

StriveTogether[®]

Every child. Cradle to career.



**civic
infrastructure:**
paving the way to
economic mobility

2021 Annual Report

Cover photo caption:

Youth and families are at the center the Cradle to Career Network's work to address the root causes of systemic inequities. In California, Cradle to Career Fresno County created a coalition to develop solutions for digital inclusion with members from 29 government, education and community-based organizations. Read more about their work on the Insights page at www.StriveTogether.org.

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IMPACTING TOMORROW

join us

what's working



Jennifer Blatz
President & CEO,
StriveTogether



Danae D. Davis
Board Chair,
StriveTogether

For over a decade, StriveTogether has been building something unique with the Cradle to Career Network of communities. Now, this once-unfamiliar concept — civic infrastructure — is gaining momentum among community members and legislators.

Civic infrastructure develops in communities when place-based partnerships — in collaboration with children, families, schools, nonprofits, businesses, health care organizations and more — work to identify data-driven, outcomes-focused strategies to address the root causes of systemic inequities. With these strategies, we can put more young people on the path to economic mobility. And what was once only a framework for cities or regions is now taking hold across states, with 13 state coalitions advocating for policy change to improve cradle-to-career outcomes.

The pandemic laid bare dramatic and horrific racial and economic disparities across myriad outcomes. These disparities are painful, but they are the reason this movement exists. We

are uniquely positioned to change the course of history and transform systems so kids and families of color and those experiencing poverty can achieve their dreams.

While COVID-19 may have stalled progress on the outcomes that comprise the cradle-to-career continuum, we are encouraged by bright spots we see across the Network. These bright spots would not be possible without the civic infrastructure established through partnerships' implementation of the StriveTogether Theory of Action™ and our focus on transforming systems in service of results.

The following data and stories share some incredible results, and they also remind us that there is still much more work to do. It might feel like we are further from our vision than we were in March 2020, but in fact, our call to action is clearer and the movement is growing. With our network members, partners, investors and community members, we are strengthening this movement every day.

As always, we invite you to share these results and insights or learn more about StriveTogether's work at StriveTogether.org. The connections you make are building civic infrastructure and paving the way to better outcomes for every child, cradle to career.

network at a glance

a nationwide movement

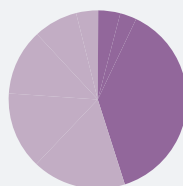


total youth served birth to age 24

14,800,000

59% youth of color

45% of youth experience poverty



StriveTogether counts youth as “experiencing poverty” if their families live at twice the poverty threshold or below.

English language learners

15%

of youth in K-12 public schools are English Language Learners



youth by demographic

41% White	31% Latine	19% Black	7% Other	6% Multi-racial	5% Asian	1% Indigenous
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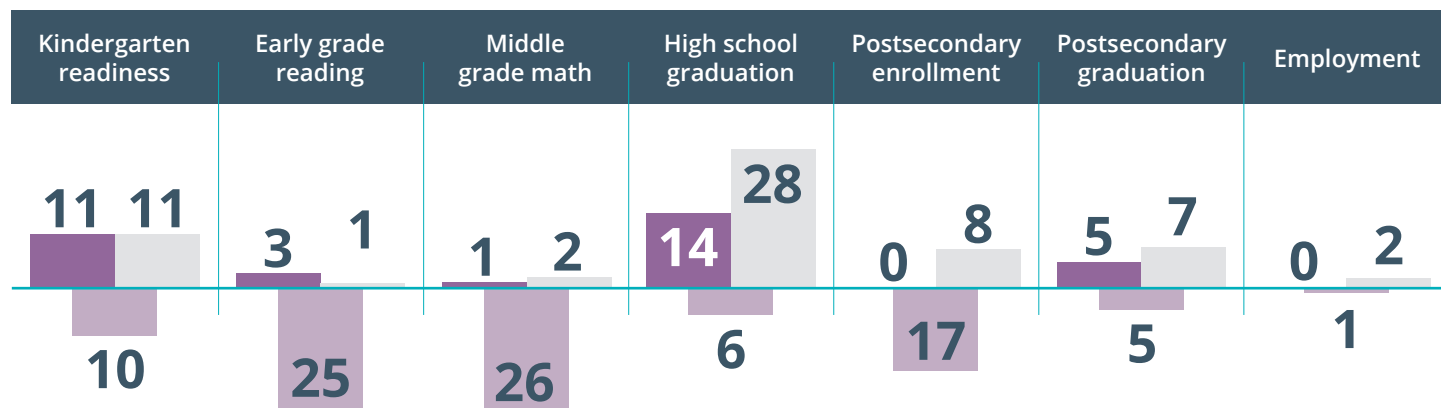
Percentages do not add to 100% because the American Community Survey measures Hispanic/Latine as an ethnicity, not as a race. Black, Indigenous, Asian, multiracial and other youth of color may also have identified as Hispanic/Latine. White youth presented here did not identify as Hispanic/Latine.

