

overview

theory of action

StriveTogether is a national movement with a clear purpose: helping every child succeed in school and in life. In partnership with nearly 70 communities across the country, we provide resources, best practices and tools to create opportunities and close gaps in education and more. We use data to illuminate challenges and solutions, tackle tough conversations and impact change for millions of children and families across the country.

The cornerstone of our approach is the StriveTogether Theory of Action™. Built on lessons from network members, our nationally recognized theory of action helps communities build and sustain the civic infrastructure necessary to improve outcomes and close gaps from cradle to career. Civic infrastructure is how a community holds itself collectively accountable and organizes to implement a cradle-to-career vision.

Our framework acts as a guide for developing civic infrastructure that meets and adapts to the unique needs of a community. The rigorous standards and focus on results distinguish our approach from traditional collaboration and other collective impact approaches. The theory of our action is the Cradle to Career Network's approach to quality collective impact.

G A T E W A Y S

To measure progress, the theory of action has six progressive gateways — sets of milestones that a community moves through during its effort to build and strengthen civic infrastructure. Within each gateway are benchmarks that the community achieves on its journey.



PILLARS

Within each gateway, the benchmarks are organized by pillar — categories of work that are necessary for better, more equitable outcomes for kids and families. The pillars include:



Evidence-Based Decision Making – Partnerships are most successful when people identify shared outcomes and commit to improving them together. Our approach centralizes the need to align on outcomes and metrics for success, as well as the processes needed to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data regularly. Over time, data use becomes more sophisticated and tailored to meet the needs of children and families.



Collaborative Action – Community members must come together to act on the data collected. Partnerships often form networks or collaboratives focused on improving an outcome and eliminating disparities. They use continuous improvement practices to test strategies, with the goal of scaling what works and shifting or abandoning what doesn't.



Shared Community Vision – Partners representing all sectors that impact a child or family must align around a cradle-to-career vision to improve outcomes, reduce and eliminate disparities, and ensure economic mobility. Community buy-in and ownership are critical to the success of a partnership.



Investment and Sustainability – Redirecting or aligning resources (e.g., people, knowledge, money, etc.) requires shifts in policies and practices across systems. Many communities, though not all, are program rich and system poor, meaning a number of services/supports are disconnected. Partnerships work to align and allocate resources to what works to improve outcomes and eliminate disparities. They also drive policy change at the institutional, local or state level to ensure the sustainability of practices that lead to positive impact.

PRINCIPLES

Undergirding the entire approach is a commitment to four principles. These principles are relevant and critical, regardless of where a partnership is working in the theory of action. They are:



Engage the community



Advance equity



Develop a culture of continuous improvement



Leverage existing resources