

# **TOGETHER FOR STUDENTS**

Learning Project: Round Two Findings

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# CONTENTS

Together for Students (TFS)	2
The Learning Project	2
Project Goals and Process	2
Research Questions	3
Who are the TFS partners?	3
Methods and Analysis	3
Sample Size and Representativeness	4
Generalizability and Limitations	5
Survey Participant Demographics	5
Summary of Round One Findings	7
Round Two Learnings from Together for Students	8
Overview of Round Two Findings	8
The Five Core Principles	8
Students at the Center	. 11
Successes	. 12
Early Impacts	. 12
Conditions for Success	. 13
Challenges and Solutions	. 14
Staff Turnover	. 14
COVID-19 Pandemic	. 15
Appendix	. 17
TABLE 1: Questions and Response Options Related to Demographics and TFS Involvement	. 17
FIGURE 2: Demographics of Survey Participants at Each Site by Race	. 18
TABLE 2: Survey Statements for Each TFS Core Principle	. 19
TABLE 3: Chicago – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Partners	. 20
TABLE 4: Chicago – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Community Partners	. 21
TABLE 5: Dayton – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Partners	. 22
TABLE 6: Dayton – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Community Partners	. 23
TABLE 7: Lehigh Valley – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Partners	. 24
TABLE 8: Lehigh Valley – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Community Partners	. 25
TABLE 9: Memphis – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Partners	. 26
TABLE 10: Memphis – Core Principles and Students at the Center for Community Partners	. 27

# **TOGETHER FOR STUDENTS**

For the first time in decades, more than 50% of our nation's public school students live in poverty. The challenges children face are too broad for public schools and other agencies and organizations to manage alone. In 2016, three national organizations, the Coalition for Community Schools at the Institute for Educational Leadership, Communities In Schools, and StriveTogether, came together to leverage the networks they represent — in some 250 communities — and the wealth of knowledge that has been generated by their innovative work to expedite the progress of communities to develop a more intentional system focused on meeting the unique needs of every child. Through the support of the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI), these three aligned national partners launched the Together for Students (TFS) initiative, a multiyear grant to support four communities in transforming how they work together to meet the needs of every student. The four TFS implementation sites are Thrive Chicago in Chicago, Ill.; Learn to Earn Dayton in Dayton, Ohio; Lehigh Valley Reads in Lehigh Valley, Pa.; and Communities In Schools of Memphis in Memphis, Tenn.

# **THE LEARNING PROJECT**

#### **Project Goals and Process**

The purpose of the Together for Students Learning Project is to develop an understanding of the emerging lessons from the TFS initiative in service to the goal of improving population outcomes for students. A learning consultant was tasked with capturing critical insights, challenges and potential opportunities to accelerate progress and improve practice in the four local implementation sites and the broader field.

The learning consultant gathered and examined evidence of early successes, challenges and alignment to the five core principles of TFS — trusting relationships, purposeful engagement, cross-sector partnerships, actionable data and shared accountability. The learning project was not intended to be a program evaluation nor to measure site-specific population impacts, as it is too early in the grant to expect widespread system-level or population-level changes. The first year of implementation was March 2019 – February 2020, the second year of implementation was March 2020 – February 2021, and the third year of implementation will be March 2021 – January 2022.

The learning project was conducted in iterative phases.<sup>1</sup> In the first phase, the learning consultant examined the perspectives of the TFS leadership through document analysis and interviews with leaders at the three aligned national partner organizations and the four local implementation sites. Learnings from the first phase were captured in the technical report for round one and a brief, <u>"Together for Students: Five Key Lessons from Our Collective Impact Initiative."</u> The second phase of the learning project expanded the scope of investigation by integrating the perspectives of TFS partners and participants at each of the TFS sites. This report builds on learnings from the first phase and describes learnings gleaned from TFS by a broad group of community partners.

The learning project utilized an exploratory, sequential, mixed-methods research design with both qualitative and quantitative data. As this description suggests, the process unfolds in sequential phases of qualitative and quantitative exploration. The TFS Learning Project began with qualitative

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The full plan for the learning project is described in detail in the <u>round one technical report</u>.

survey research conducted through the round one interviews and document analysis, and progressed to additional interviews and a formal online survey in round two.

#### **Research Questions**

During the first round of the learning project, the collaboration with the national partners, the learning consultant worked with the partners to identify the primary areas of focus:

- The TFS five core principles
- · The greatest successes and challenges of the TFS work to date
- · Other important learnings identified by the TFS participants

The learning consultant developed specific research questions to explore each theme. Major themes from round one (summarized on page 7) informed round two of the learning project.

The second round of the learning project built on the findings from the first round and collected feedback from an expanded group of stakeholders, including not only TFS site leaders but additional local partners, such as core site partners and community partners (see sidebar "Who are the TFS partners?").

In addition to the research areas from round one, round two asked these questions:

- 1. Were there major differences between the national and local perspectives on the TFS work?
- To what extent have the core site partners and the community partners adopted the five core TFS principles?
- 3. Are there any major differences between the various TFS stakeholders or among the local sites?

This project intentionally did not try to measure population-level or long-term outcomes for students and families because it would be unreasonable to expect large-scale changes after only one full year of implementation.

#### Methods and Analysis

All interviews and focus groups during both rounds were facilitated by the learning consultant using a semi-structured interview protocol. Conversations were recorded, professionally transcribed, and then analyzed using an emergent design method and formal qualitative coding processes.