IMPACT

cradle-to-career outcomes

COVID-19 disrupted outcomes, as many schools paused standardized testing and simplified graduation requirements, and postsecondary institutions modified enrollment and graduation requirements. This made data collection and interpretation difficult. While the data collected during the pandemic paints a cloudier picture than previous years, it provides context as StriveTogether works toward an equitable recovery.

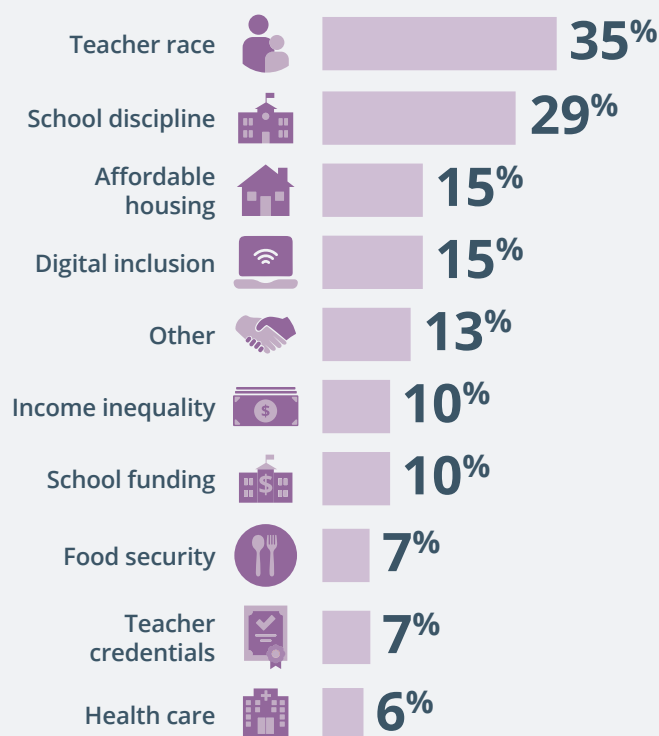
Number of partnerships with: ■ Positive change ■ Negative change ■ Little or no change



systems indicators

This is the first time StriveTogether asked network members to report systems indicator data as part of the Civic Infrastructure Assessment. About 84% submitted this type of data. Teacher and school discipline were the most common indicators reported. Equitable teacher demographic representation is increasingly recognized as crucial to student success, as research shows same-race student-teacher pairings positively impact learning. Network members reporting school discipline data found Black students experiencing poverty are more likely to be disciplined and suspended. Removing students from the classroom impacts learning opportunities and affects outcomes across the cradle-to-career continuum.

