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Highline Public Schools and the Road Map Project

A case study of district involvement in collective impact

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About Education Northwest

Founded as a nonprofit corporation in 1966, Education Northwest builds capacity in schools, families, and communities through applied research and development.

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Summary of Key Findings

Highline Involvement in the Road Map Project

- Highline Public Schools (HPS) and their partners were involved since the early days of the Road Map Project (RMP), especially through the Race to The Top (RTT) grant.
- Study participants reported high alignment between the work of HPS and RMP, particularly around early learning, high school completion, and postsecondary readiness.
- HPS showcased and modeled their innovative work, tools, and approaches for the other RMP districts.

Road Map Project Support for Highline

- RMP supported the work of HPS and their partners by providing new resources, data capacity, and network convening.
- The most useful RMP supports were aligned across local initiatives, promoted innovative practice, respected the autonomy of districts and their partners, and were oriented toward collective action.

Road Map Project Influence on Highline

- HPS and their partners strategically used RMP supports to challenge the status quo, advance asset-based views of students and a cradle-to-career approach.
- RMP prompted HPS to develop new policies and procedures.
- RMP increased the capacity of HPS to support young people, while strengthening pathway connections between the partners.

Challenges of Collective Impact

- Tension between local and regional priorities makes it difficult to align efforts across organizations.
- RMP partners experience "disconnects" that pose a barrier to deeper engagement.
- Given these competing priorities and disconnects, many participants suggested that the region has not yet adopted a full set of systems-level strategies.

Stakeholder Recommendations for RMP

- Focus on high-leverage strategies that require a regional approach.
- Move beyond convening work groups to support more aligned action across the districts.
- Continue to "lift up" scalable models while providing resources and respecting the autonomy of districts and organizations.
- Maximize the external position of the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) to be a "bridge" and "referee" in the region.

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Introduction

The Road Map Project (RMP) began in 2010 as a cradle-to-career collective impact initiative with an ambitious goal: to double the number of students in South King County and South Seattle who are on track to graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020. This goal includes a commitment to close achievement and opportunity gaps for low-income students and children of color and increase achievement for all students.

At the heart of this work is the belief that cross-sector collaboration is necessary to address systemic disparities and advance educational equity across the seven school districts in this region. The Community Center for Education Results (CCER) is the backbone organization for this collaborative effort that includes K–12 systems, community-based organizations, government agencies, postsecondary institutions, grantmakers, youth, and families. For the past six years, the RMP has brought together these diverse partners around a common agenda to improve outcomes from birth through postsecondary completion. The partnership includes work groups organized around issue areas (e.g., Birth to Third Grade, High School to College Completion, Opportunity Youth) and advised by the Community Network Steering Committee and Project Sponsors Group. After publishing baseline data for the region in 2011, CCER published four subsequent Results Reports tracking progress on key indicators related to educational milestones. See the Appendix for a list of critical events in the history of the RMP.

Public school districts are a key partner in cradle-to-career collective impact efforts such as the RMP. Yet, little is known about the roles that districts play in these efforts or how they benefit from their involvement in this form of cross-sector collaboration. This case study is one of the first to examine how a collective impact initiative relates to priorities, activities, and outcomes of one school district and their community partners. This project occurs as part of a multiyear formative evaluation of the RMP conducted by Education Northwest.[1]

Case Study Purpose and Methods

This report summarizes key findings of how the RMP relates to the work of Highline Public Schools (HPS) and their community partners. HPS is one of seven school districts involved in the RMP. Our purpose is to examine the ways in which the district and their community partners have contributed to the RMP, as well as how the RMP has influenced the district's effort to improve opportunities and outcomes for young people. This project also provides feedback to CCER on how a collective impact initiative may support districts and their partners in reaching their goals, while documenting lessons learned that may be useful to the broader collective impact field.

[1] See the Road Map Project website for a copy of previous evaluation reports.

Four research questions guided this case study:

1. What is the history of HPS and community partner involvement in RMP?
2. To what degree has the district and their partners adopted programs, policies, or practices advanced by RMP?
3. How has the RMP influenced the activities of the district and their partners in specific issue areas (e.g., early learning, postsecondary transitions, English learners)?
4. What is the feedback and lessons learned for the RMP and other districts?

