–50K
Build and maintain comprehensive data management systems that connect outcomes to programmatic/service delivery data inside and outside the classroom	$75-100K

PART FOUR: How Should the Federal Government Measure Success?

National education reform will require close monitoring and evaluation of shared outcomes that span the educational continuum. As one of the largest investors in education programs, the federal government should lead this process by identifying a set of essential outcome areas to incorporate across all federal education programs. These areas should represent critical points along the educational continuum that any funder, including the federal government, should consider when measuring and evaluating the success of education programs and practices.

Fortunately, StriveTogether has already identified six essential outcomes areas that appear most frequently throughout its Network communities. Since evidence based decision making is central to the success of quality collective impact initiatives, established partnerships have already identified community-level outcomes that research indicates are key contributors to the achievement of the partnership's vision and goals. Partnerships also report on these outcomes regularly, maintaining a public dashboard that illustrates ongoing data trends. The dashboard communicates areas of progress and concern across the educational continuum using baseline and current data to uncover emerging trends. The public can access and analyze this community-level data at any time to ensure widespread buy-in and accountability for results. These common outcome areas have aligned statewide indicators and available data so communities face few barriers collecting, analyzing and using the information to make key decisions about where to invest resources.

Six Essential Outcome Areas and Indicators

| Kindergarten Readiness | Early Grade Reading | Middle Grade Math | High School Graduation | Postsecondary Enrollment | Postsecondary Completion |

Kindergarten Readiness

Kindergarten readiness is closely linked to future academic achievement and life success. Children develop fundamental skills and responses in early childhood that build strong foundations for reading, counting and social interactions. A child's kindergarten readiness scores are directly linked to his or her future academic performance. In Cincinnati, Ohio, for example, StrivePartnership's community initiative, the Cincinnati Preschool Promise, helped identify the score a child needs to receive on Ohio's K-ready assessment, the KRA-L, in order to have an 85 percent chance of reading proficiently in the third grade.[13] The community is now working to help all children reach that milestone before entering kindergarten.

Early Grade Reading

Literacy, across the education continuum, is critical to a child's academic success. Early grade reading is a particularly important milestone as data shows that disparities in literacy during the early grades are linked to persistent achievement gaps. In third grade, students switch from learning to read, to reading to learn. So if children are behind by third grade, they generally stay behind throughout school.[14] One national survey detailing reading achievement of fourth graders indicated that 44 percent of school children were reading below a basic level of achievement.[15] Similarly, one longitudinal study found that students who do not read at grade level by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers.[16] Given its importance to future academic success, a number of states have started to consider and implement laws that would require students to demonstrate an established level of reading mastery in the third grade before advancing to the next level.

Middle Grade Math

Middle grade math has become an important milestone for high school persistence, academic achievement, college attainment and general preparedness for the workforce. Students completing algebra in eighth grade are more likely to stay in the mathematics pipeline longer and attend college at higher rates compared to students who do not complete algebra in eighth grade.[17] Research indicates that students successfully completing middle grade math perform better in geometry, more advanced algebra, trigonometry and calculus.[18]

High School Graduation

High school graduation is associated with higher earnings, college attendance and graduation, and other measures of personal and social welfare. As college education increasingly becomes a necessity for upward mobility, graduating more students from high school is critical. High school graduation is not only a precursor to college enrollment; it is also a major indicator for earnings throughout adulthood. On average, high school graduates make at least $10,000 more annually than individuals who did not complete high school. Over a lifetime, high school graduates earn over half a million dollars more than their counterparts without a diploma.[19]

Postsecondary Enrollment

Postsecondary enrollment marks one of the critical transitions in the education pipeline where students, particularly low-income and students of color, are less likely to pursue education beyond high school. Students from lower income schools enrolled in college at an average rate of 50 percent, compared to 65 percent of students from higher

income schools.[20] Research has shown that "low-income students, even those with high academic performance levels, are less likely to enroll in college, more likely to attend two-year colleges when they do enroll, and less likely to apply to more selective institutions compared to their more advantaged peers with similar academic preparation."[21]

