

GOALS FOR THE COMMON GOOD:

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF EDUCATION



A joint publication of Measure of America and United Way.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To cut in half the number of high school dropouts in the next 10 years, we have to start long before school does. We know high school dropouts are more than 12 years in the making. They usually start school behind, and research shows that most never catch up. Tackling high school dropout rates means reversing these grim statistics:

- 46 percent of children start school without the literacy, social, emotional and intellectual capacity they need to succeed (Zill and West 2001)
- 67 percent of fourth-graders cannot read proficiently (NAEP 2007)
- 25 percent of high school students fail to graduate on time (Planty et al 2008)
- 15 percent of young adults are neither working nor attending school (United Way of America 2007)

That's why the entire education continuum — from birth through 21 — must be in our sightline if we are to move the needle on high school graduation.

HOW WE CAN ACHIEVE OUR EDUCATION GOALS

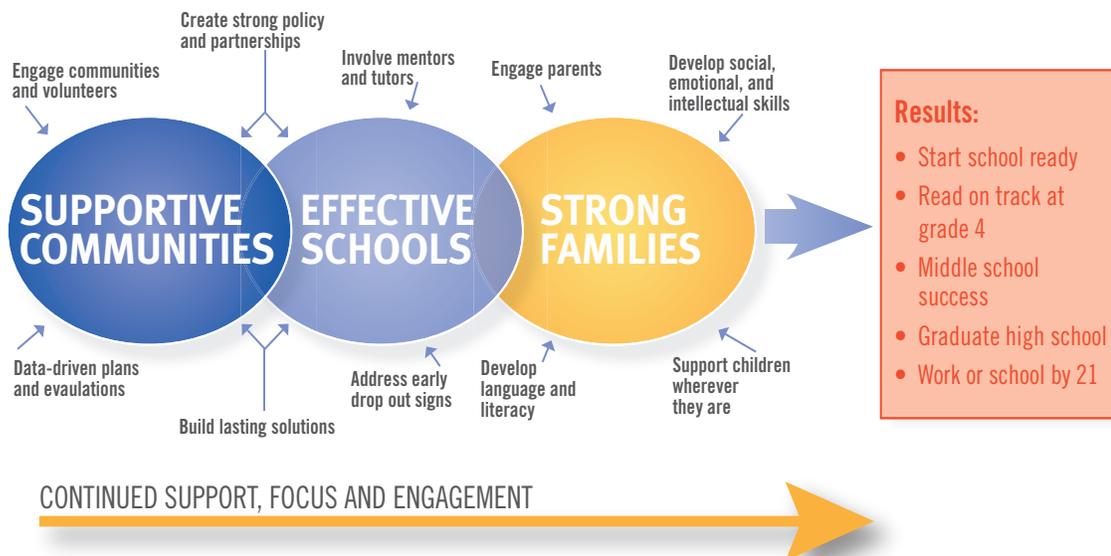
How can we move the needle on education? This theory of change is built on a view that focusing on outcomes and goals should define and lead the work. This means drawing on the strength of existing partnerships, relationships, and good ideas already underway. Sustained investment and action do not happen in a vacuum. Supportive communi-

ties, effective schools, and strong families must be in place, along with strategies rooted in research, such as:

- Honing in on language and literacy skill-building, starting at birth
- Engaging volunteers, including mentors and tutors, especially in the early years
- Pursuing new strategies to bring parents and families in as full partners in improving education opportunities for their children
- Being alert to early warning signs (e.g. chronic absenteeism in early grades), with action plans in place
- Building strong public-private partnerships that help galvanize multiple sectors behind reform
- Focusing community leaders from all sectors around research-based and proven strategies
- Insisting on data-driven plans and evaluation and taking full advantage of new data systems that track individual students from kindergarten through high school and beyond
- Shaping legislative policies, programs and budgets at local, state and national levels.

Visit [United Way's Web site](#) for an overview of United Way's Education Action Plan, ideas for how you can get involved to improve education, and research, and strategies for how to tackle community education challenges.

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POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal and state funding streams have a large effect on our daily lives and partially define the focus of efforts to improve education. It is important that the right legislation be passed to maximize the chances we can deliver on goals for young people today and for healthy, financially stable, and vibrant communities in the future.

The following policy recommendations are our best bets to ensure quality education for children and youth along the continuum of education:

- Policies to provide access to quality learning beginning at birth, including (but not limited to):
 - Expand Early Head Start, Head Start, and Pre-K programs
 - Incentivize and/or establish programs for infant and toddler home visitation
 - Support Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care to ensure quality and consistency
 - Policies to increase parental and community involvement in education, including (but not limited to):
 - Support Community Schools as centers of community activity to better leverage existing community resources and partnerships
 - Provide incentives for the development of coalitions and partnerships among local educational agencies, nonprofits, the business community, and families
 - Implement the community-based, integrated student services model to address both academic and non-academic barriers to learning
 - Policies to increase middle and high school retention and reenrollment, including (but not limited to):
 - Modernize K-12 education to teach twenty-first century skills and content
 - Develop supplemental supports for youth in disadvantaged populations
 - Address disparities in educational quality
 - Increase opportunity for academic re-entry and high school completion
 - Policies to ensure quality and support of out-of-school-time programs:
 - Support 21st Century Learning Centers and Supplemental Educational Services
 - Support quality mentoring programs
 - Increase training for and investment in the after-school workforce
 - Expand the definition of out-of-school-time to recognize the importance of nights, weekends, and summers
 - Policies to maintain and increase investment in early childhood, elementary, and secondary education
 - Policies to adopt a uniform, broad-based accountability framework and necessary longitudinal data systems from birth through post secondary education
- Visit [United Way's Web site](http://capwiz.com/unitedway/issues/bills/) for an overview of United Way's stance on education policies. Then take action by calling your elected officials to express support for the policies mentioned above.
(<http://capwiz.com/unitedway/issues/bills/>)

United Way, a global network of nearly 1,300 local organizations, is dedicated to achieving long-lasting community change by addressing the underlying causes of the most significant local issues. United Way focuses on three key building blocks of a good life: health, education and income. The United Way is grateful to the millions of individuals, corporations and foundations who offer their generous time, talent and support every year.
www.liveunited.org

Measure of America works to stimulate factbased public debate about and political attention to issues that affect people's well-being and access to opportunity. A hallmark of this work is the American Human Development Index, a measure that paints a portrait of Americans today and empowers communities with a tool to track progress in areas we all care about: health, education, and standard of living. The Project is an initiative of the Social Science Research Council and is funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.
www.measureofamerica.org