Methods

To examine these questions, we conducted interviews with 20 key informants and reviewed a host of documents, including: HPS and CCER organizational documents, RMP member lists and reports, Race to the Top (RTT) reports, media reports, and interview transcripts conducted for previous evaluation reports. We also met with three CCER staff members to gather background information about Highline's involvement in RMP.

This report primarily draws on interviews with five HPS leaders, nine HPS staff members, and six HPS partners (Table 1). We selected an initial list of interview participants by consulting with CCER staff members and examining RMP work group membership lists, with additional participants identified through snowball sampling.

Table 1. Case study interview participants

Participant type	Description	N
HPS leader	Current and former executive-level leadership	5
HPS staff	District and school-based staff members who lead content-area work	9*
HPS partner	Non-district personnel who partner with HPS on projects and participate in RMP	6
Total		**20**

*Includes one interview from the 2015 evaluation.

Interviews with HPS leaders (current/former superintendents, high-level administrators, and board members) provided valuable background information on the history of HPS' involvement in RMP, key areas of alignment, and the initiative's influence on the South King County region. To understand the influence of RMP in particular issue areas (e.g., early learning, English learners, family engagement, high school graduation, and postsecondary transitions) we interviewed current and former staff members who played a leadership role in implementing work in this area. This included staff members based in the district office as well as school-based staff members, most of whom were active in RMP work groups. Interviews with HPS partners from community-based organizations and colleges provided useful insight into how participation in the RMP relates to school-community partnerships.

Five participants were involved in previous waves of data collection by Education Northwest for the RMP evaluation. Where possible, we drew upon previously collected data to reduce the

time burden on these participants. Through their current and previous positions, many participants were involved in RMP beyond Highline as part of their work with other districts and organizations.

We used additional data sources (mapping, document review, and prior interviews) to develop background for the case study and to identify priority issues influenced by RMP within the local district and stakeholder context. All interviews were recorded and partially transcribed. Transcripts and documents were stored in the Atlas.ti qualitative software program for thematic analysis.

Structure of This Report

Chapter 2 provides an overview of HPS, their community partners, and their contributions to the RMP. Chapter 3 discusses how HPS and their partners leveraged the RMP to support their work with students and families. Chapter 4 presents case study participants' lessons learned about collective impact and recommendations for strengthening the RMP as it moves forward.

In presenting these findings, we use "most participants" to indicate when at least half the sample discussed a theme, "many participants" when at least a third of the sample discussed a theme, and "some participants" when fewer than five people discussed a theme. We use "HPS" to refer specifically to the district and "Highline" to refer more generally to HPS and their community partners. We use "RMP" in reference to the overall collective impact partnership and "CCER" when referring specifically to the backbone organization that supports the initiative.

Chapter 2
History of Highline Involvement in the Road Map Project

Overview of Highline Public Schools and Community Context

Highline Public Schools (HPS) serves a unique and rapidly diversifying set of communities spanning unincorporated King County, such as Boulevard Park, White Center, and the surrounding cities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, and SeaTac. Unlike other districts in the RMP region who serve a specific municipality in South King County, the community of Highline is not a governmental entity, but rather a common school district shared by these urban and suburban communities. HPS is the fourth-largest school district in the RMP region with 16 percent of all RMP students (Community Center for Education Results, 2016).

Highline Public Schools

- 19,611 students
- 39 schools
- 18 elementary schools
- 4 middle schools
    - 2 grades 7–12 schools
    - 11 high schools
    - 1 skills center
    - 1 early childhood center
    - 1 home school center
- 63.9% free or reduced-price lunch
- 76% racial/ethnic minority students
- 25% English language learners

Source: Highline Public Schools, 2017.

Key Events in HPS Since the Launch of RMP (2010–2016)

In the early years of the RMP, John Welch served as HPS superintendent. He was followed by Alan Spicciati, who served as interim superintendent for one year. Susan Enfield joined the district as superintendent in 2012. From November 2012 through August 2013, Superintendent Enfield led community stakeholders and district staff members in a strategic planning process to focus on goals for 2017. These goals included meeting or exceeding standards by grade 3, improving high school graduation rates, reducing out-of-school suspensions, and ensuring that graduating students are bilingual, biliterate, tech-savvy, and tech-literate (Highline Public Schools, 2013).