The TFS survey explored the same constructs and used consistent questions across sites. However, the

#### Who are the TFS partners?

The **national partners** are the three national organizations — the Coalition for Community Schools, Communities In Schools and StriveTogether — who started the Together for Students initiative.

Local site partners are people and organizations involved with TFS at one of the implementation sites as site leaders, core site partners or community partners.

**TFS site leaders** are the individuals and organizations responsible for grant deliverables. They are the partners most closely involved with the TFS project at one of the four implementation sites.

**TFS core site partners** are individuals and organizations who support the TFS initiative at one of the four implementation sites but are not the primary conveners of the work. Stakeholders in this group indicated that they were not site leaders but were involved with TFS as part of their job.

TFS community partners are individuals who have more limited involvement with TFS but are nevertheless key stakeholders in aligning and streamlining supports for students. These partners, including educators, volunteers, parents and students, indicated that their involvement with TFS was not part of their regular job. language for each individual site survey was adapted to ensure the questions were understandable and relevant to the particular TFS community. Site-specific language was drafted by the learning consultant and vetted by the TFS site leaders to ensure it was relevant and accurate. For example, the TFS project in Lehigh Valley is not commonly known as Together for Students. Instead, it is called Lehigh Valley Reads. So the survey for Lehigh Valley TFS partners referred to the project only as Lehigh Valley Reads. The surveys for each individual TFS site used language that would resonate in that community. Additionally, the survey language changed depending on whether the respondent was a core site partner or a community partner.

#### Sample Size and Representativeness

In total, 141 people participated in the learning project. In both rounds, the learning consultant worked to ensure that participants were representative across sites and stakeholder groups. For the interviews and focus groups, participation was evenly distributed across partnership levels and implementation sites (see Table 1 below). In aggregate, there were significantly more participants from the local sites (N = 28) than from the national partner organizations (N = 9). The greater emphasis on the local sites was expected and intentional because there are significantly more local partners and leaders than national partners.

TABLE 1: Number of Interview and Focus Group Participants in Each Round by TFS Partnership
Level

Stakeholder Group	R1 Participants	R2 Participants	Total Participants
National TFS Leaders	9	0	9
Local Site Leaders	6	1	7
Core Site Partners	0	21	21
Total Participants	15	22	37

Participation in the survey was not evenly distributed across sites (see Table 2 below). Nearly 40% of the total responses represented participants from Lehigh Valley (38.5%, N = 40) and only 10.6% (N = 11) represented participants from Memphis. This disproportionate representation in the surveys was not anticipated. To address the uneven survey participation, all survey data calculations accounted for the disparate participation.

Local TFS Site	R1 Participants	R2 Participants	Survey Participants	Total Participants
Chicago	1	6	27	34
Dayton	2	5	26	33
Lehigh Valley	2	6	40	48
Memphis	1	5	11	17
Total Participants	6	22	104	132

#### **TABLE 2: Number of Site Participants in Each Round**

#### Generalizability and Limitations

Because the interview and survey participants self-selected (rather than participating through random selection), the sample cannot be assumed to be representative of the larger population of TFS participants, nor of the broader TFS communities. However, there was sufficient participation in most sites to have a general understanding of the major trends within the TFS partners. Memphis is an exception because the sample size was fairly low (N = 9) and the round two survey respondents were all site leaders or core site partners, with no community partners represented. Therefore, caution is recommended in generalizing these findings to broad stakeholder groups, especially in Memphis.

#### Survey Participant Demographics

The TFS survey participants were asked standard demographic questions about their gender, race and ethnicity, and highest level of education. In addition, they were asked about the length of their involvement with the TFS project, their stakeholder group and the frequency of their interactions with other partners. All survey questions related to demographics and TFS involvement, and their respective response options, are listed in Table A1 in the appendix.

Most respondents answered every question. Less than 5% preferred not to identify their gender and just under 10% (9.6%) preferred not to identify their race. Figures 3 through 5 show the overall demographic characteristics of all survey participants, and Figure 6 shows connection to TFS by stakeholder group. Some demographic data is also disaggregated by TFS site in the appendix.

# FIGURE 1: Demographic Characteristics — Respondent Gender

Aggregate percentages from all TFS sites



### FIGURE 2: Demographic Characteristics — Latinx, Hispanic, or Spanish Origin

Aggregate percentages from all TFS sites



#### FIGURE 3: Demographics — Race and Ethnicity

Aggregate percentages from all TFS sites



# **All Participants**

#### FIGURE 4: Connection to TFS — Stakeholder Group

Aggregate percentages from all TFS sites



# SUMMARY OF ROUND ONE FINDINGS<sup>2</sup>

The five core principles are an integral part of TFS among the national partners and the site leaders.

All partners see **trusting relationships** as the key to success in collective impact work. Trusting relationships are built through time, shared purpose and consistent contact. Difficult organizational histories and competition for resources were the most frequent causes of reluctance to participate in the TFS work. TFS leaders have adopted various strategies to manage and improve difficult relationships.

TFS site leaders see **purposeful engagement** as a critical component to the success of any effort to put students at the center. During the planning phase, TFS created new opportunities for implementation sites to engage with students and families.

Building **cross-sector partnerships** across broad stakeholder groups was a central component of TFS planning and year one implementation at the local implementation sites. At the time of the report, TFS site leaders were addressing the challenge of how to continue to meaningfully engage their cross-sector partners in year two of implementation.

Local TFS sites are fully embracing **actionable data** in a variety of detailed and creative practices. The national partners value the principle of actionable data but have not fully explored or agreed on how to incorporate it in their TFS work.

