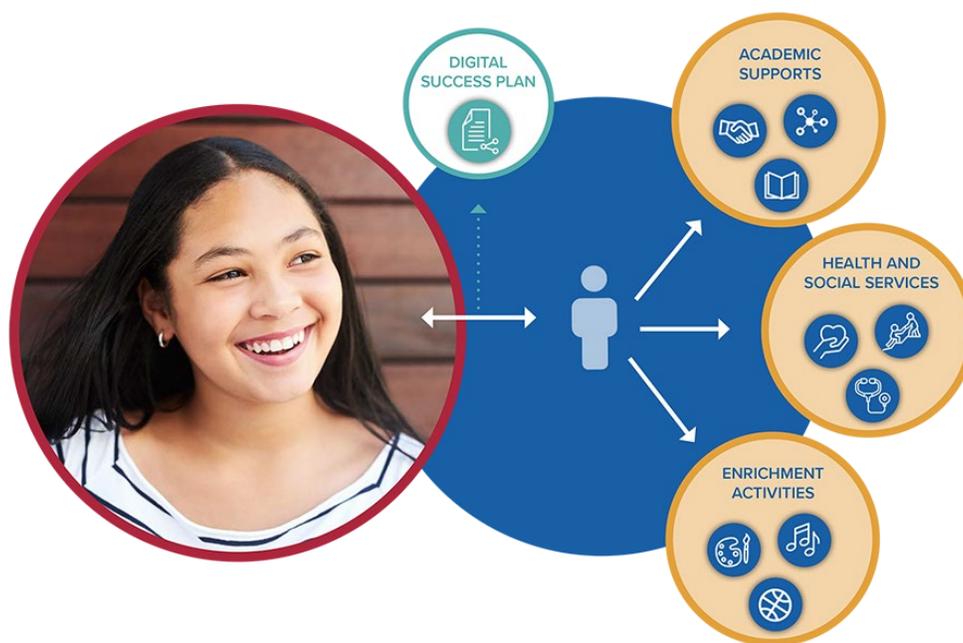


Wise Investments in the Future: Cross-Sector Collaborations and Student Success Plans to Improve Child Well-being and School Success

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Policy Brief

We are at a pivotal moment in the history of our nation. Beginning to recover from a simultaneous set of crises—health, economic, and racial justice—we must seek innovative approaches to build a new and better America. Even before 2020, too many children in the U.S. were living in poverty, failing in school, and not thriving in adulthood. We must utilize all we have learned about the ways to break the iron-law correlation between socio-economic status and educational attainment, and invest in new systems of education and child development—systems that are more personalized, reduce fragmentation, and build cradle-to-career support systems in communities across the U.S.

The American Rescue Plan funding provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to act on these goals and to fundamentally improve the educational prospects for all children. But it will require a new conception of education—one that broadens the design to include increased supports and services, new staffing models, and key partnerships. Twenty years of data are clear—schools alone, as currently constituted, cannot mitigate the impact of poverty on student success.

This is why the [Education Redesign Lab](#) at Harvard Graduate School of Education and [The Aspen Institute’s Education & Society Program \(Aspen Education\)](#) are calling on local education, city, and civic leaders to prioritize the creation and funding of cross-sector collaborations and student Success Plans. Funding from the American Rescue Plan’s Coronavirus Fiscal Recovery Funds to city leaders (\$350 billion) and Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Funds (ESSER III - \$125 billion) to school districts *can be used* to invest in these two strategies. School districts and city governments should take advantage of these resources to partner with and fund strong intermediary or “backbone” organizations that can deliver expanded services for children. This policy brief provides examples of communities that have successfully committed to these strategies. We urge you to make these two infrastructure investments for the future.

CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATIONS

Over 400 communities across the U.S. have established cross-sector collaborations. Many have also created “backbone” organizations with staff who facilitate the development of community goals and a mechanism to coordinate the delivery of personalized services and supports for children and youth.

Networks like [StriveTogether](#), [Promise Neighborhoods](#), [Purpose Built Communities](#), the [Coalition for Community Schools](#), [Communities in Schools](#), [City Connects](#) and our [By All Means](#) and [Local Children Cabinet Network](#), are all working to provide a holistic set of services for children linked to the k-12 education system. These services and supports include early childhood, health, mental health, after-school, summer programs and youth jobs, mentoring, college access, and more.

Cost requirements for cross-sector collaborations include staffing—typically an executive director, facilitators to engage the community and to support issue-based working groups, data analysts, and communications managers. Some collaborations also raise funds to support specific initiatives and advocate for policy changes that support children and families. Investments in these intermediary organizations can have a long-term impact on improving specific child-centered goals.

STUDENT SUCCESS PLANS

The new system of education and child development must support each child’s needs inside and outside of school throughout their school years.

“Meet them where they are and
give them what they need.”

-Paul Reville, Harvard Graduate School of Education Professor &
EdRedesign Director

Success Planning includes a holistic diagnostic of student needs and interests and an aligned action plan with tools and strategies to meet children’s academic and non-academic needs. A caring adult—a “Navigator”—works with a student, their family, teachers, and others to guide the student to the opportunities and supports necessary for success. Ideally, Success Planning involves families, students, and an assigned adult staff person/Navigator working together to coordinate the implementation of the Success Plan.

Where are Success Plans being implemented?

Louisville, Kentucky: Partnered with Unite Us and the United Way to launch a [coordinated care network](#) of health and social service providers for implementation in Jefferson County Public Schools.

Oakland, California: Expanded on its community schools structure and staffing model by partnering with Salesforce to build a [Student Success Hub](#) to ensure services and supports are delivered to students who need them.

Salem, Massachusetts: Partnered with [City Connects](#) to retrain guidance counselors and implement Success Plans for all children in their K-8 schools

Nashville, Tennessee: When the pandemic closed schools, the district designed an approach to Success Planning that involved school staff from across departments being assigned a set of students and families to support. Weekly one-on-one check-ins on social-emotional supports, academics, and other needs were held. Data on [needed services](#) were collected centrally by the district. Read the [article](#) about Nashville in *The 74*.

Cost considerations for Success Planning include staffing, training, technology, and a data platform. In some cases, existing staff have been retrained to take on Navigator roles. In other cases, new staff have been hired, many with social work, counseling, or youth development backgrounds. AmeriCorp has recently created a Student Success Corp to provide just this type of support.

EdRedesign and Aspen Education believe that communities need to work together, across sectors, to create coordinated systems of support and opportunity for children starting in early childhood and throughout the k-12 years, and that these supports and opportunities need to be personalized to meet the needs of each child. Both elements are essential if we are to change the trajectories of the lives of children growing up in poverty. Redesigning systems through Children’s Cabinets or other coordinating bodies doesn’t necessarily lead to creating mechanisms to understand and support individual children. Conversely, creating a Success Planning structure to understand children’s individual needs, without a coordinated system of supports to back it up, limits the effectiveness of that strategy. We urge your community to utilize your new federal funding to ensure your students are receiving personalized and comprehensive supports so they can thrive.