



Cincinnati | Northern Kentucky

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

Who We Are

The Strive Partnership is a **cradle to career** education partnership focused on **improving student achievement and growth** – kindergarten readiness rates through postsecondary completion rates – in the **urban core** of Cincinnati, Covington and Newport.

We are a unique **public-private partnership** of early learning leaders, superintendents, college presidents, funders, business leaders, and service providers who know that improving education starts with a world-class system of **early learning**, has to include **high performing schools** for every child, and must involve **postsecondary preparedness and success**.

The key, we believe, is to work **across sectors**, and in a **data-focused** way, to better **align and leverage existing resources** around what works – getting to a more **effective and efficient system** of education – cradle to career. To this end, we offer the following recommendations.

Policy Priorities

To have greater impact locally on the Partnership’s goals, we developed an **aligned policy agenda**, focused on three core principles:

“Data, Data, Data” – Use Data 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. 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 policy, and develop internal capacity to offer data analysis and support to local providers.

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

- **Promote High Performing Schools that Can Demonstrate Evidence of Effectiveness**

We are also calling for **charter laws that require school operators to produce data on their ability to improve student achievement**. This will be aided by state policy changes that strengthen charter-school accountability, result in the closing of chronically underperforming schools, and help districts adopt model charter-school applications:

- 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 best describes their model.



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- 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.

“Fund What Works” – Invest Resources in What We Know Works

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

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.

- 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.
- Identify existing resources, such a 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.

“One Coordinated System” – Pursue 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, form an appropriate state-level, public-private, cradle to career committee. The committee 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. The group would set short- and long-term student achievement and growth targets, 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.

- **Support Local Cradle to Career Partnerships to Drive Results**

In order to establish similar Cradle to Career partnerships throughout state, 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 students.