**Shared accountability** is seen by TFS participants as either a compliance-focused effort or a responsibility of serving students and families.

TFS has helped improve relationships among local site partners.

TFS has been especially effective at accelerating the progress that was underway at local partnerships and initiatives before the start of the grant. The grant has incentivized broad participation in the work and given local TFS leaders leverage to bring other stakeholders to the table. Implementation site leaders have started to identify gaps and overlaps in services for students and families. They are working to minimize duplicative efforts and ensure that all students receive the supports they need.

Collective impact efforts are difficult and have been slowed by staff turnover and the COVID crisis.

As a rule, collective impact work is difficult and complicated. Managing a large group of diverse stakeholders takes a significant amount of time in addition to doing the work of changing systems and supporting students and families.

Changes in staff are an inevitable part of any project, and they present both challenges and opportunities for moving the work forward. TFS participants have developed some ways to minimize the negative consequences of staff turnover, but turnover remains a challenge for the project.

In some TFS sites, the COVID crisis has deepened stakeholder commitment to collective work. Despite the pandemic, site leaders are developing unique and creative ways to continue supporting students now and into the future. TFS site leaders will have to determine ways to build and sustain trusting relationships, likely without in-person contact.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Detailed findings are described in the <u>technical report from round one of the learning project</u>.

# **ROUND TWO LEARNINGS FROM TOGETHER FOR STUDENTS**

#### **Overview of Round Two Findings**

With few exceptions, the findings from round one of the learning project were reinforced in round two. Most partners, regardless of level, stakeholder group, or local site, had similar beliefs about and experiences with the TFS project. The learnings were consistent across the quantitative data from the online survey and the qualitative data gathered through interviews and focus groups.

The consistency across TFS stakeholders is not surprising given that the local site leaders and many core site partners are closely linked with the national partners, often as affiliates, and have similar frameworks for approaching collective impact work.

#### The Five Core Principles

The five TFS core principles were very important to national partners and site leaders who participated in the first round of the learning project. To determine whether the core principles were also important to TFS core partners and community partners, the second round asked interview and survey participants about their agreement with statements related to each principle (see Table A2 in the appendix for every statement).

TFS partners at every level reported that they strongly integrate the five core principles into their approach to collective impact. The national partners identified and outlined the principles, but to some degree, the TFS site leaders, core site partners and community partners have integrated the five core principles into their work to an even greater degree than the national TFS organizations.

The vast majority of local stakeholders agreed that the five TFS core principles are part of their work (see Table 3 below). Shared accountability and trusting relationships had the highest percentage of agreement among survey participants (90.8% and 81.5%, respectively).

Principle	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
			0.001	81	.5%	
Trusting Relationships	1.3%	2.7%	9.8%	40.1%	41.4%	4.8%
	nt 0.6% 6.1% 17.3%	C 40/	47.20/	63	.9%	42.20/
Purposeful Engagement		12.1% 17.3% 17.3% 44.79	44.7%	19.2%	12.2%	
Cross-Sector	0.0%	C 40/	14.00/	59	.8%	20.2%
Partnerships	0.0%	6.1%	14.0%	40.5%	19.3%	20.2%
Actionable Data	0.0%	0.0% 2.4%	16 59/	76	.0%	5.2%
Actionable Data	0.070 2.470 10.570		16.5%	52.7%	23.2%	5.2%
Sharod Accountability	0.0%	2 20/	1 10/	90	.8%	2.6%
	red Accountability 0.0% 2.3% 4.4%		49.9%	40.9%	2.0%	

#### TABLE 3: Presence of the Five TFS Core Principles in the Local Sites

Weighted averages of responses from each TFS local site

Whereas the national partners did not indicate that they focused significantly on pursuing purposeful engagement, cross-sector partnerships, or actionable data, all local stakeholders (site leads, core site partners, and community partners) highlighted the presence of these three principles in their work.

Like the national partners, the local stakeholders see trusting relationships as the key to success in collective impact work.

Many participants expressed a belief that trusting relationships are the most important component in laying a strong foundation for collective impact work. Further, more than 80% agreed or strongly agreed that two of the three different facets of trusting relationships were present in their work (see Table 4 below). The following quotations highlight the importance of trusting relationships to the local partners:<sup>3</sup>

"I think forging relationships is really important.... I don't think you can really collaborate without that — not well, anyway."

Community partner, TFS Chicago

"We came to the table around relationships. Trust existed, and we came to the table with folks having a belief that other people had integrity. So we had an opportunity to focus on the work." — Core site partner, TFS Lehigh Valley

Participants in the first round of the learning project identified several approaches to building trusting relationships: deep commitment to a shared goal or value, making time for consistent communication and meetings, and the ability to have "difficult conversations" with partners. Round two participants were asked whether these different ways to build trust were part of their partnerships. Responses indicated that stakeholders overwhelmingly thought they were (Table 4 below).

The most strongly supported statement about trusting relationships was that everyone in the project was working in the best interest of students, with 97% of the survey respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. The least supported statement measured whether participants felt they could have "difficult conversations" with other TFS partners. Less than a third (28.8%) strongly agreed, 42.4% agreed, and 3.0% strongly disagreed.

TABLE 4: Dimensions of Trusting Relationships Present in TFS
--

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	25.8%	71.2%	0.0%
I can have difficult conversations with partners in the project.	3.0%	6.1%	13.6%	42.4%	28.8%	6.1%

Weighted averages of responses from each TFS site

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Direct quotations from interview and focus group participants are included in this report to add context and clarity to findings. They have been lightly edited to remove filler words, improve clarity and ensure participant anonymity. When necessary, clarifying words have been added in brackets.