After this goal-setting process, HPS focused resources on building school and district capacity for early learning and extending full-day kindergarten to all students to meet the goal of mastery by grade 3; offering a variety of STEM-related programs; and improving high school graduation rates (on-time, extended, and grade 9 cohort) and direct enrollment in college. They also participated in the Washington State Seal of Biliteracy program and established a World Language Credit by Proficiency program.

Inspired by the successes of the Graduate Tacoma program, in 2016 HPS partnered with Highline Schools Foundation, Matt Griffin YMCA, and other stakeholders to launch Graduate! Highline. This communitywide program connects families and educators with community, civic, and philanthropic leaders to focus on graduation, starting with kindergarten through middle school and high school transitions and moving into students' postsecondary

opportunities. Now at 75 percent graduation rate for the class of 2016, HPS continues to strive toward their goal of 95 percent graduation.

In 2016, Highline passed a $299.9 million bond measure to improve existing structures and to build new schools in the region. This was the first bond measure passed in the Highline district in a decade (Cornwell, 2016). During the case study data collection in 2016, several interview participants discussed how HPS' goal to dramatically reduce out-of-school suspensions garnered local news attention in an article that described low teacher morale and staff members' fears about safety (Rowe, 2016). HPS disputed the accuracy of the story. In a letter posted on the HPS website, Superintendent Enfield acknowledged that alternatives to suspension had not been well implemented in every school, but she also provided data suggesting that most HPS teachers supported the goals of the strategic plan (Enfield, 2016).

Highline Participation in the RMP

HPS has been an active player in the RMP since its formation, regularly participating in work groups and in RTT. In fall 2011, former HPS Superintendent John Welch worked with each RMP superintendent to build on the first steps of the collective impact initiative, emphasizing the college-bound focus for the region. HPS became an early champion of the College Bound Scholarship Campaign, and interim superintendent Alan Spicciati played a leadership role in the RMP Data Advisors Group.

HPS expanded their participation in the RMP as part of the Road Map District Consortium for Race to the Top (RTT) competition. In 2012, the seven RMP districts collaborated to secure a competitive $40 million award from the U.S. Department of Education to support their collaboration. Puget Sound Educational Services District is the manager of this five-year RTT grant. Superintendent Enfield participated in the conceptualization and writing of the proposal and went on to serve as a spokesperson, state advocate, and leader for RTT after becoming the HPS superintendent in 2012. Superintendent Enfield brought with her a strong emphasis on early learning.

HPS and their community partners are especially active in RMP work related to early learning, high school completion, postsecondary readiness, and English learners and somewhat involved in family engagement and youth development projects. They are also involved in leadership groups for RTT and RMP. In addition to the district's participation, a number of HPS community partners have also been involved in RMP through work groups, the Community Network Steering Committee, and RTT (Table 2).

Table 2 Highline community partners

Road Map work group members	Race to the Top partners
• Equity in Education Coalition • Highline Community College • Matt Griffin YMCA • Somali Youth and Family Club • South Seattle College • Southwest Youth and Family Services • White Center Boys and Girls Club • White Center CDA	• Child Care Resources • Highline Community College • King County Housing Authority • Para Los Niños • United Way of King County • UW Dream Project • White Center CDA

Source: RTI International, 2015; authors' analysis of data from CCER network lists, 2015.

Within our case study sample, many participants were either previous members or currently active in RMP work groups and were also attending RTT planning and implementation meetings. HPS and their partners were primarily involved in the High School to College Completion, Opportunity Youth, Birth to Third Grade, and English Language Learner (ELL) RMP work groups. Several leaders in our study were also regular attendees at the quarterly Education Results Network meetings and participated in the Data Advisors Group. HPS leaders participated in RTT planning and implementation meetings—particularly at the beginning of the grant—and attended RMP and Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) superintendent meetings to provide updates and talk through strategies for RTT implementation. HPS continues to share data and best practices across district lines in pursuit of their goals as part of the RTT Road Map District Consortium.

Areas of Alignment

The language of the 2012 HPS strategic plan mirrors the goals of RTT and the early foundational work of the RMP. For example, the region's RTT effort is organized around three domains: Start Strong, STEM Strong, and Stay Strong. Similarly, HPS focuses it work in three areas: early learning and connections between pre-K–3 in the region; strengthening science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills; and working to bridge the connections from high school to postsecondary opportunities and careers (Community Center for Education Results, 2015).

