



Cincinnati | Northern Kentucky

Every Child, Every Step of the Way, From Cradle to Career

## **Getting Better Results in Education – “Cradle to Career” 2011 State Policy Agenda**

As a “Cradle to Career” education partnership in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky, one which believes that education is the single most important investment we can make to grow our economy and lift individual incomes, we find the inevitable budget cuts troubling. However, we also know that getting dramatically better results in education—from kindergarten readiness to college completion—will take reform.

As such, we believe that driving improved results in education will require Ohio and Kentucky to:

### **Use Data More Effectively to Determine What Works**

- ✓ **Build State Longitudinal Data Systems, and Offer More Data Analysis to Providers**
- ✓ **Support Local Data Systems that Connect School-Based and Provider-Based Data**
- ✓ **Require Providers to Track Impact, and Practice Continuous Improvement**

### **Invest Resources in What Works, with a Greater Focus on Getting Results**

- ✓ **Invest in Quality Early Learning and Development, and Programs that Get Results**
- ✓ **Provide Fair and Flexible Funding for Districts to Improve Results**
- ✓ **Use Existing Funding to Create Competitive “Impact” Grants to Districts**
- ✓ **Prioritize Teacher and Principal Excellence to Lift Student Achievement and Growth**
- ✓ **Promote High Performing Schools that Can Demonstrate Evidence of Effectiveness**

### **Support Public-Private Partnerships and Greater Cradle-to-Career Systems Alignment**

- ✓ **Pursue State-level Cradle to Career Systems Alignment**
- ✓ **Support Local Cradle to Career Partnerships to Drive Results**

The Strive Partnership’s 2011 state policy agenda provides both short-term and long-term recommendations to improve student achievement and growth, cradle to career.

For more information, contact The Strive Partnership at 513-929-1145 or [info@strivetogether.org](mailto:info@strivetogether.org).



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## Short-Term and Long-Term Solutions

### 2011 State Policy Agenda

#### Use Data More Effectively to Determine What Works

##### ✓ **Build State Longitudinal Data Systems, and Offer More Data Analysis to Providers**

Both states should expedite the integration of data systems at the departments responsible for early learning and development, K-12 education, higher education, and workforce training. Access to the data is essential if policymakers are expected to improve results and find savings through systems alignment and by investing in only those strategies that work. This systems' alignment will improve the analysis of the impacts of early childhood programs on school readiness and provide a better way to understand measures of achievement and progress in K-12 and student outcomes related to postsecondary education.

##### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or through an executive order, require responsible agencies to:

- Complete the development of the state's longitudinal data system within the year.
- Release *annual* plans detailing how emerging data will be used to better inform education policy.
- Develop internal capacity to offer data analysis and support to local providers.

(For example, districts should be able to access value-added data support from the state at no cost)

##### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should continue to invest in expanding their longitudinal data systems, as well as their capacity to offer data analysis and support to education providers, and release annual reports on what the data are revealing about the impact of state investments in education.

##### ✓ **Support Local Data Systems that Connect School-Based and Provider-Based Data**

Lawmakers should help districts establish data systems that connect school-based data (i.e. academic, attendance, behavioral) with nonprofit service provider data (e.g. tutoring and after school). With such a system in place, districts will be able to work with providers more effectively and efficiently, students get exactly what they need to succeed, and funders and policymakers can better determine which programs are working, and which ones are not. School-level resource coordination will be important to the success of these systems.

In Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky, The Strive Partnership is working with local school districts to pilot a Learning Partner Dashboard, or a tool to manage, track, and analyze student level data by combining school-based data with nonprofit service provider data.



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### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or through an executive order, require the departments of education to:

- Offer technical assistance to support districts in establishing model data systems that connect school-based data with nonprofit service provider data. Look to the example of the Learning Partner Dashboard as to how this could work in other districts throughout Ohio.

### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should continue to invest in expanding their capacity to offer technical assistance to support these model data systems, and release annual reports on what the data are revealing about the impact of support services in and outside of schools.

#### ✓ **Require Providers to Track Impact, and Practice Continuous Improvement**

Ohio and Kentucky should require recipients of state funding for education to pursue rigorous continuous improvement best practices, create or identify existing systems to track data and outcomes, routinely set student achievement and growth benchmarks, and provide reports on how funded efforts are improving outcomes. Recipients of state funding for education should also be able to demonstrate how their efforts are using the data collected to make program improvements.

### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or through an executive order, require relevant agencies to:

- Include in contracts, or as a part of formula-based funding, language that requires recipients of state funding for education to establish student achievement and growth benchmarks or targets, create or identify existing systems to track data and outcomes, and pursue continuous improvement best practices.

### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should invest in their capacity to offer continuous improvement technical assistance, and release annual reports on how recipients of state funding for education are performing based on their ability to improve student achievement and growth.



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## **Invest Existing Resources in What Works, with a Greater Focus on Getting Results**

### **✓ Invest in Quality Early Learning and Development, and Programs That Get Results**

Investments in early learning and development are critical to student success. Investments must be made in programs proven to be effective. Lawmakers must place a greater emphasis on funding based on results and quality, not just programs and counties. This includes better leveraging existing general revenue funding, or using Medicaid resources to invest in home visitation efforts that get results, and continuing quality rating systems that assess child care programs based on quality and results. Investments should encourage providers to achieve the highest possible rating the states offer.

Despite the importance of these programs to later educational attainment, the overwhelming majority of Ohio and Kentucky spending occurs after age five. Current coverage for families in need of quality early childhood interventions is woefully inadequate, and we spend billions of dollars to intervene in future years as a result.

#### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or through an executive order, require relevant agencies to:

- Review early learning and development investments based on whether or not recipients of these investments are improving results for children. This review should pay particular attention to a program's ability to improve results related to kindergarten readiness assessments.
- Identify existing resources, such as Medicaid funding, that can be leveraged to support the expansion of high quality home visitation programming.
- Establish new early childhood learning and development leadership – solely accountable to the Governor – with the responsibility for consolidating services and funding to create a world-class system of early learning.

#### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should maintain their quality rating systems for early learning providers. As new resources become available, we believe a much greater share of state spending should be dedicated to early learning and development. The states should find ways to express their commitment to increasing these critically important investments in future years.

### **✓ Provide Flexible, Fair and Smart Funding for Districts to Improve Results**

Districts need greater flexibility to make local decisions about how best to improve achievement – especially in light of pending budget cuts. This flexibility should be done thoughtfully, and in partnership with teachers and administrators, understanding that unfunded mandates and staffing reform (e.g. identifying fair and pragmatic changes for tenure and seniority that keep the most qualified teachers in classrooms) must be addressed.



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Funding to districts must also calculate need in a more fair and accurate way. Establishing a more reliable and fair calculation of poverty and a community's ability to pay must be pursued.

Finally, funding for districts should take into account the relative level of efficiency of each district's non-instructional spending. Pending cuts to districts should reflect the reality that some districts have greater savings potential in non-instructional than others. The goal should be that spending for instructional purposes – those dollars that will impact student achievement – is maintained at the highest level possible for every district.

### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or through an executive order, require relevant agencies to:

- Provide technical assistance to districts to pursue model teacher and principal evaluation systems so that staffing decisions are based, in large part, on credible assessments of performance.
- Update district funding formula to measure deep pockets of concentrated poverty (e.g. percentage of families on state cash assistance programs) as well as median (not average) income as a more reliable and fair calculation of poverty and a community's ability to pay.
- Ensure funding for districts maintains at the highest level possible spending for instructional purposes by taking into account the relative level of efficiency of each district's non-instructional spending.

### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states review and evaluate all existing mandates for districts. This evaluation should focus on whether or not existing mandates are improving student achievement and growth, and whether or not adequate funding is available to execute the mandate effectively.

#### ✓ **Use Existing Funding to Create Competitive “Impact” Grants to Districts**

By leveraging existing resources, both states should consider competitive grant programs that reward districts that A) boost academic performance, and B) find efficiencies and align funding to improved outcomes for students. These “impact” grants, with existing or repurposed state funding, allow districts to compete for grants that will help to expand or replicate strategies that have had a measurable impact on improving achievement. Other states, such as New York and Florida, are pursuing similar competitions to boost achievement.

### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget, establish a competitive Impact Grants program, using existing or repurposed funding, to reward district that can demonstrate with data that they have developed strategies to boost achievement and/or lower costs that align savings to improved outcomes for their students.



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### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should identify additional resources, particularly as revenues increase, to support the expansion of their Impact Grants program.