Postsecondary Degree Completion

The benefits of postsecondary education span across social and economic domains. By 2018, more than 60 percent of jobs will require some level of postsecondary education. According to the Lumina Foundation, the number of jobs requiring an associate degree has grown by 1.6 million and the number of jobs requiring a bachelor's degree has grown by 2 million since the end of the recession. Historically, it has been difficult to track the myriad postsecondary credentials of Americans, but the Lumina Foundation estimates that approximately 5 percent of the U.S. population holds a certificate with high economic value.[22]

Dashboard of Key Outcomes and Indicators

After selecting a set of core outcome areas, the federal government should encourage communities to identify aligned indicators that contribute to each corresponding essential outcome area. For example, a community that intends to track the percentage of students ready for kindergarten might also track the following contributing indicators: the percent of children enrolled in a quality preschool program, the percent of preschool children with identified developmental delays, and the percent of students assessed as socially and emotionally ready for kindergarten. A deep analysis of these contributing indicators can help communities diagnose potential problems and target resources and practices to specific areas of concern.

The following graphic depicts a dashboard that policymakers can use to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of education investments. The dashboard includes the six core outcome areas and examples of potential corresponding "contributing indicators" that are commonly used across StriveTogether's network sites. Although national education reform efforts would benefit significantly from standardization of the core outcome areas, communities should have the flexibility to identify their own contributing indicators based on local needs and circumstance. The following dashboard provides options for communities based on data available in all 50 states.

Dashboard of Core Education Outcomes

Community Outcomes Area	Kindergarten Readiness	Early Grade Reading	Middle Grade Math	High School Graduation	Post-secondary Enrollment	Post-secondary Completion
Core Outcomes Measure	· Percent of students assessed as ready for school at kindergarten	· Percent of students proficient at third grade reading	· Percent of students proficient at math in 8th grade	· Percent of students who graduate from high school	· Percent of students who enroll in a post-secondary institution within six months of graduation	· Percent of students who graduate from local post-secondary institution · Percent of students who earn a certification
Contributing Indicators	· Percent of children enrolled in a quality pre-school program · Percent of children identified as potentially developmentally delayed · Percent of students assessed as socially/emotionally ready · Parent education opportunties	· Percent of students chronically absent · Percent of ELL/ESL students · Percent of students K-3 participating in extended learning time/high quality summer learning opportunties	· Percent of students chronically absent · Percent of 8th grade students enrolled in Algebra 1 · Percent of 8th grade students passing Algebra 1	· Percent of students chronically absent · Percent of ELL/ESL students · Percent of students K-3 participating in extended learning time/high quality summer learning opportunties	· Percent of students scoring "college ready" on ACT/SAT (by subject) · Percent of students completing FAFSA · Percent of students applying to college	· Percent of students enrolled after 1 or 2 years · Percent of students needing 2 or more remedial courses (and 1 or more) · Percent of students receiving federal/institutional aid
Contextual Indicators	· Percent Free & Reduced Lunch · Percent children w/ special health needs		· Poverty rates · Mobility rates		· Children feel safe · Unemployment rates	

On the Horizon: What's next for Measurement and Evaluation of Collective Impact Partnerships?

While academic indicators remain important measures for evaluating the effectiveness of education reform efforts, there is increasing interest from the field to incorporate social and emotional indicators in the dashboard that communities use to track the success of local education efforts. Social and emotional indicators measure the skills students need to make sense of and transfer knowledge to a wide range of settings.

Given the growing interest in these indicators from its network sites, StriveTogether launched the Task Force on Measuring Social and Emotional Learning in early 2013 to identify a set of social and emotional competencies that satisfied two criteria: 1) They positively impact academic achievement; and 2) They are malleable at different points along the education continuum. After conducting extensive research, the task force released a report in August 2013 titled "Beyond Content: Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning into the StriveTogether Framework." [23] This report identified five competencies that satisfied their criteria. They include:

- **Academic Self-Efficacy -** The belief that one can succeed in a particular academic pursuit
- **Growth Mindset or Mastery Orientation -** The belief that intelligence can be improved, much like a muscle that is exercised
- **Grit or Perseverance -** The ability to stay focused on a goal despite obstacles along the way
- **Emotional Competence -** The ability to deal with emotions in a constructive way, whether they are your own or others'
- **Self-Regulated Learning and Study Skills -** Those academic behaviors and use of study strategies that allow a student to focus on and meet academic demands

StriveTogether uncovered a growing number of measurement strategies for these competencies, but due to the lack of quality assessment tools, the field has yet to incorporate them into their evaluation systems in a meaningful way. The federal government and philanthropic leaders should prioritize research and development of these tools to address this gap in quality measurement. Once communities have the ability to incorporate these measures into their data analysis and reporting systems, conversations about education reform will deepen and strategies for systems change will become more holistic.