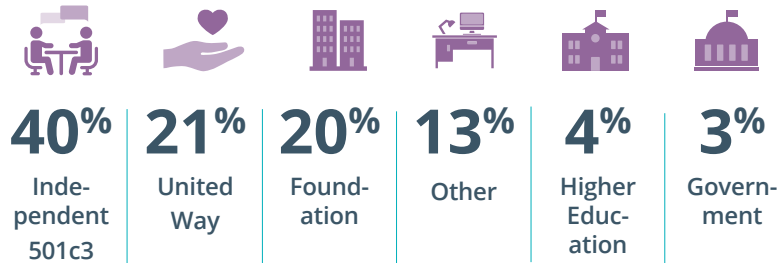
partnerships reporting on each indicator



IMPACT

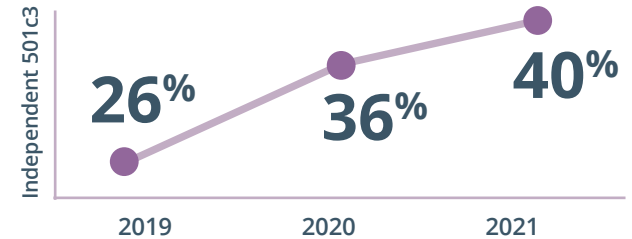
anchor organizations

These entities are the fiscal agents for network members.



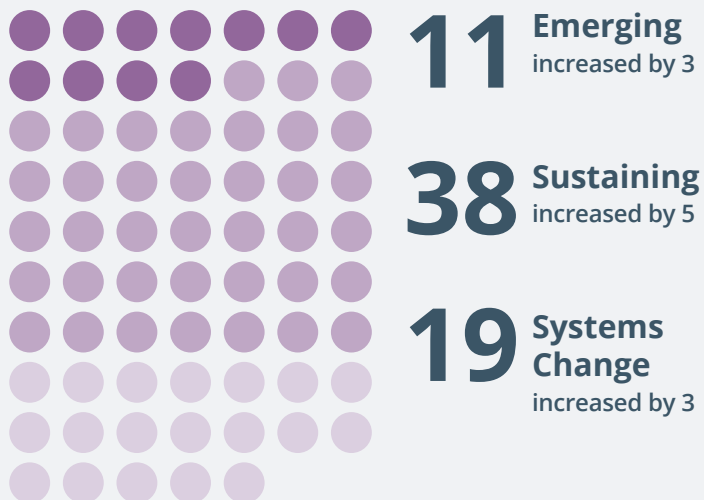
network member 501c3

More network members have become independent 501c3 organizations.



progress

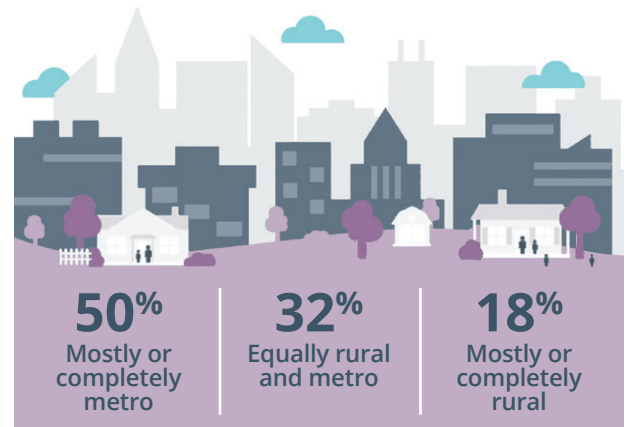
Network members progressed through the Theory of Action™, a road map for changing systems to get better outcomes for young people. Partnerships spend an average of two years in the Emerging Gateway and three years in the Sustaining Gateway before advancing to Systems Change. Systems Change partnerships tend to serve more youth and employ more staff.



