



# Striving Together: Early Lessons in Achieving Collective Impact in Education

*Jeff Edmondson, Nancy L. Zimpher*

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*Chronicles the development of a framework for collective impact in education through the perspectives of its founders and lessons learned from pioneering sites.*

In 2006, Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky had been suffering from many of the same challenges facing metro regions across the country. Despite significant investments in education from the public and private sectors, outcomes were alarming: Kindergarten readiness was below fifty percent, and nearly half of the students in the Cincinnati Public Schools were dropping out before high school graduation. Fortunately, a diverse group of community leaders across sectors was exploring a transformative approach to improving education *as a system*. This gathering of leaders was the genesis of the StrivePartnership, which served as the inspiration for the theory of collective impact. Together, these partners are building a cradle-to-career civic infrastructure based on the idea that everyone in a community has a stake in the success of every child.

This book chronicles the early stages of this ongoing journey from the perspective of the founding chair and director of this work, drawing upon lessons from Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky and four other pioneering local partnerships. The experiences captured in these five regions helped lay the foundation for the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, a national community of practice on the cutting edge of social change.

“I have always held that education is the responsibility of the *entire* community—not *just* the schools. StriveTogether’s experience shows that it is possible to drive the systemic change we need. I recommend this book to all who are looking for a community-wide roadmap to a better future for our children.” — Richard W. Riley, former US Secretary of Education

“No one sector can tackle society’s challenges alone. *Striving Together*’s practical guide offers excellent tools for leaders in all sectors to use in creating collaborative solutions to improve education and outcomes for children. It’s inspiring to see communities coming together to create opportunities for all children with a cradle-to-career approach.” — Stacey D. Stewart, US President, United Way Worldwide

“History provides many examples of efforts to help whole communities to thrive. Collective impact is the latest and most promising idea for how to get it done, and StriveTogether is the leading example on the ground. This book is a welcome contribution, representing the state of the art!” — Ronald F. Ferguson, Faculty Co-Chair and Director, the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University; Faculty Co-Director, Pathways to Prosperity at the Harvard Graduate School of Education

Jeff Edmondson is Managing Director of KnowledgeWorks subsidiary StriveTogether and was the founding Director of the StrivePartnership.

Nancy L. Zimpher is Chancellor of the State University of New York and Chair of the StriveTogether National Advisory Board.

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