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Michael Oleskewicz

Sarah Gardiner

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Collective Impact: Early Childhood Education in Hartford



and the Strive Partnership

Michael Oleskewicz '13 & Sarah Gardiner '13

Professor Stefanie Chambers

Community Partner: Achieve Hartford!



Abstract

Large-scale social change requires broad coordination across the social sector. Regrettably, reform in the social sector often focuses on the isolated intervention of individual groups. Early childhood education is no exception, even though it is an important component of a child's future educational success and social mobility. We study the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati, OH as a successful example of a collective impact initiative in the educational field. By analyzing their work to bring together various organizations to address early childhood literacy, we can identify organizations in Hartford that will be the most effective partners to carry out similar work locally. Understanding how collaborative efforts are positively affecting early childhood education in Hartford will help to close the achievement gap and improve social mobility.

Introduction

Research Question:

- How can improved early childhood literacy be shaped by a collective impact initiative in Hartford?
- How can the Strive Partnership serve as a model for collective impact?

5 Elements of collective impact:

- ✓ **Common Agenda**
- ✓ **Shared Measurement**
- ✓ **Mutually Reinforcing Activities**
- ✓ **Continuous Communication**
- ✓ **Backbone Organization**



Methodology

Background to our work with community partner Achieve Hartford!

AH! Theory of Reform

- Culture of high expectations in our schools and community
- Effective teachers in every classroom
- Strong leaders directing every school
- Family and community responsibility for education
- Strategies to address challenges created by poverty
- Commitment to school choice
- Analyze and compare Hartford and Cincinnati in terms of population and educational environment
- Examine organizations that currently exist in Hartford which could potentially collaborate on early childhood education (non-profit, private sector, government)
- Evaluate the aforementioned organizations in light of the 5 elements of successful collective impact

The Strive Partnership Model for Success

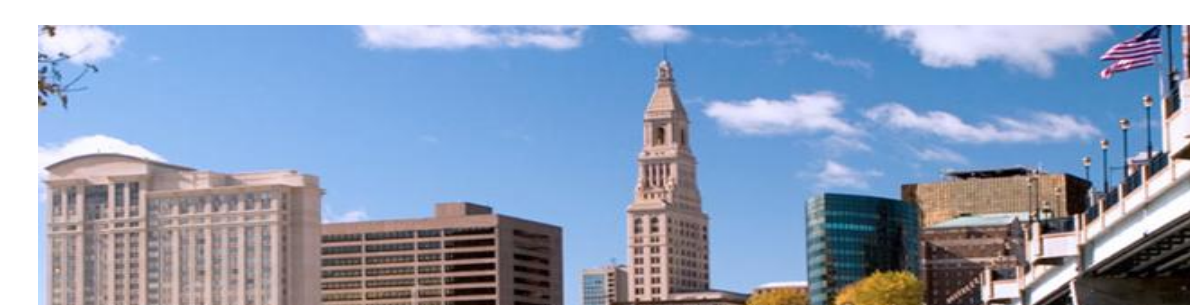


- Call to action in Cincinnati: A failing public school system in the 1990s and 2000s.
- First wave of reform had limited success in the early 2000s; City changes model to achieve long term reform.
- Enter Strive Partnership:
 - Founded in 2006
 - 300 organizations (government, private, non-profit sectors)
 - Cradle-to-career support network to sustain reform throughout each child's academic life
 - Of 54 indicators of success, 40 have shown improvement