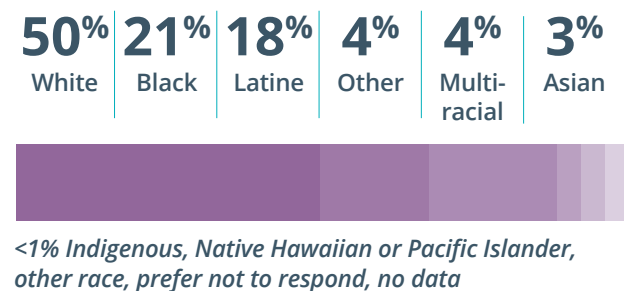
median network staff size



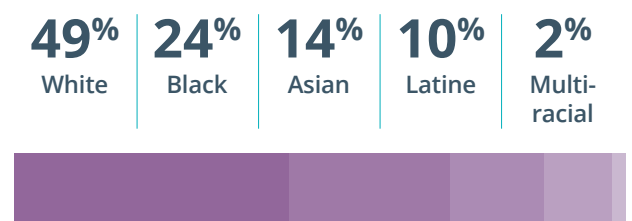
geographical scope



network staff by race



StriveTogether staff by race



shifting policy and resources

Despite a divided state government, Wisconsin policymakers came together to help child care providers serve children during the pandemic. These policymakers had help from four StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network member communities who built a statewide partnership to advocate for children long before the pandemic.

Cradle-to-career leaders from partnerships in Milwaukee, Brown, Kenosha and Racine counties were often collaborators, but it was the opportunity to receive additional support from StriveTogether to advocate, inform and shift policy at the state level that motivated the creation of the Wisconsin Partnership.

“Each partnership had already been working on early child care and education in their communities, but they were bumping into to state policies that did not support the work,” said Daria Hall, who became the policy director for the Wisconsin Partnership in 2019.



Their work was informed by research data showing high-quality early child care education impacts economic and social mobility. For example, the American Education Research Association found an 8.1 percentage point reduction in special education placement and an 11.4 percentage point increase in high school graduation rates among young people who participated in early child care education. High-quality early child care education effects are intergenerational. The children of participants are more likely than their peers to complete high school without suspension and be employed full time, according to the Heckman Equation. Heckman also found that every dollar invested in early child care education has a return on investment of 7-10% per year through better outcomes in education, health, economic productivity and reduced crime.

A StriveTogether grant funded the Wisconsin Partnership to advocate for expanded access to affordable, quality early childhood care and education and to build the data infrastructure

High-quality early childhood care and education benefits children, families and communities' economies.

for scaling what was working locally across the state. They believed shifting state policy would pave the road to improved outcomes for children, starting from the cradle to kindergarten readiness and beyond. This work was well underway when the pandemic began.

When 40% of child care providers in Wisconsin closed in the early days of the pandemic, Hall said, families of essential workers were hit hardest. Essential workers often earn less and are in large part people of color. Affordable, quality child care remained critical for young and school-age children when classrooms closed for in-person instruction.

The Wisconsin Partnership engaged systems leaders who are trusted voices for state-level policy changes. They brought early child care providers and parents to the decision-making tables. Through a fellowship, they taught parents how to advocate for the changes they wanted to see. Parents learned how to use data and share their experiences directly with the legislative committee that's responsible for Wisconsin's budget.

"Data has been central to all of our advocacy. We use data to highlight a need and to tell stories that resonate with decision-makers," Hall said. These constituent stories from parents made an impression on policymakers. "Parents asked for more investment in child care. They shared firsthand experiences like the loss of housing and jobs due to inadequate child care. They brought quantitative data that showed they were spending between 25% and 30% of their household income on child care."

The Wisconsin Partnership informed how the state allocated federal COVID-19 relief funding to support child care, including the Child Care Counts Payment program, which to date has brought \$587 million to support 3,600 child care programs across the state.

The partnership also partnered with advocates across the state to secure a \$29 million funding increase in the state budget for the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program, which offsets the cost of child care for working parents whose incomes are at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level.

They realized the need to work together to influence policy because political power resides in rural and suburban communities in the state, Hall said. The partnership represents one out of every four children, from birth to age 8, in the state. This includes 37% of all children living in poverty, 79% of the Black children and 46% of the Latine children in Wisconsin.

While they are still waiting on reliable data on the percentage of Wisconsin children in high-quality early child care and education, they believe enrollment will be an early indicator of kindergarten readiness.

"The voices of these partners would not have been as loud or able to influence the state alone," Hall said. The partnership aligned the civic infrastructure in their local communities to build civic infrastructure in their state to get better results for children.