I have regular communication —						
emails, calls, meetings, etc. —	0.0%	6.1%	16.7%	54.5%	21.2%	1.5%
with partners.						

#### **Challenging Areas**

The local leaders and partners are working to create strong cross-sector partnerships but occasionally lack the input of specific stakeholder groups.

Intentionally integrating the number and types of groups involved was seen as important. The majority of respondents (57.6%) agreed that "a variety of sectors are represented in the project" and 43.0% identified "groups joining the work" as an improvement owing to the TFS work in their community.

Challenges to building cross-sector partnerships were largely about whether the local partners felt that any important stakeholders were missing from the TFS work. Having "the right people" at the table did not emerge as a dominant theme but was raised in a few interviews. As one interviewee from Chicago shared,

"One audience that I wish we had more opportunities to have touch points with would be school principals and leadership. Getting them in a room together is like herding cats. It just rarely happens. But it's so important that the language that we're asking educators to use with children be used by their leadership with the educators, and [we need] more opportunities for them to hear good things about what we're seeing happening in their classrooms." — Core site partner, TFS Chicago

Other participants made similar points — that they felt a certain stakeholder group should have a greater presence within TFS but had difficulty bringing the group into the work, usually because of scheduling or logistical challenges.

Like cross-sector partnerships, the core principle of purposeful engagement was mentioned significantly more by local partners than by the national partners during the learning project.

Although TFS site leaders had identified new opportunities to engage with students and families during the planning phase of the TFS work, the core site partners and community partners cited challenges with meaningfully integrating parents and students throughout the project to date.

Less than half of the core site partners agreed that parents were involved with TFS at their site (see Table 5 below). Additionally, when asked which things had improved due to the TFS initiative, "the amount of input from parents" and "the amount of input from students" had the lowest percentages (20.3% and 25.1%, respectively).

Interestingly, TFS core site partners and community partners saw parent involvement differently. While less than half (45.5%) of core site partners agreed that parents were involved, nearly two-thirds (71.1%) of community partners did so. It is not clear why the two groups felt so differently about this specific issue. Learning about this difference may be valuable over the next year of implementation.

#### TABLE 5: Perspectives on Student, Parent and Community Involvement in TFS Sites

Statement	Core Site Partner	Community Partner	Difference
Students are involved.	65.2%	73.7%	8.5%
Parents are involved.	45.5%	71.1%	25.6%
Community members are involved.	75.8%	78.9%	3.1%

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree

#### Students at the Center

At its core, the purpose of the TFS initiative is to create stronger, more effective community partnerships that put students at the center of their learning experience and in which all their unique needs are met by a network of supportive partners. To gauge the degree to which TFS partners feel that they are starting to meet this ambitious goal, the round two survey asked the degree to which respondents agreed with the following statements (using the same language for both core site partners and community partners):

- This project is working to create a system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.
- This project supports the needs of the whole student health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.

With the exception of the perception of parent involvement noted above, the core site partners and the community partners had similar responses and levels of agreement in all other research areas. Where there were slight variances, the community partners held more positive views about the work than the core site partners most of the time. However, for the theme of students at the center, the trends were the opposite, with the core site partners, involved with TFS as part of their job, having a higher level of agreement than the community partners.

Nearly all of the core site partners at the TFS sites (93.3%) agreed that the project is working to ensure every student and family has what they need to thrive (see Table 6). While more than threequarters of community partners agreed with that statement, there was a 12-point difference between the two groups of stakeholders. Given that the other findings showed such strong similarities in the responses from different stakeholder groups, this may be a worthwhile topic of investigation during the remainder of the project.

#### **TABLE 6: Perspectives on Students at the Center in TFS Sites**

Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree

Statement	Core Site Partners	Community Partners	Difference
This project is working to create an education system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	93.9%	81.6%	12.3%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	86.4%	73.7%	12.7%

#### Successes

The goal of the TFS initiative is to improve population-level outcomes for underserved students. This ambitious objective will not be achieved quickly but, rather, will take long-term dedication and sustained collective effort. Given that the learning project examined the work during the first year of implementation, it would not be reasonable to expect changes in population-level outcomes at this point. Instead of looking for systemic changes or improvements in student achievement, the learning project investigated early TFS wins based on the core principles and uncovered whether participants felt they were seeing the conditions for long-term success that they identified in round one.

#### **Early Impacts**

Consistent with the round one findings about the five TFS core principles, respondents indicated that early improvements had taken place in relationships between partners (65.6%), increased focus on meeting the needs of all students (58.3%), using data to guide project decisions (47.9%), sharing responsibility for the success of all students across partners (45.0%), and groups joining the TFS work (43.0%) (see Table 7 below). Predictably, the greatest number of participants felt that relationships between partners had improved because of the TFS initiative at their site. One core site partner described it this way:

"Everyone talks about wanting to partner, and everyone talks about doing work for families and for students. Yet we were rather splintered and separate before we received this grant. And with this grant, we were able to refocus and reorganize and restructure the work that we had been doing together."

- Core site partner, TFS Dayton



#### TABLE 7: Improvements due to TFS in the First Year of Implementation

Percentage of respondents who indicated that the issue had improved

Also consistent with the findings about the core principles of purposeful engagement, the categories with the least improvement from TFS were the amount of input from parents (20.3%), students (25.1%), and diverse stakeholder groups (25.9%). These unique data points reinforce the key takeaway that TFS core site partners have seen improvements among their organizational partners but would like to see greater inclusion of students, parents and diverse community members in the work.

