

## OVERVIEW

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 builds a partnership and holds itself collectively accountable and organizes to implement a cradle-to-career vision.

Our framework acts as a guide for partnerships in 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.

Cradle-to-career partnerships are formal groups consisting of cross-sector organizational and system leaders (e.g., education, business, government, nonprofits, etc.) as well as grassroots organizations, neighborhood leaders and individual members of affected populations, especially youth and families who come together around a shared community vision. With support from backbone staff, the partnership group works together to define population-level challenges, develop and implement strategies to address those challenges, and hold systems accountable for results.

## GATEWAYS

To measure progress, the Theory of Action™ has five 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.

Partnerships use this framework work towards population-level outcome improvements for Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and those experiencing poverty as they close equity gaps across outcomes and systems indicators. StriveTogether designates partnerships as Proof Points when they meet systems change/transformation benchmarks and are seeing more equitable outcomes.

In Systems Transformation communities, the civic infrastructure exists where every Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and family and those experiencing poverty have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential, cradle to career. This is a result of partnership with system leaders in making fundamental and institutionalized shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures to eliminate structural racism and advance equitable outcomes.

- Policies are laws, regulations and other rules guiding individual or institutional actions adopted by institutions and/or local, state and federal governments. In transformed systems, policies are aligned with the interests of Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty.
- Practices are the everyday actions and decisions of individuals and institutions. In transformed systems, practices are informed by Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty to address the root causes of structural inequities
- Resources are the cultural, financial and social assets among a group of people or accessible to them. In transformed systems, asset use is guided by and responds to the interests of Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty
- Power is the ability to make things happen. In transformed systems, Black, Indigenous, Latinx and Asian youth and families and those experiencing poverty have formalized roles and/or are central to decision making about how policies get developed, how practices get implemented and how resources are allocated in the community.



**PROOF POINT** is a designation for partnerships that meet the systems change/transformation benchmarks and are seeing more equitable outcomes\*



## 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:



### SHARED COMMUNITY VISION:

A diverse group of people in a geographic area agree on what shifts to policies, practices, resources and power structures produce equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.



### EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING:

The process of rigorously collecting, analyzing, sharing and taking action with data (i.e., both outcomes and systems data), including youth and family perspectives and narratives, to make shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures that produce equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.



### COLLABORATIVE ACTION:

Members of a partnership collectively adopt the tools and processes and build the necessary knowledge and skills to make powerful contributions that shift policies, practices, resources and power structures leading to equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.



### INVESTMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY:

A partnership has cultural, financial and social assets to support the collaboration necessary for producing and maintaining shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures that will lead to equitable cradle-to-career outcomes.

## OUTCOMES

The seven cradle-to-career outcomes are:



Kindergarten  
readiness



Early grade  
reading



Middle grade  
math



High school  
graduation



Postsecondary  
enrollment



Postsecondary  
completion



Employment