In addition to identifying a useful set of social and emotional competencies, and revealing a list of corresponding measurement tools for these competencies, the StriveTogether task force also identified other areas for research and development. These include the creation of measurement tools that assess more than one competency, a clearer understanding of how the various competencies affect each other, and greater clarity and consistency on names, definitions and categorization of competencies. There is also a strong interest and desire in connecting these outcomes to workforce needs, particularly in high-demand careers. Each of these topic areas is critically important for the advancement of the collective impact field.

Conclusion

The American education system must adapt to a rapidly changing world that demands more of today's graduates than generations past. But instead of chasing the next great idea, the nation must adopt a different approach that leverages existing dollars and maximizes outcomes across the entire education continuum. America will not maintain its international competitiveness if it continues to fund piecemeal strategies that lack stakeholder buy-in at the local, state and federal levels. A comprehensive approach will help stakeholders identify challenges and shift resources behind the strategies with the greatest potential to make a difference in the lives of America's students.

The emerging collective impact movement provides policymakers with an effective model for systems change. An increasing number of communities have already adopted the framework so all students, regardless of age, income, ethnicity or geographic location have access to quality educational opportunities. The early success of these communities has sparked national interest in the collective impact approach, elevating its potential for national transformation. As more and more communities seek to build capacity with collective impact partnerships, policymakers at all levels of the system should explore strategies to leverage their success. Targeted investments for expansion and replication will help communities build the civic infrastructure necessary to sustain long-term reform.

The federal government has an important role to play in this transformation. As federal policymakers craft an agenda to improve the effectiveness of the education system, they must advance the following policy recommendations:

1. **Leverage resources for education reform by aligning all federal education place-based grants with local collective impact efforts.**

2. **Ensure that federal grants for place-based work help communities make strategic investments to further quality collective impact including staffing for an anchor entity to support the partnership, data access and use, facilitation and convening expenses, and the development of communication materials.**