Superintendent Enfield was able to capitalize on HPS' momentum through a strategic planning process that took place during the 2012–2013 schools year and included a diverse group of internal and external school stakeholders. Two of their goals for 2017[2]—mastery by grade 3 and

[2] Strategic plan goals that are particularly aligned with RTT goals include mastery by grade 3, where 19 of 20 students entering kindergarten in 2013 will meet or exceed standards in all core subjects; high school graduation, where at least 19 of 20 students entering grade 9 in 2013 will graduate prepared to choose their future; and technology literacy, where every student in the class of 2026 will graduate tech-savvy and tech-literate (Highline Public Schools, 2013).

improving high school graduation—were particularly aligned with the Road Map region's efforts for improving early learning opportunities and high school-to-college connections.

> *It's all about graduating kids college and career ready; it's about investing in early learning; it's about keeping kids in school … I've never once felt at odds with anything the Road Map was doing.* (HPS leader)

Perhaps due to this early foundational work by HPS leadership, in our interviews we found that there was a large degree of perceived overlap between HPS' own district initiatives, RTT, and RMP initiatives. For example, study participants who worked most closely with students reported confusion in unpacking the differences between RTT, RMP, and efforts convened by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

> *Define Road Map. Because I do think there has been some confusion around who is leading the Road Map effort. Is it CCER? Or is it Puget Sound ESD as the grantee for the Race to the Top investment? Who is the convener and the backbone, since we are talking collective impact? Who is the real backbone for the work? Or is it the same? Maybe it is Puget Sound ESD on some issues and CCER on other issues, but I for one remain confused. When you say "the Road Map" I don't know who to call about that.* (HPS partner)

This alignment of the HPS strategic plan with RMP's goals facilitated HPS participation in regionwide initiatives such as a coordinated kindergarten registration date, College Bound Scholarship Campaign and Discover U events, and the King County Reengagement Provider Network. Other areas of alignment reported by participants were the regional work surrounding the World Language Credit by proficiency for ELL students and the expansion of family engagement in early childhood and high school-to-college initiatives.

As discussed in the next chapter, this ability to align emerging initiatives within the district, leverage RMP work groups and networking opportunities, and strategically use funding for targeted programming and professional development allowed HPS to deepen their participation and investment in early learning and high school-to-college initiatives, as well as other target areas such as ELL, family engagement, and recruitment and retention of teachers of color.

Highline's Contributions to RMP

Participation in these RMP initiatives and in regional work allowed HPS and their community partners to showcase and model their innovative work, tools, and approaches to key RMP initiative areas. Many participants spoke about HPS' contribution as a leader and model for building strong Birth to Third Grade (B–3) systems, with their work being "replicated" by other districts.

Some participants also mentioned that Highline served as a leader in family engagement, for example through partnerships with White Center CDA and the Speak Your Language! campaign. In terms of high school completion and postsecondary readiness, HPS has been a "pioneer" in providing college success coaches and worksite visits for student, as well as in piloting tools for CCER. Some participants described Graduate! Highline as a promising initiative, while others relayed that HPS often shared their GEAR UP college and career readiness survey with other districts and contributed their experience to the discussion of data disaggregation methods within the Data Advisory work group.

Finally, some participants mentioned HPS' overall approach to improving student outcomes, which they feel has influenced the region. This includes a "culture of moving quickly," a "spirit of sharing," and an overall willingness to "experiment" to find the best way to serve students.

> *I think they [HPS] are willing to experiment a little bit and try some things that maybe aren't proven yet … Some people are cautious about having any of that play out publicly because it looks like you're failing, and I think they're trying to say 'We're going to try some things to make a difference; if that doesn't work, we'll try something else.' I think that helps others see that you can do that.* (HPS leader)

One example of this visibility during experimentation involved HPS' commitment to reducing out-of-school suspensions and new discipline policies within the district. The willingness of HPS leaders to stick to the spirit of this initiative—despite public criticism—can serve as a model for experimentation and "risk-taking" for other districts in the region.

Chapter 3
RMP Support and Influence in Highline

In this chapter we discuss the types of support provided by RMP and the influence of this support on the work of HPS and their partners. Many of the examples described here focus on the three issues on which there was the most alignment between HPS and RMP: early learning, high school completion, and postsecondary readiness. For more information on RMP efforts in these spaces, see the Appendix, which includes the Birth to Third Grade Critical Event Chart and the High School to Postsecondary Critical Event Chart.