#### **Conditions for Success**

Participants in the first round of the learning project identified several activities and beliefs that they felt contributed to the early success of collective impact efforts. Participants in the second round were asked to what degree they saw these conditions for success in their TFS work (see Table 8 below). Overwhelmingly, core site partners shared the belief that organizations can do more by working together than by working alone (100.0%) and that all TFS partners have the best interest of students at the heart of their work (97.5%).

Additionally, partners agreed that they have shared goals for student outcomes (91.0%), recognize and respect each other's strengths (95.5%), and compromise when necessary (83.4%). These findings were consistent across TFS implementation sites and indicate that the sites have widely created the conditions they identified earlier for long-term success in their collective impact efforts.

#### **TABLE 8: Presence of Conditions for Success in Collective Impact Efforts**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Organizations can have a bigger impact working together than they could alone.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.7%	77.3%	0.0%
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	25.8%	71.2%	0.0%
Partners have shared goals for student outcomes.	0.0%	1.5%	6.1%	45.5%	45.5%	1.5%
Partners recognize and respect one another's strengths.	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	48.5%	47.0%	1.5%
Partners compromise when necessary.	0.0%	0.0%	6.1%	57.6%	25.8%	10.6%

Weighted averages of responses from core site partners at each TFS site

#### Challenges and Solutions<sup>4</sup>

National partners and site leaders experienced the complexity and difficulty of collective impact work, but core site partners and community partners did not feel the same challenges. Instead, the greatest challenges at the local level were primarily due to staff turnover and the impacts of the COVID crisis.

In round one of the learning project, TFS leaders identified and acknowledged that collective impact initiatives are typically complex and difficult. While some of the local TFS partners also indicated that collective efforts are challenging, they did not do so to the same extent that the national partners and site leaders did. Less than 10% of the local TFS partners said project challenges included difficult relationships with partners (7.3%) or disagreements about the purpose of the work (5.6%). The most frequently cited challenges at the local level were staff changes (36.1%) and the effects and uncertainty of the COVID crisis (64.0%).

#### **Staff Turnover**

Every TFS site has experienced changes in staff. The national partners also identified staff turnover as a concern in the project. Although a little more than a third of round two participants indicated that staff turnover had been a challenge, many shared that this did not refer to turnover within the TFS leadership or the core site partners. Instead, staff changes that delayed the work were frequently within the broader partner organizations. Although every TFS site experienced some turnover, it was especially pronounced in Chicago and Memphis, where more than half of individual local partners have been involved with the project for less than a year (see Figure 5).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This section summarizes unique challenges that did not clearly fall under another research theme. Topic-specific challenges, for example difficulties with the five core principles, are discussed under their respective themes.

#### FIGURE 5: Length of Stakeholder Connection to TFS at Each Site

Responses from TFS core site partners (involved with TFS through their job)



#### **COVID-19** Pandemic<sup>5</sup>

Plans for the site-specific TFS projects were created before the COVID pandemic spread across the globe. As with all other aspects of life, COVID impacted all the TFS sites and altered their focus for a large portion of the first year of implementation.

All TFS sites experienced disruptions and challenges in their work due to the COVID crisis.

The core site partners experienced more significant COVID impacts than the community partners. However, most community partners also indicated that their involvement in TFS had been impacted by COVID.

COVID created changes to the substance and process of the TFS projects. Site leaders and core site partners indicated they had to shift their community goals and focus to meet the immediate, emergency needs of students. When asked about challenges in the TFS project, one core site partner in Chicago shared,

"We obviously had the coronavirus that we're still dealing with right now, and it's just changed the landscape completely."

Core site partner, Chicago

As another indication of how much COVID has impacted the TFS projects in each site, participants were asked about how frequently they interacted with TFS pre- and post-COVID (see Figure 6). In every site, the frequency of TFS interactions decreased after the COVID crisis began. For example, in Dayton, the percentage of partners interacting with TFS "a few times per week" decreased by more

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> These learnings were collected during the summer and fall of 2020. Given the unpredictable nature of the COVID crisis, the ultimate findings related to COVID may be different from those captured here.

than 30%, and in Memphis the partners who interacted with TFS only "once a month or less" increased by nearly 20% after the start of COVID.



FIGURE 6: Frequency of Partner Interactions with TFS Pre- and Post-COVID

Responses from TFS core site partners (involved with TFS through their job)

While the challenges due to COVID have been significant, COVID has resulted in unexpected benefits including deepened stakeholder commitment to TFS and recognition of the need to put students at the center.

The pandemic, while devastatingly tragic, presented a unique opportunity for TFS sites to make the case for collective impact. One core site partner in Memphis shared this experience:

"The district as a whole, in addition to community partners, business, nonprofits, etc., sees the need for a more holistic approach to education. And so that's been helpful. In a lot of ways, the purpose of this project was to create this prototype for what community schooling looks like. And [to show] this is what education can look like when we have everyone invested in supporting kids and families and neighborhoods to make sure that needs are met so there aren't barriers to academics. So the beauty of it is that that shift has definitely happened within the district as a whole."

- Core site partner, TFS Memphis

Local TFS partners have been significantly impacted by the COVID crisis, but it has had some unintended benefits in demonstrating the importance of collective impact efforts and increasing support for the TFS initiative.