Results

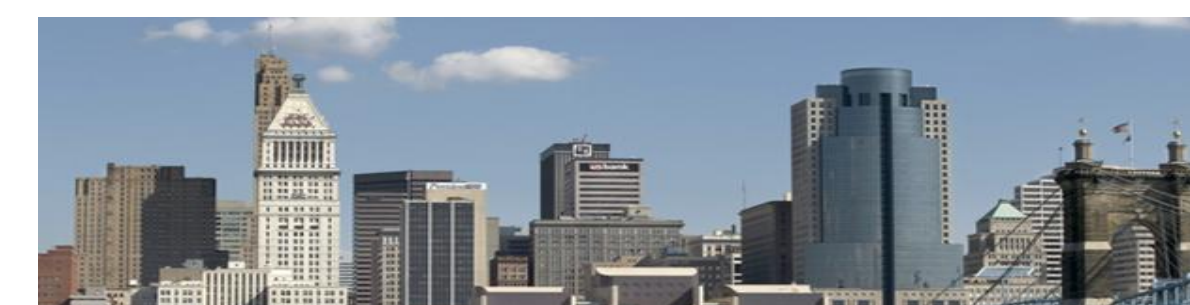
Population Demographics Comparison

Total Population
Hartford: 121,578
Cincinnati: 331,285



% Renter Occupied Housing
Hartford: 75.41 %
Cincinnati: 61.03 %

% Population under Age 9
Hartford: 17.16%
Cincinnati: 14.09%



% Hispanic or Latino
Hartford: 40.52%
Cincinnati: 1.28%

Table 1. Potential Partners for Collective Impact in Hartford

| Organization | Objective in Education Reform |
|--|--|
| City of Hartford | Wants to cultivate a high performing school system to develop a strong and educated work force, which will in turn stimulate the city's economy. |
| Hartford Public Schools | Third Grade Promise—To close the achievement gap, developing goals and implementing programs so that every Hartford student who enters HPS in kindergarten will be reading at grade level by the 3 rd grade. |
| United Way Worldwide | Implement initiatives to improve quality of childcare, family support, early intervention and public awareness activities so that children enter school ready to succeed (ex: Success by 6, Born Learning) |
| Achieve Hartford! | Build awareness, drive accountability, and increase involvement of everyone who has a role in creating the best educational experience. They support an informed community (ex: SGCs, Choice Education, parent advisors, community events and forums) |
| National Civic League | Increase the power that individuals and groups have to build and participate in successful communities. All-America City award encourages cities to prove they are effectively reforming HPS. |
| William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund | Improve school success for all children with a special emphasis on students under age 8 through personal and leadership development. The Discovery Initiative increases parent engagement, creates family-centered based programs, and they share their success stories. |
| The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving Annie E. Casey Foundation | To award grants to deserving organizations who support sustained education reform. Focus on child welfare, community change, economic security, education, and juvenile justice. 3 Areas of interest: closing the achievement gap, increasing proficient grade-level reading by 50%, and "raising the bar". |
| The Campaign for Grade-Level Reading | 3 Areas of interest to address: Readiness gap, achievement gap, "summer slide". Believe that school's can't do things alone; they need complete community support, especially in low-income areas like Hartford. |
| Metro Hartford Alliance | Improve HPS because education is a main component of a successful economic future for the Hartford region. |
| Trinity College | By assisting in the creation of Smart Choices school choice program and the Trinfo café, improving relationships with the surrounding community |
| University of Hartford | Partnership with University High School to assist in college readiness. |
| Parents | To be completely invested in their child's success from cradle-to-career. |



Results

Table 2. How the Selected Organizations Address the Five Components

| Component of Collective Impact | How is it addressed in Hartford? |
|--|--|
| Common Agenda ✓ | The partners listed above have objectives which align to create a common agenda around sustained education reform in HPS |
| Shared Measurement ✓ | An organization like Achieve Hartford! focuses on data-based research and success indicators. There are several partners with the resources to fund a data-driven approach to reform compatible to Strive's 54 success indicators. |
| Mutually Reinforcing Activities ✓ | Partners focus on varying aspects of reform (family support, community engagement, raising standards, etc.), but all are focused on the same goal of sustained reform. |
| Continuous Communication | This aspect will have to be facilitated by the back bone organization and will need to include regular correspondence between partners. |
| Back Bone Organization | Once partners are solidified, a back bone organization with a full-time staff with a specific skill set will need to form in order to manage collaboration. |

Conclusions

- The Strive Partnership's collective impact model is feasible in Hartford.
- Organizations representing the government, private sector, and non-profit sector exist to create a collective impact in early childhood education.
- These organizations address (or can feasibly address) the 5 elements of collective impact and thus the city of Hartford is poised to create a successful early childhood literacy initiative.
- The primary challenge facing the model will be establishing trust among the organizations that this partnership will be successful and is worth any individual sacrifices inherent to collaboration.

Acknowledgments

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