RMP Support for HPS and Their Partners

RMP supported the work of HPS and their partners by providing new resources, network convening, and data capacity. Interview participants indicated that the most useful RMP supports were aligned to promote innovation and adoption of new practices, built capacity while respecting the autonomy of districts and their partners, and were oriented toward collective learning and collective action. We briefly describe each of these areas of support below, with more elaboration on these themes later in the report.

New Resources

Since the launch of RMP in 2010, HPS and their partners have received a wide array of supplementary funding to support their district priorities. While most of these funds did not flow directly from the RMP or CCER, stakeholders suggest that the collective impact initiative played a role in helping to attract these resources to the region.

For example, the RMP districts formed the Road Map District Consortium to secure the $40 million RTT award, which supports student achievement throughout the region through a focus on pre-K–3 approaches, STEM, and college and career readiness. HPS and the White Center Community Development Association (CDA) were selected as one of two RTT "Deep Dive" Projects to create 24/7 community learning systems and academic improvements through coordinated school-community partnerships, family engagement, targeted language instruction, and personalized service referrals (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

Graduation and postsecondary efforts in HPS were further supported by a six-year GEAR UP grant to boost graduation rates in the district, and CCER staff members contributed to this proposal. Part of the RMP approach encourages local funders to align their grantmaking with each other and in support of RMP priorities. HPS received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support family engagement partnerships with White Center CDA for strengthening pre-K–3 connections, build leaders' knowledge of pre-K–3 in partnership with local providers, recruit and select educators to improve the strength and diversity of their

workforce, and improve the quality of pre-K–3 classroom instruction across HPS (in alignment with Seattle Public Schools).

See Table 3 for a summary of funding for RMP-aligned initiatives and programming in the Highline community. This chart includes funding from multiple sources and for grants to HPS or their community partners.

Table 3. Grants for targeted initiatives in Highline during RMP 2012–2017

Initiative area	Funder	Total grant
P–3	Gates Foundation	$1,294,435
B–3	RTT	$821,064
HS-College	RTT	$1,468,313
HS-College	GEAR UP	$6,939,000
STEM	RTT	$2,488,554
Deep Dive (White Center CDA)	RTT	$1,033,561
Data and Evaluation	RTT	$79,936
Family Engagement	Gates Foundation	$60,000
Human Resources	Gates Foundation	$248,556

Source: Authors' analysis of data from U.S. Department of Education, 2014, 2015, 2016; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.; Highline Public Schools, 2017; Community Center for Education Results, 2015.

In the past several years, HPS has engaged in several new initiatives, both on their own and with other RMP partners. HPS leaders endeavored to be strategic in how they used RMP-related resources to build the infrastructure, human capital, and will necessary to carry out the goals outlined in the strategic plan.

> *Obviously, millions of dollars helps. Resources have been helpful and using those resources to implement change that has led to culture change … We tried to be really smart about how we used our [RTT] investment dollars to really further our strategy and our work. We only wanted to do things that aligned with our strategic plan goal … We didn't pay for things and people that we knew we wouldn't be able to sustain, and we tried to invest in building the capacity and talent of our team rather than on a specific thing.* (HPS leader)

Many interview participants expressed appreciation for the "consistency" in funding provided in relation to RMP. This includes the provision of multiple years of funding to support the adoption of new policies, practices, and positions, as well as the regional approach to funding that included coordination of professional development and outreach across districts as they launched similar programs and initiatives.

Network Convening

Many case study participants valued the opportunity to network across districts, organizations, and sectors through RMP. Through events such as the Education Results Network Meetings,

participants gained a regional perspective on their work and learned about the broader work of the project. Most useful was the chance to connect directly with peers in their content area in meetings that were focused on mutual learning, problem solving, and collaboration.

> *I think, more than anything, it's always helpful to learn from my peers; to see what they're doing, what's working, what's not working. That is what I've always appreciated about the Road Map is [how it's] bringing folks together.* (HPS staff member)

Through RMP, some participants described visiting other programs, sharing models and resources, and helping each other with events such as FAFSA completion. HPS staff and partners alike strongly valued the systems-building work taking place through the RMP Opportunity Youth Work Group and King County Reengagement Provider Network.