# **APPENDIX**

Survey Question	Response Options
Demographics	
What is your gender?	Male Female Nonbinary Prefer to self-describe Prefer not to answer
Are you of Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin?	No, not of Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin Yes, of Hispanic, Latinx or Spanish origin Prefer not to answer
What is your race? (Check one or more)	American Indian / Alaska Native Asian Black / African American Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander White Prefer to self-describe Prefer not to answer
What is your highest level of education?	Some high school High school diploma or equivalent Trade/technical school Some college Associate degree Bachelor's degree Advanced degree (master's, Ph.D., M.D.) Prefer not to answer
Connection to Together for Students	
How are you connected to this project?	As part of my job As an educator As a parent As a student As a volunteer As a community member Other (Please describe)
How long have you been connected to this project?	6 months or less 6 months – 1 year 1 – 2 years 2 years or more Not applicable

#### TABLE A1: Questions and Response Options Related to Demographics and TFS Involvement



#### FIGURE A1: Demographics of Survey Participants at Each Site by Race

Dayton Survey Participants
Prefer to self-describe, 4%
Black / African-American, 7%

Nhite, 81% Asian, 0% American Indian / Alaska Native, 0% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0%

Lehigh Valley Survey Participants



**Memphis Survey Participants** 



Statements for Site Leaders and Core Site Partners	Statements for Community Partners
Trusting Relationships	
I have trusting relationships with partner organizations.	I trust the organizations running this project
I have regular communication — emails, calls, meetings, etc. — with partners.	I get regular updates and information about the project.
I can have difficult conversations with partners in the project.	
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	
Purposeful Engagement	·
Community members are involved.	Community members are included.
Our community's diversity is represented.	Our community's diversity is represented.
Parents are involved.	Parents are included.
Students are involved.	Students are included.
Cross-Sector Partnerships	
A variety of sectors are represented in the project, for example health, housing, education, wellness or employment.	Different groups are included, for example health, housing, education, wellness and employment.
Actionable Data	·
Data helps us measure progress.	This project uses data to measure progress.
Data helps us set project goals and objectives.	This project uses data to set goals.
Shared Accountability	·
The partner organizations in this project share responsibility for the success of all students.	The organizations share responsibility for the success of all students.

# TABLE A2: Survey Statements about Each TFS Core Principle

# TABLE A3: Chicago — Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Site Partners

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Shudanta at the Contan	0.0%		7.0%	84.3%		7.00/
Students at the Center	0.0%	0.0%	7.9%	50.0%	34.3%	7.9%
This project is working to create a system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	42.1%	47.4%	5.3%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	0.0%	10.5%	57.9%	21.1%	10.5%
Trusting Relationships	1.3%	2.6%	9.3%	39.5%	.9% 47.4%	6.6%
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	21.1%	73.7%	0.0%
I can have difficult conversations with partners in the project.	5.3%	0.0%	5.3%	57.9%	21.1%	10.5%
I have regular communication — emails, calls, meetings, etc. — with partners.	0.0%	10.5%	21.1%	42.1%	21.1%	5.3%
I have trusting relationships with partner organizations.	0.0%	0.0%	5.3%	42.1%	42.1%	10.5%
				64	.9%	
Purposeful Engagement	0.0%	6.6%	17.1%	38.2%	23.7%	14.5%
Community members are involved.	0.0%	5.3%	15.8%	52.6%	21.1%	5.39
Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	0.0%	26.3%	36.8%	36.8%	0.09
Parents are involved.	0.0%	15.8%	21.1%	21.1%	5.3%	36.89
Students are involved.	0.0%	5.3%	5.3%	42.1%	31.6%	15.89
				47	.4%	
Cross Sector Partnerships	0.0%	5.3%	10.5%	26.3%	.4%	36.8%
A variety of sectors are represented in the project, for example health, housing, education, wellness or employment.	0.0%	5.3%	10.5%	26.3%	21.1%	36.8%
Actionable Data	0.0%	0.0%	18.5%	76	.3%	5.3%
				42.1%	34.2%	
Data helps us measure progress.	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%	42.1%	36.8%	5.3%
Data helps us set project goals and objectives.	0.0%	0.0%	21.1%	42.1%	31.6%	5.3%
Shared Accountability	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	89	.5%	10 50
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	26.3%	63.2%	10.5%
The partner organizations in this project share responsibility for the success of all students.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	26.3%	63.2%	10.5%

TABLE A4: Chicago — Core Principles and Students at the Cer	nter for Community Partners
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Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agroo	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
	Disagree	Disagree	Neutrai	Agree 87	Not Sure	
Students at the Center	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	31.3%	56.3%	0.0%
This project is working to create an education system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	0.0%
		•		87	.5%	
Trusting Relationships	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	43.8%	43.8%	0.0%
I get regular updates and information about the project.	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%
I trust the organizations running this project.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	37.5%	62.5%	0.0%
P	2.4%	40/ 0.40/	2.49/	83.3%		40.50
Purposeful Engagement	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%	37.5%	45.8%	12.5%
Community members are included.	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	62.5%	0.0%
Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%
Parents are included.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%
Students are included.	0.0%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%
Constant Partnerskins	0.0%	40.5%	40.50/	75.0%		0.00
Cross-Sector Partnerships	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%
Different groups are included, for example: health, housing, education, wellness, and employment.	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	50.0%	25.0%	0.0%
			0/	62	.5%	
Actionable Data	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%
This project uses data to measure progress.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%
This project uses data to set goals.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%
Shared Accountability	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	75 25.0%	.0% 50.0%	12.5%
The organizations share responsibility for the success of all students.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%