3. **Establish a set of six essential outcome areas, or academic points along the education continuum, that will guide selection, monitoring and evaluation of all federal education place-based grants.**
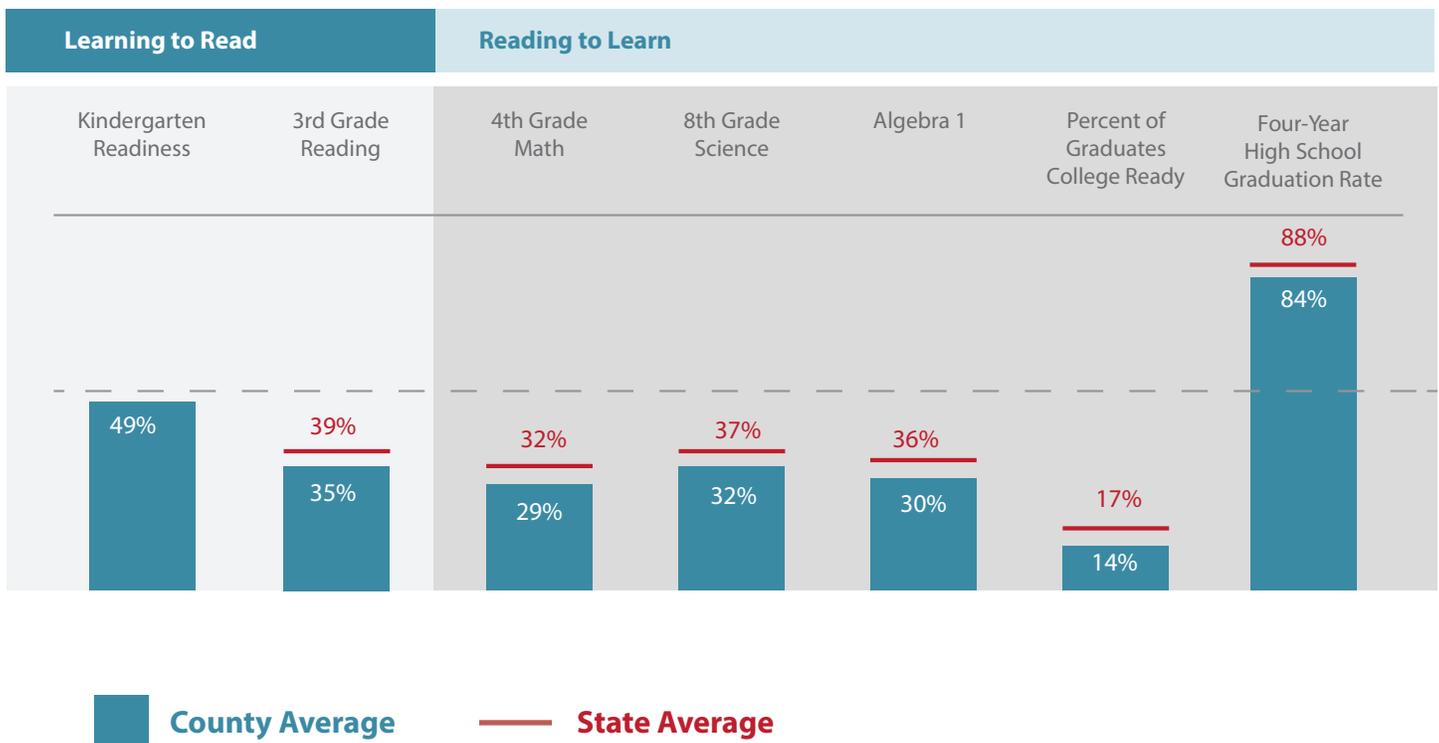
These important steps will help the country establish a strong foundation committed to evidence based reform and the success of future generations.

Enhancing Kindergarten Readiness and 3rd Grade Reading in Dallas

The Commit! Partnership in Dallas consists of more than 130 organizations including K-12 public, charter and private school districts, higher education institutions, parent and teacher groups, nonprofit and faith-based organizations, foundations and businesses. Collectively, these partners serve 350,000 K-12 students (of which 3 in 4 are economically disadvantaged, 8 in 10 are students of color and almost 3 in 10 are English Language Learners) and 120,000 higher education students.
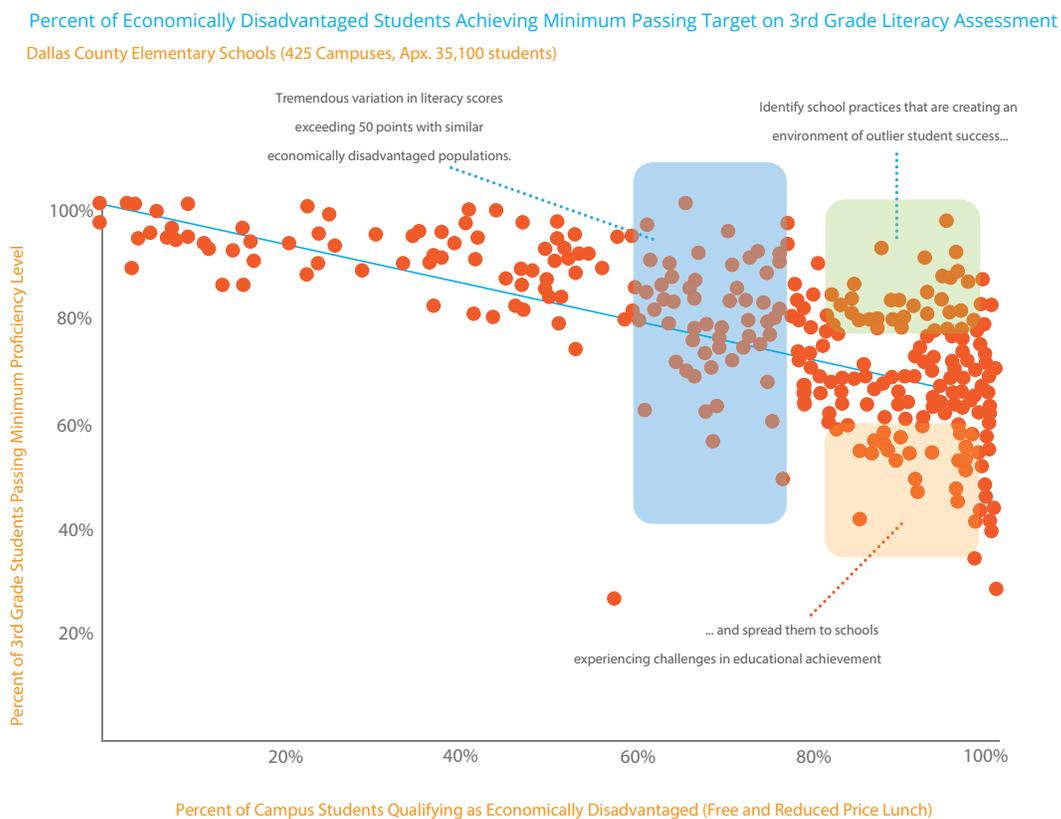
Commit! staff aggregate and analyze community-level data to develop a common agenda across the Partnership and then help catalyze action by uncovering bright spots and leveraging partners to spread those promising practices. An annual "community achievement scorecard" reports aggregate student performance across 11 achievement indicators.