> *CCER has led a regional re-engagement network … That's a great convening because it does bring together a little community of practice. We're like a little PLC that meets once a month, and we're sharing best practices, and someone from CCER facilitates it. We all take turns doing different presentations. [The work] is huge because otherwise we'd be all alone in our district doing this work and we'd have no idea what the other districts are doing. It's allowed us to go visit other districts and programs. It's been a great network.* (HPS staff member)

In the early learning space, participants described RTT projects as one way that they came together across districts and organizations. Shared professional development opportunities across districts and between districts and early learning providers were often cited as an effective support in this area.

Data Capacity

Finally, some case study participants expressed that RMP has provided critical data capacity to support their work. They appreciated that the regional reports capture shifting demographic trends and bring a "sense of urgency" around the need to improve student outcomes.

> *That's probably the biggest impact in the last five years is the changing demographics and the ability of the districts to stay on top on those changes. I think CCER has been really helpful in mapping those changes over time and helping districts understand exactly who they're dealing with and sort of disseminating some level of best practices and how to engage diverse communities that I don't know if they were prepared to do initially.* (HPS partner)

Participants indicated that RMP reports are accessible and relevant for their work, especially when data are available at the district or organizational level. They mentioned that CCER provides additional data capacity that is not available within their district or organization. They especially appreciated reports that connect datasets across systems and provide new, district-

level data not previously available, such as the *Road Map Project Community and Technical College* report.

> *I think it's been really exciting to have data that is really accessible and usable. We have so much data, and we often don't have the capacity to interpret that data and really play with that data and ask the big questions and have the core team, specifically at Road Map, that can answer those questions for us. It's really exciting to have that partnership and have that capacity … Then you have this data team that can really dig in and give us that information that we can then design interventions around.* (HPS staff member)

RMP Influence on HPS and Their Partners

The support provided by RMP has influenced the work of HPS and their partners by shifting norms, policies, and procedures within the district. RMP support has also increased the capacity and connectedness of education pathways in the communities served by the district.

HPS used RMP supports to challenge the status quo and motivate change. Interview participants used RMP data to shift mindsets within the district. First, they cited RMP data as a way to generate a sense of urgency around the idea that the "the status quo isn't working" within HPS. District leaders used the regional data in the RMP Results Reports as a "benchmark" to raise awareness among district staff and board members that districts with similar socioeconomic circumstances were doing better than HPS on key indicators. This comparative data provided the "leverage" that HPS leadership needed to make the case to the board for new policies and initiatives.

> *[We] used the data they [CCER] gave us in the year-end report to make a case for change. It was incredibly helpful to be able to say … that out of the seven districts we are the lowest in these seven areas. This is unacceptable … we're going to push hard, this is why. We were lowest in everything; it was bad … [the report provided] leverage to really make a case that … we are not serving our kids. The reality is you can't blame it on demographics because our surrounding districts have the same demographics and they're doing better. That was powerful.* (HPS leader)

For example, Superintendent Enfield sent the 2013 Results Report to central office leadership, principals, and assistant principals. In a memo accompanying the report, she highlighted the positive ranking for HPS in enrolling students in rigorous courses, while expressing concern about low rankings in several other areas. She wrote, "It is my hope that this data compels us to continue to push and support ourselves, and one another, in support of our goals" (Highline Public Schools, personal/internal communication, March 20, 2014).

In the high school-to-postsecondary space, the Results Report about high school graduation rates across the region served as a "reality check" to the district. This report drew attention to

the issue of low high school graduation rates and reinforced the importance of emerging reforms such as the adoption of an early warning system and grade 9 transition programming.

> *[The Results Report] helped bring the conversation to the surface around graduation rates. That was a huge area of struggle in Highline. I can remember looking at those reports, and we were in a really bad place, and it helped us again see that some things were possible. Not that we didn't know that, but it just removed an easy excuse and started a focus on freshmen … amping up our leverage of early warning indicators, and [we] also started to do some programs to help kids across the finish line at the junior and senior level.* (HPS leader)

By comparing HPS to districts that have similar socioeconomic profiles, participants say the Results Reports removed the "easy excuse" that performance was low in HPS because their students were "tough." This opened the door for the district to expand the conversation from students to the need to change district policies and practices to better support student success. Change was "possible" because other districts in the region were making progress. The district's strong stance on restorative practice illustrates this shift in focus and the new emphasis on changing policies and practices.