# TABLE A5: Dayton — Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Site Partners

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Students at the Center	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%		.0%	0.0%
				47.5%	42.5%	
This project is working to create a system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	50.0%	40.0%	0.0%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	45.0%	45.0%	0.0%
					-0/	
Trusting Relationships	1.3%	6.3%	17.5%	35.0%	.5% 42.5%	1.3%
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	35.0%	65.0%	0.0%
I can have difficult conversations with partners in the project.	5.0%	15.0%	25.0%	35.0%	20.0%	0.0%
I have regular communication — emails, calls, meetings, etc. — with partners.	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	50.0%	10.0%	0.0%
I have trusting relationships with partner organizations.	0.0%	0.0%	15.0%	50.0%	30.0%	5.0%
					-0/	
Purposeful Engagement	0.0%	6.3%	25.0%	43.8%	.5% 23.8%	1.3%
Community members are involved.	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	40.0%	15.0%	5.0%
Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	0.0%	10.0%	45.0%	45.0%	0.0%
Parents are involved.	0.0%	10.0%	35.0%	45.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Students are involved.	0.0%	5.0%	25.0%	45.0%	25.0%	0.0%
Cross Sector Partnerships	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	50 40.0%	.0% 10.0%	10.0%
A variety of sectors are represented in the project, for example health, housing, education, wellness or employment.	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	40.0%	10.0%	10.0%
				80	.0%	
Actionable Data	0.0%	5.0%	15.0%	62.5%	17.5%	0.0%
Data helps us measure progress.	0.0%	5.0%	15.0%	65.0%	15.0%	0.0%
Data helps us set project goals and objectives.	0.0%	5.0%	15.0%	60.0%	20.0%	0.0%
Shared Accountability	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%		.0%	0.0%
				50.0%	45.0%	

Statements	Strongly				Strongly	N/A or
	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree	Not Sure
Students at the Center	0.0%	0.0%	41.7%		.4%	0.0%
This contraction to the second s				25.0%	33.4%	
This project is working to create an education system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	16.7%	50.0%	0.0%
	• •			58	.4%	
Trusting Relationships	8.4%	8.4%	16.7%	25.0%	33.4%	8.4%
I get regular updates and information about the project.	16.7%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%
I trust the organizations running this project.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%
Purposeful Engagement	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	66.	.7%	16.7%
	0.078	10.776	0.078	11.1%	55.6%	10.770
Community members are included.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	33.3%	33.3%
Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	16.7%
Parents are included.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	66.7%	0.0%
Students are included.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%
				66.7%		0/
Cross Sector Partnerships	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%
Different groups are included, for example: health, housing, education, wellness, and employment.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%
	46.70/	0.0%	46.70/	66.	.7%	0.0%
Actionable Data	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%
This project uses data to measure progress.	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%
This project uses data to set goals.	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%	0.0%
Shared Accountability	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	83. 16.7%	.4% 66.7%	0.0%
The organizations share responsibility for the success of all students.	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	16.7%	66.7%	0.0%

# TABLE A7: Lehigh Valley — Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Site Partners

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Students at the Center	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%		.7%	3.2%
Stutents at the center	0.0%	0.0%	0.576	53.2%	37.5%	5.270
This project is working to create a system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	62.5%	37.5%	0.0%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	43.8%	37.5%	6.3%
				01	.3%	
Trusting Relationships	0.0%	1.6%	6.3%	21.9%	.5% 59.4%	3.1%
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%	0.0%
I can have difficult conversations with partners in the project.	0.0%	6.3%	18.8%	31.3%	31.3%	12.5%
I have regular communication — emails, calls, meetings, etc. — with partners.	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	75.0%	18.8%	0.0%
I have trusting relationships with partner organizations.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	31.3%	68.8%	0.0%
					- 94	
Purposeful Engagement	0.0%	9.4%	11.0%	67. 46.9%	.2% 20.3%	12.5%
Community members are involved.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	56.3%	37.5%	6.3%
Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	12.5%	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Parents are involved.	0.0%	12.5%	12.5%	43.8%	18.8%	12.5%
Students are involved.	0.0%	12.5%	6.3%	50.0%	12.5%	18.8%
				60	.8%	
Cross Sector Partnerships	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	50.0%	18.8%	25.0%
A variety of sectors are represented in the project, for example health, housing, education, wellness or employment.	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	50.0%	18.8%	25.0%
				65	.7%	
Actionable Data	0.0%	0.0%	18.8%	56.3%	9.4%	15.7%
Data helps us measure progress.	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	50.0%	12.5%	12.5%
Data helps us set project goals and objectives.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	62.5%	6.3%	18.8%
					.6%	
Shared Accountability	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	68.8%	18.8%	0.0%
The partner organizations in this project share responsibility for the success of all students.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	68.8%	18.8%	0.0%