The Wisconsin Partnership includes StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network communities

Achieve Brown County
Green Bay

Building Our Future
Kenosha

Milwaukee Succeeds
Milwaukee

**Higher Expectations for
Racine County**
Racine

[Learn more here.](#)

lessening learning lags

Civic infrastructure is the connective tissue that allows communities to work together in harmony, adapt and flourish even in crisis. In Stamford, Connecticut, that connective tissue has been critical to leveling the playing field for students amidst COVID-19-related learning lags.

Stamford Cradle to Career (SC2C) tapped into civic infrastructure to leverage 2021 American Rescue Plan funds toward the community's largest-ever summer learning opportunity, designed to support students' academic outcomes and social-emotional learning needs. Through existing partnerships with Stamford Public Schools and community-based organizations, SC2C was able to quickly coordinate the funding and programming for the district's summer afternoon enrichment.

"One of the strengths of having our collective impact initiative in place for the past five years is that we had contacts who already knew who we were," explained Lauren Scopaz Daunais, vice president for strategy and operations for SC2C. The partnership's positioning within the community allowed them to act as an intermediary be-

tween the school district and local organizations to create wraparound programming.

The school district also benefitted from this collaboration, as it allowed them to expand summer school offerings into six weeks of full-day academic and social emotional enrichment.

"We are extremely grateful for our partnership with Stamford Cradle to Career," said Amy Beldotti, associate superintendent of teaching and learning at Stamford Public Schools. "Like many school districts across nation, we had to make decisions quickly. It was extremely helpful to work with allies that already had the trusted partnerships in the community and knew how to help us navigate through the daunting technical aspects of hosting the largest-ever summer program we've held."

The school district provided academic support in the mornings, and 11 community providers created optional afternoon learning experiences covering subjects from coding and science to art and sports. The 2021 program was open to

The summer opportunity included morning academic support and optional afternoon learning experiences supported by 11 community providers.



Stamford Cradle to Career's trusted community relationships allowed them to support a comprehensive summer learning opportunity.

all students enrolled in kindergarten through the eighth grade, with invitations to students who were identified as performing below grade level on benchmark assessments or who were identified as disengaged during the 2020-21 school year and more than 1,200 students opted into the afternoon programming. Academic programming focused on foundational literacy skills for elementary-age students, and all students participated in math, science, arts and social-emotional learning courses. At the onset of the program, assessments were administered to pre-K, kindergarten and first grade students to identify kindergarten readiness, social-emotional learning and math skills, as well as where students are developing in comparison to their first-grade peers. With these supports, SC2C anticipates that the summer programming can measurably stabilize or improve outcomes like early grade reading and middle grade math, and is analyzing academic outcomes data to determine best practices for future shifts to programming that narrows pandemic-related learning lags for students.

SC2C designed and managed the selection process for participating afternoon programming providers, including disbursing funding and working with providers to finalize budgets. More than 1,200 students opted into the afternoon programming.

"There were new providers who we were able to access through our existing contacts," explained Scopaz Daunais. "Because we had a broad enough scope, people in our network knew to bring organizations who aren't working solely in Stamford. [The existing infrastructure] helped broaden our network to provide a good variety for students over the summer."



SC2C worked with school leaders and local partners to target disengaged students and prioritized the youth who have been most marginalized by systems. To increase program accessibility, the school district leveraged additional funds for free participant transportation and meals.

After a year of uncertainty and distance learning, it was important to not only create opportunities for youth to catch up on learning, but also to reconnect and socialize with their peers. When surveyed, 88% of participating students said that they enjoyed their experience. The most common points of enjoyment? Making friends and having time for play. Parents were similarly pleased with the programming, and the reasons were largely two-fold: their children were able to try new experiences they may not have had access to otherwise, and all-day programming meant parents had free child care during the summer months.