RMP helped to advance asset-based frameworks and foster a cradle-to-career perspective. By encouraging a "different conversation" between districts and communities, participants note that RMP bolstered HPS' efforts to focus on the strengths and potential of all students. This was especially evident in relation to the district's support for English language learner (ELL) students. Several participants suggested that HPS involvement in the RMP ELL Work Group helped to advance the perspective that speaking a language other than English is an asset rather than a deficit—a perspective also advanced in the HPS strategic plan. For example, this work group partnered with REL Northwest to produce several studies to examine the outcomes for ELL students.

> *The [ELL Work Group] data point was still helping with beliefs … it underscored that ELL is not or does not have to be a deficit model. It could in fact be an asset … [The strategic planning team] really advocated for the strategic plan to treat language as an asset and that grew into a goal that all students after 12 years would graduate bilingual and biliterate.* (HPS leader)

OneAmerica—which facilitated the ELL Work Group—helped connect the district with families and students around this issue, both in terms of sharing their lived experience with district staff and generating their support for district initiatives.

> *We have a pretty strong stance around bilingualism at Highline. It's part of our strategic plan. We have a board policy that says all kids will graduate bilingual and biliterate, and that has been bolstered through community voice. That's not something that would have happened as robustly without the relationship with OneAmerica. The fact that*

> *OneAmerica knows about what we're doing, they're able to help communicate that through other venues, and that generates a lot of public support for the work that we're doing …* (HPS staff member)

Extending this asset-based frame to communities, many study participants noted that RMP encouraged HPS to "deepen" their partnerships with community-based organizations. They spoke of a desire to move from a "contractual" relationship focused on sharing space and students toward a more "responsive" and "authentic" two-way partnership around a shared set of priorities.

> *On the whole sort of community-school relationship, CCER has done a phenomenal job of providing information for both districts and providers alike on how we're doing in terms of what kind of impact we have … I think CCER has been tremendously helpful in terms of continuing the conversation, making sure the conversation is about priorities, and having school districts be responsive to their communities.* (HPS partner)

> *[RMP] changed the definition of partnering. It's not just about money, really, about sharing not just data, or space, or paper, but really [it's about] engaging so we all have the same interest in mind or being on the same page whether it's helping our families succeed and our children graduate … It's not completely resolved, but at least [we're] having some conversations and has created some deeper partnerships in some places and also some great learning opportunities because, as we know, when we have a challenge, we have to think differently to resolve it.* (HPS leader)

In an example of "thinking differently," many participants noted that RMP spread awareness of the importance of a cradle-to-career perspective to education. In the high school-to-postsecondary space, some participants propose that RMP events such as Discover U and the College Bound Campaign helped to cultivate a stronger "college-going culture" within HPS, both in the traditional high school and in the re-engagement programs.

> *I do think the Discover U week has really gotten traction. It's a little more defined this year. It gets better every year. I think that has put a focus on college that maybe wasn't there before in every district. I can say that when I came to Highline, I don't think we had a really robust college-going culture … I think that level of awareness has changed.* (HPS leader)

Several HPS staff members noted that the *Road Map Project Community and Technical College* report produced by CCER had been especially helpful in challenging assumptions within the district about what happens to HPS students after high school. The report provided data on the community and technical colleges attended by each district's graduates and how the students perform once get they get to those colleges. By offering a "long-term perspective," the report also drew attention to the need for HPS to play a role in improving postsecondary readiness and persistence.

> *To tell the story of where our students go after Highline has been a big myth buster. Our [high school] graduation rate is going up. We've had amazing success. We're almost at 75 percent now. What we hadn't known before or just didn't talk about was, 'Where do our students go after [high school graduation]?' So, the community and technical college report was amazing last year because that really opened up conversations with Highline College for us because the narrative we tell is: 'Our students go to Highline College and that's the pathway, that they're doing two-year [college].' But, I think in that report it was something like 50 percent are needing remedial classes or this many don't stay past their first year, and very few are actually getting a certificate or moving on past Highline College. Things like that shine a light on, 'Wow, are we telling the right story? What supports do we need?'* (HPS staff member)

> *You know, if we get our students in the door to college but they can't thrive once they're there then we haven't done our work. So I think [the RMP reports] have been helpful to create this long-term perspective in terms of the work that we are doing, and make it about both the rigor and access and ability to navigate systems, but it's also about being able to be successful once you have access.* (HPS staff member)

Similarly, participants noted an increased appreciation for the importance of early learning, early intervention, and family engagement since the start of the RMP.