# TABLE A8: Lehigh Valley — Core Principles and Students at the Center for Community Partners

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Students at the Center	0.0%	2.1%	4.2%	79.2%		14.6%
				35.4%	43.8%	
This project is working to create an education system where every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	37.5%	45.8%	12.5%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	4.2%	4.2%	33.3%	41.7%	16.7%
				25	.5%	
Trusting Relationships	0.0%	2.1%	6.3%	41.7%	43.8%	6.3%
I get regular updates and information about the project.	0.0%	0.0%	12.5%	54.2%	25.0%	8.3%
I trust the organizations running this project.	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	29.2%	62.5%	4.2%
Purposeful Engagement	1.1%	2.1%	6.3%		.4%	13.6%
	0.0%	4.2%	0.0%	41.7% 50.0%	34.7% 33.3%	10 50/
Community members are included. Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	4.2%	4.2%	33.3%	45.8%	12.5% 12.5%
Parents are included.	0.0%	0.0%	4.2%	41.7%	25.0%	16.7%
Students are included.	4.2%	0.0%	4.2%	25.0%	54.2%	18.7%
	4.270	0.070	4.270	23.070	34.270	12.570
	0.0%	0.0%	0.0% 10.5%	62	.5%	4.5 -20/
Cross Sector Partnerships	0.0%	8.3%	12.5%	16.7%	45.8%	16.7%
Different groups are included, for example: health, housing, education, wellness, and employment.	0.0%	8.3%	12.5%	16.7%	45.8%	16.7%
Actionable Data	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	60 27.1%	.4% 33.3%	22.9%
This project uses data to measure progress.	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	29.2%	33.3%	20.8%
This project uses data to set goals.	0.0%	0.0%	16.7%	25.0%	33.3%	25.0%
					-04/	
Shared Accountability	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	83 37.5%	.3% 45.8%	8.3%
The organizations share responsibility for the success of all students.	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	37.5%	45.8%	8.3%

# TABLE A9: Memphis — Core Principles and Students at the Center for Core Site Partners

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A or Not Sure
Students at the Center	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%		0.0%	0.0%
This project is working to create a system where				41.0%	59.1%	
every student and family will have what they need to thrive.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	45.5%	54.5%	0.0%
This project supports the needs of the whole student — health, well-being, housing, safety and academic.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	36.4%	63.6%	0.0%
				95	.5%	
Trusting Relationships	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	41.0%	54.5%	0.0%
Everyone in this project has the best interest of students at heart.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	36.4%	54.5%	0.0%
I can have difficult conversations with partners in the project.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	45.5%	54.5%	0.0%
I have regular communication — emails, calls, meetings, etc. — with partners.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	54.5%	45.5%	0.0%
I have trusting relationships with partner organizations.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	27.3%	63.6%	0.0%
Purposeful Engagement	2.3%	2.3%	15.9%	50.0%	.1% 9.1%	20.5%
Community members are involved.	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%	72.7%	18.2%	0.0%
Our community's diversity is represented.	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	54.5%	9.1%	18.2%
Parents are involved.	0.0%	0.0%	36.4%	36.4%	0.0%	27.3%
Students are involved.	9.1%	0.0%	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%	36.4%
Cross Sector Partnerships	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	9.1%
A variety of sectors are represented in the project, for example health, housing, education, wellness or employment.	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	45.5%	27.3%	9.1%
Actionable Data	0.0%	4.6%	13.7%	50.0%	9% 31.9%	0.0%
Data helps us measure progress.	0.0%	0.0%	18.2%	45.5%	36.4%	0.0%
Data helps us set project goals and objectives.	0.0%	9.1%	9.1%	54.5%	27.3%	0.0%
				90	.9%	
Shared Accountability	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	0.0%
The partner organizations in this project share responsibility for the success of all students.	0.0%	9.1%	0.0%	54.5%	36.4%	0.0%

#### TABLE A10: Memphis — Core Principles and Students at the Center for Community Partners

[There is no data to show for Memphis community stakeholders. All the survey participants were connected to the TFS project through their job.]

Statements	Strongly				Strongly	N/A or
Statements	Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Agree	Not Sur
Students at the Center						
This project is working to create an						
education system where every student and						
family will have what they need to thrive.						
This project supports the needs of the whole						
student — health, well-being, housing, safety						
and academic.						
Trusting Relationships				·	-	-
I get regular updates and information about						
the project. I trust the organizations running this project.						
Purposeful Engagement						
Community members are included.						
Our community's diversity is represented.						
Parents are included.						
Students are included.						
Cross Sector Partnerships						
Different groups are included, for example:						
health, housing, education, wellness, and						
employment.						
Actionable Data						
Actionable Data						
This project uses data to measure progress.						
This project uses data to set goals.						
Shared Accountability					-	
The organizations share responsibility for the success of all students.						

# About Us

#### Coalition for Community Schools

Supported by the Institute for Educational Leadership, the Coalition for Community Schools evolved since 1998 as an ecosystem of national, state, and local cross-sector leaders that promote community schools as an equity-driven, researched based strategy, and fights for justice and investments for young people's access to resources, supports, and opportunities they deserve to advance their hopes and fulfill their social responsibility.

The strengths of the Coalition are the close relationships we have with thousands of grassroots to grasstops leaders, organized in networks to expand their knowledge, skills, beliefs, and practices; and our ability to prepare, support, and mobilize leaders, to create transformative and innovative solutions to disrupt the status quo, and eliminate systemic and structural barriers to equitable outcomes in education.

#### **Communities In Schools**

Communities In Schools<sup>®</sup> (CIS<sup>™</sup>) is a national organization that ensures every student, regardless of race, zip code, or socioeconomic background has what they need to realize their potential in school and beyond. Working directly inside more than 2,900 schools across the country, we connect students to caring adults and community resources that help them see, confront, and overcome the barriers that stand between them and a brighter future. Together, we build a powerful change movement made up of peers, students, and alumni committed to building an equitable path to education for future generations.

#### StriveTogether

StriveTogether is a national movement with a clear purpose: helping every child succeed in school and in life from cradle to career, regardless of race, ethnicity, zip code or circumstance. In partnership with 70 communities across the country, we provide coaching, resources and rigorous approaches to create opportunities and close gaps in education, housing and so much more. We use data to illuminate problems and solutions, tackle tough conversations and deliver impactful results for more than 12 million children and counting.