"We understand how important academics are," explained Edith Presley, president of Stamford Cradle to Career. "We understand how important structured activities are. To parents, it was also important that they could get back to work and have their child in a safe, nurturing environment as we were coming out of the heights of the pandemic. Stamford Cradle to Career found our partnership with Stamford Public Schools paramount to connecting learning expectations and enriching new activities to meet the needs of students and families."

Baltimore's Promise Baltimore, Maryland

Outcomes improved:

Postsecondary enrollment; employment



Cradle to Career Network member Baltimore's Promise is reconnecting youth to career and postsecondary opportunities through the Grads2Careers initiative. In the first phase of the initiative, 400 participants completed training, 257 obtained employment and 35 enrolled in a postsecondary institution, for a total positive outcomes rate of 76%.

Grads2Careers launched in 2017 as a collaborative effort between Baltimore's Promise, the Baltimore Mayor's Office of Employment Development and Baltimore City Public Schools. This initiative was developed in response to data that showed that 26% of Baltimore City Public Schools graduates were disconnected from both school and the workforce the fall following high school graduation, and six years after graduation, graduates were earning a median

income of \$11,000. Grads2Careers addresses this issue, which disproportionately affects Black youth, by creating immediate opportunities for occupational skills training for Baltimore City high school graduates.

Based on success so far, the Baltimore City Mayor's Office aligned funding to the Grads2Careers priority population, expanding the initiative. Baltimore City Public Schools has adopted Grads2Careers as a postsecondary option for all students. Grads2Careers alumni serve as consultants to the initiative and have assumed many advisory roles, including reviewing proposals from prospective providers and representing Grads2Careers at events. Some also serve on the Baltimore Workforce Development Board's Youth Committee, where they provide vital young adult perspectives and feedback related to the systems and programs that impact them.



In the first phase of the Grads2Careers initiative, 76% of participants achieved positive outcomes, including obtaining employment and enrolling at a postsecondary institution.

Learn to Earn Dayton Dayton, Ohio

Outcomes improved:

Postsecondary enrollment; postsecondary completion



Cradle to Career Network member Learn to Earn Dayton is proving that institutional policy shifts can lead to increased opportunity for Black and Latine students.

Thanks to new policies established by partner higher education institutions, more students of color are accessing postsecondary programs. The University of Dayton, for example, set records for underrepresented students among its undergraduates (15.9%) and its first-year class (19.8%). The university also achieved a 98% retention rate over the past three years. Another institution in the community, Sinclair Community College, also increased enrollment of students of color and students experiencing poverty thanks to new college credit transition policies.

To reach these outcomes, Learn to Earn Dayton and partner institutions explored disaggregated postsecondary data and hosted listening sessions to discuss strategies to bridge opportunity gaps. These efforts led to policy changes at postsecondary institutions

to address the challenges confronting all types of students, including stopped-out students and students with stranded credits — policy changes aimed at lowering barriers to entry by increasing tuition transparency, providing services to underrepresented students, supporting the seamless transition of credits from high school to college, and creating articulation models that allow students with debt to access transcripts.



Policy changes at higher education institutions are leading to increased opportunities for students of color in Dayton, Ohio.

operating highlights

StriveTogether's auditors have expressed an unqualified opinion on our financial statements for the fiscal year that ended on December 31, 2021. Those financial statements are available on StriveTogether's website.

revenues

2021

2020

Grant Revenue	\$26,699,967	\$30,314,341
Contract Service Fees	\$437,860	\$392,367
Membership Fees	\$170,158	\$173,126
In-kind Donations	\$867,244	\$0
Other Revenue	\$250,251	\$102,412
Total Revenues	\$28,425,480	\$30,982,246

expenditures

2021

2020

Grants to Other Organizations	\$11,292,610	\$20,029,910
Personnel	\$5,841,636	\$5,199,803
Consulting and Professional	\$2,019,447	\$1,292,311
Communications	\$594,177	\$607,785
Depreciation and Amortization	\$391,675	\$373,060
Information Technology	\$313,653	\$368,268
Occupancy	\$217,086	\$223,130
Network Stipends and Support	\$152,686	\$192,533
Other	\$184,145	\$153,703
Conferences, Conventions and Meetings	\$232,431	\$148,862
Travel	\$92,723	\$54,238
Total Expenditures	\$21,332,269	\$28,643,603

