StriveTogether

Every child. Cradle to career.

2018 Annual Civic Infrastructure Assessment Report

CRADLE TO CAREER PARTNERSHIP TUCSON, ARIZONA
SUSTAINING

Introduction

Purpose of the civic infrastructure assessment and report

The civic infrastructure assessment helps communities gain a deeper understanding of their partnership's cradle-to-career civic infrastructure, while also helping StriveTogether ensure quality, rigor and appropriate support within the Cradle to Career Network. The assessment is a tool to help communities identify strengths and obstacles as they progress through the Theory of Action and achieve specific benchmarks. The final report is meant to:

- Synthesize your partnership's progress across the Theory of Action
- Provide recommendations to help your partnership move through the Theory of Action
- Provide context around specific areas of work as related to systems transformation

Ultimately, partnerships are working toward systems transformation
Partnerships in the systems transformation gateway focus on spreading and scaling successful strategies across sectors and championing work that improves economic mobility. These goals are achieved through ensuring shared accountability for improvement; deepening action toward equity and results at scale; creating data infrastructure that works across sectors; and intentionally and authentically engaging families, youth and community residents in the decision-making process.

Partnerships that achieve the systems transformation designation have improved four of the seven cradle-to-career outcomes, narrowed or eliminated disparity gaps in four of these outcomes, and improved one adjacent sector outcome for families, youth or community residents.

The Theory of Action posits that in order to change systems and improve outcomes, partnership staff, partners and community members need to change the way they behave. This change requires moving from an institutional or organizational-centric approach to a frame that ensures the child is at the center of decisions, policies and practices implemented in the community. This shift includes addressing adaptive challenges, cultivating authentic engagement and embracing shared accountability. To sustainably improve outcomes, partners must consider how their actions, processes and practices can adapt to support the goals of the partnership.

We recommend familiarizing all partners with the gateways at the end of the Theory of Action so that focus is placed on the challenges and opportunities related to systems transformation. The foundational work for building infrastructure and capacity to accommodate this work is done in the earlier gateways and includes incorporating the four principles of the Theory of Action:

- Engage the community
- Advance equity

- Develop a culture of continuous improvement
- Leverage existing assets

In systems transformation, partners alter or shift behaviors to improve outcomes and eliminate disparity gaps.

Reflections
• Cradle to Career Partnership is intentional in its communication practices, providing orientations to new potential partners, demonstrating the value of a backbone to programmatic focused investors, and continuously improving its communication vehicles (such as e-newsletter) based on user feedback and behavior.   • Cradle to Career Partnership is creating the structures to enable the community to co-design solutions, including both providing seats at the change network table for Opportunity Youth as well as providing them their own table to take action on their priorities.   • Cradle to Career Partnership is seeing community investment in their priorities, such as the Backpack Project and Youth on the Rise smartphone app.   • Cradle to Career Partnership is aiming to develop a solution at scale to a key factor in youth reengagement – pathway coaches. With more than 21,000 disconnected youth, they are building and testing an app to provide wider reach to this population with the individualized support necessary to put them on a path to success.

Recommendations

Pillar: Shared community vision

• As Cradle to Career Pima builds the community's regard for the role of a backbone, it can begin to rally the region around shared results, encouraging alignment and accountability towards those results. One thing that might initiate that shared accountability could be having a community-wide result as well as targets for each of the CANs/outcome areas. Move from broad aspirations like "Every 8th grader performs at or above grade level in math" to "By 2023, 80% of Tucson eighth graders will perform at or above grade level in math and be on track to pursue careers in local STEM industries" and "By 2020, we will increase the percent of 8th grade students at or above grade level in math from 37% to 40%, 2,100 more students." We've seen the ability for that to mobilize communities:
   o The tried and true example is often Graduate Tacoma's commitment to high school graduation after USA Today dubbed them "dropout factories," going from 55% graduation in 2010 to 89.3% in 2018. However, there are other clear examples of this as well.
   o In Northfield, Minnesota, a desire for a 3% gain in early grade reading meant that 5 more kids in every classroom needed to be proficient, and from there, the Move 5 campaign was born, mobilizing teachers and partners (plus providing them with the resources they needed to provide the targeted interventions needed.) They achieved a 6.9% gain.
   o In Austin, Texas, declining kindergarten readiness brought together early childhood partners. They set a long-term goal (70% k-ready by 2020) but also a short-term target which amounted to 2,500 more kids being k-ready by 2019. They reflected that the one-year goal with a specific number attached to it turned up the heat and made them realize the importance of concurrent strategies, tackling not only the systemic pieces that will take 5 – 10 years to show up in the numbers, but also the shorter term solutions that will help the kids who are sitting in the Head Start classroom today. That stake in the ground has also enabled them to bring broader partners (health, mental health, business, etc.) to the table in a new way.

Pillar: Evidence-based decision making
• Start small with the connection of data across organizations to get early examples of use and wins, demonstrating the value of short-term and/or student-level data being shared with relevant stakeholders. For example, what organizations might benefit from the home visitation data from Casa de los Niños? What information would be helpful for Casa de los Niños to know from the child's pediatrician or Head Start classroom to inform the home visits?

Pillar: Collaborative action
• Be intentional in how you are capturing and lifting up factors and barriers identified by students, families, and front-line practitioners. This can be one foray into advocating for policy or systems changes. For example, in DC, a youth survey and intake data at the Opportunity Youth Reengagement Center both pointed to transportation as a barrier to going back to school. They were able to rally multiple stakeholders to advocate for a change in the age limitation for the school transportation subsidy.

Pillar: Investment & sustainability
• Define what role(s) the partnership is comfortable with playing with regards to state, local, and organizational policy (e.g., data expert, partner convener, community mobilizer, advocate.) • Consider partnering with other communities – both within the StriveTogether Network as well as other similar organizations in additional regions across the state – to identify and tackle state policy issues that are impacting kids. StriveTogether communities have found this to be particularly impactful when both rural and urban communities are engaged.

- Consider working to influence organizational or local policy. For example, in Tacoma, students of color were not proportionately represented in Advanced Placement or IB classes. They shifted their district policy to be "opt out" rather than "opt in," automatically enrolling all eligible students in the college prep courses, which required an action to get OUT rather than get IN them. As you consider issues such as eighth grade math, are there similar district policies that need to be changed to close disparity gaps? For example, are students of color being tracked to lower math courses in early grades, leading them to be behind in 8th grade?
- As related to previous recommendations:
  - Ensure that barriers are being lifted up from the change networks and youth/families themselves to inform policy shifts.
  - Consider the power of asking funders to align their investments to a community-wide result and/or to individual CAN targets that organizations across the region have committed to. You could consider supporting the alignment of funding through a collaborative body such as Road Map Project's "aligned funders group."