A graphic from Commit!'s most recent scorecard demonstrates the hard-to-break "ceiling" on subsequent achievement created by the community's current 49 percent Kindergarten Readiness rate. This data motivated the Partnership to focus its early work on Kindergarten Readiness and 3rd Grade Reading indicators.

Learning to Read		Reading to Learn				
Kindergarten Readiness	3rd Grade Reading	4th Grade Math	8th Grade Science	Algebra 1	Percent of Graduates College Ready	Four-Year High School Graduation Rate
49%	39% (State) 35%	32% (State) 29%	37% (State) 32%	36% (State) 30%	17% (State) 14%	88% (State) 84%

■ County Average ⎯⎯ **State Average**

With further analysis, Commit! found that an estimated 37,000 eligible 3- and 4-year-olds in Dallas County do not attend free public pre-K, leaving more than $136 million in available state funding untapped. Districts, private providers and community-based organizations are working to close this gap by simultaneously launching pre-K registration campaigns while building a data-driven case to increase the number of quality early education seats. This spring, these campaigns resulted in 3,000 new parent registrations within Commit!'s largest partner school district - a near 90 percent increase - and 700 new parent registrations within a second partner district. Also, four partner districts have agreed to assess a representative sample of kindergartners with a common multidimensional screener at the beginning of the upcoming school year, providing a common school readiness data point for the first time in the county's history.

For its early grade literacy work, Commit! disaggregated the data to produce a "hope chart" that reveals numerous high-poverty schools achieving outlier early literacy performance.

Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students Achieving Minimum Passing Target on 3rd Grade Literacy Assessment
Dallas County Elementary Schools (425 Campuses, Apx. 35,100 students)

Tremendous variation in literacy scores exceeding 50 points with similar economically disadvantaged populations.

Identify school practices that are creating an environment of outlier student success...

... and spread them to schools experiencing challenges in educational achievement

Percent of 3rd Grade Students Passing Minimum Proficiency Level

Percent of Campus Students Qualifying as Economically Disadvantaged (Free and Reduced Price Lunch)

Commit! then sought to identify the effective practices within the high-achieving outlier campuses that were not in place at demographically similar, but lower-performing, schools. The Partnership's resulting 3rd Grade Reading network now brings together school and community partners to support principals, instructional coaches, teachers and parents in 14 elementary schools (educating 8,400 students reflecting the region's demographics) with data-driven decision-making and adoption of effective practices. While there is still much progress to be made, in 2013-2014, eight of 14 schools closed the 3rd grade reading gap both with the District and the State.

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Acknowledgements

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