LEADERSHIP

board of directors



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Communities In Schools
Ford Foundation

Harlem Children's Zone
Nielsen Foundation
Pritzker Children's Initiative
Tableau Foundation
Walmart Foundation

partners

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Bloomberg Associates
BRIDGES USA
Brookings Institution
Campaign for Black Male Achievement
The Center for the Study of Social Policy
Children's Funding Project
Cities United
Coalition for Community Schools
Communities In Schools
Community Solutions
The Educare Learning Network
The Education Trust
Enterprise Community Partners
Equal Measure
FUSE Corps
Harlem Children's Zone
Independent Sector
Institute for Healthcare Improvement
KABOOM!
Kids Impact Initiative

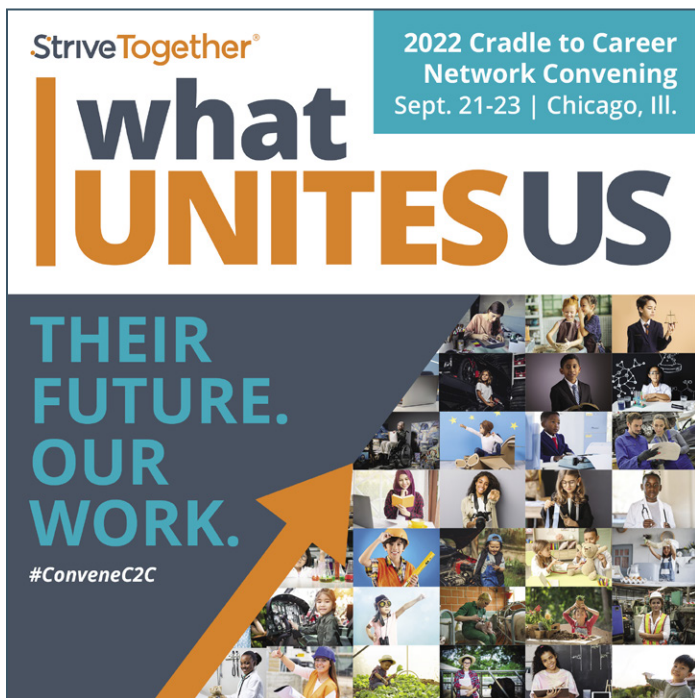
Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race & Ethnicity
Low Income Investment Fund
MENTOR
My Brother's Keeper Alliance
National Collaborative of Infants and Toddlers
National Institute for Children's Health Quality
National League of Cities
Natural Resources Defense Council
Partners for Rural Impact
PolicyLink
Results for America
Save the Children
Start Early
Strong, Prosperous, And Resilient Communities Challenge
Tableau Foundation
Teach Plus
Third Sector
U.S. Department of Education
William Julius Wilson Institute

IMPACTING TOMORROW

join
us

annual convening

Join StriveTogether and changemakers from across the country at the Cradle to Career Network Convening. The convening brings together leaders and community advocates to learn from each other and cultivate a stronger future for youth and families. Click below for more details.



Together for Change podcast

Join StriveTogether leaders as well as national and local partners who are working to break down barriers, change systems and improve outcomes for as many families as possible. Don't miss an episode and subscribe by clicking below.



invest in an equitable future

Together, we can create a better tomorrow. We invite you to join us in this vital work. When you give to StriveTogether, you support a national movement to help every child succeed from cradle to career.

DONATE NOW at strivetgether.org/donate



StriveTogether is a national movement with a clear purpose: help every child succeed in school and in life from cradle to career, regardless of race, ethnicity, zip code or circumstance. In partnership with nearly 70 communities across the country, StriveTogether provides resources, best practices and processes to give every child every chance for success. The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network reaches more than 14 million students, including more than 8 million children of color and over 6 million children experiencing poverty. The network spans 30 states and Washington, D.C.

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