#### ✓ **Prioritize Teacher and Principal Excellence to Lift Student Achievement and Growth**

Both states must prioritize the investments being made in teacher and principal quality. Great school leaders and highly talented teachers are critical to our ability to sustainably improve student achievement. We recommend that lawmakers encourage districts to include student achievement and growth as the predominant measure in more rigorous teacher and principal evaluation systems – and support teachers and principals in more purposeful ways as a result of these more rigorous evaluations, trace teacher effectiveness data back to colleges of education (and begin to fund those schools according to performance), and implement performance-based compensation systems that reward and retain highly effective teachers and principals.

### Short-Term Recommendations

As we have recommended above, both states should require relevant agencies to:

- Develop internal capacity to offer data analysis and support to school districts.
- Provide technical assistance to districts to pursue model teacher and principal evaluation systems so that staffing decisions are based, in large part, on credible assessments of performance.

Additionally, we would recommend that both Ohio and Kentucky expedite the development of data tracking systems that better trace teacher effectiveness data back to colleges of education.

### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should begin to responsibly tie funding for colleges of education to the performance of their graduates.

#### ✓ **Promote High Performing Schools that Can Demonstrate Evidence of Effectiveness**

Lawmakers should encourage districts to pursue a “portfolio approach”, one that expands only high performing school options for families, and which requires strong accountability systems. In Ohio, this will be aided by state policy changes that strengthen charter-school accountability, result in the closing of chronically underperforming schools, help districts adopt model charter-school applications, and require high-quality charter-school application evaluation forms and performance-based contracts.

We encourage Kentucky to priorities these recommendations as it considers its own charter-school legislation.



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### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or relevant legislation:

- Require that charter operators demonstrate evidence of effectiveness before being authorized to open a new school. New schools should also be required to maintain their evidence of effectiveness in order to stay open. We would suggest that an evidence of effectiveness screen be developed to offer three categories of evidence (strong, medium, and preliminary), and that operators would need to identify which category of evidence best describes their model, and then prove it with data and research.
- Provide technical assistance to districts around how best to adopt a model charter-school application process, evaluation forms and performance-based contracts. To attract and grow only high performing models, adequate funding will need to be provided, and districts will need to be encouraged to share facilities while offering the appropriate flexibility.

### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should develop strategies that require any school, district or charter, to demonstrate, with credible data, that they are having an impact on improving student achievement and growth.



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## Support Public-Private Partnerships and Greater Cradle-to-Career Systems Alignment

### ✓ Pursue State-level Cradle to Career Systems Alignment

To begin to align systems of education in order to improve results and save money, the two states should form an appropriate state-level, public-private, cradle to career council. The council should be led by the governor, and include private-sector funders, leaders, and providers as well as the department directors responsible for the states' early learning and development systems, K-12 education delivery systems, colleges and universities, and workforce training programs. These groups would set short- and long-term student achievement and growth targets, from kindergarten preparedness rates to postsecondary completion rates, establish common assessments for tracking outcomes, develop strategies to better align systems of education, and strengthen the “hand off”, or transition, of a student from one system to the next.

#### Short-Term Recommendations

In the budget or through an executive order, establish a cradle to career council, chaired by the Governor, responsible for establishing short- and long-term student achievement and growth targets, from kindergarten preparedness rates to postsecondary completion rates, investing in common assessments, developing strategies to better align systems of education, and strengthening the transition from one system to the next.

#### Long-Term Recommendation

Moving forward, both states should begin to pursue plans that better align the various systems of education when such alignment will boost achievement and save money.

### ✓ Support Local Cradle to Career Partnerships to Drive Results

In order to establish similar Cradle to Career partnerships throughout Ohio and Kentucky, both states should encourage local Cradle to Career councils, which would bring together educational leaders and investors – early childhood providers, district superintendents, college and university presidents, business and nonprofit leaders, teachers, parents, and community funders – to set student achievement targets, lead cross-sector strategies to improve student-level outcomes, and more effectively use data to inform decisions around funding, intervention strategies, and where to achieve greater systems alignment.

#### Short-Term and Long-Term Recommendation

In the budget or through an executive order, require that the departments of education:

- Offer technical assistance to local communities in establishing cradle to career councils responsible for establishing short- and long-term student achievement and growth targets and developing strategies to better align local resources around what works for kids.