RMP prompted HPS to refine their policies and procedures. HPS staff members and leaders reported that participation in RMP had prompted them to improve their policies and procedures related to how they partner with community-based organizations. For example, HPS revised their data sharing agreement and practices after hearing about the model used by Seattle Public Schools at an RMP event. They also took steps to make it easier for a wider variety of organizations to partner with HPS.

> *Road Map just kind of helps build the partner relationship in a different way. Hearing some of their feedback in [RMP meetings] … we were able to push our business services and operations departments and insurance brokers around where we can be flexible in working with some of our smaller nonprofits that don't have the capacity but are doing awesome work*. (HPS staff member)

Participants also pointed to the adoption of several new policies and practices related to high school completion and postsecondary readiness. RTT funding enabled the district to start offering in-school SAT testing, a practice that they plan to continue. While not necessarily a result of specific RMP initiatives, during this time HPS adopted new policies and practices related to restorative discipline, such as revising policy to eliminate out-of-school suspensions for offenses that do not pose a safety threat, such as defiance.

Most commonly, district staff members and their partners indicated that as a result of RMP they are more regularly using data to inform their efforts to promote high school completion and

postsecondary readiness. For example, several participants suggested that RMP encouraged HPS to join other districts in adopting a new early warning system for identifying students at risk of dropping out of high school. They expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn from other districts on this new practice.

> *The ESD worked with the Road Map Project on developing a regional indicator [related to early warning indicators] and convened monthly or every six weeks early warning indicator meetings. That was an area we may have done in Highline on our own, but we worked together on that and benefitted from [regional workshops and resources].* (HPS leader)

By making their FAFSA completion rates and College Bound Scholarship enrollment publicly available, RMP urged HPS to start more frequent reporting and reflection on these data.

> *We are going to start reporting out numbers internally on College Bound Scholarship and FAFSA completion. A lot of that started at CCER and has now transitioned to the regional college access network at Puget Sound ESD. It's symbolic of getting clear with our partners about how we're going to talk about the numbers and internally getting ahead of the numbers so that the first information that our superintendent gets is not coming from an external partner, but instead is coming from internal stakeholders that understand the context in which those numbers are being shared.* (HPS staff member)

While districts had access to these data before, participants suggest that they were not regularly being reviewed and used by practitioners until RMP started making the data available to them.

The RMP Opportunity Youth Work Group supported several changes in policy and practice related to re-engagement of young people in their education. In 2013, for the first time HPS participated in the state-funded Open Doors program for re-engagement of youth ages 16–21. Building on their relationships with local community colleges and community-based organizations, HPS used Open Doors funding to modify current re-engagement programs, create a menu of alternative schools and programs for opportunity youth, and establish a new Connection Center designed to help students navigate their options.

> *The CCER effort convinced the Highline School District to participate in Open Doors. They were somewhat reluctant, I think, initially because it was new and required some suspension of previously held beliefs—about the GED specifically—that they weren't ready to embrace, but they have since jumped in with both feet and have been incredibly supportive and we're grateful for that.* (HPS partner)

HPS staff and partners who participated in the RMP Opportunity Youth Work Group and King County Reengagement Provider Network offered several examples of procedures developed as a result of their participation in this network, such as a new intake process for the Connections Center that was modelled on the process used by other re-engagement programs.

RMP strengthened the capacity and connectedness of education pathways, especially in relation to early learning, high school completion, and postsecondary readiness. The purpose of RMP is to enhance the cradle-to-career pathway for all young people in the region. In Highline, participants reported increased pathway capacity (Latham, 2014) in terms of the quantity, quality, and accessibility of education opportunities available to HPS students.

Participants also offered examples of how RMP improved pathway connections (Latham, 2014) among early learning providers, the district, community-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions. Pathway connections are especially important at key transition points such as kindergarten and high school graduation. Below we discuss improved pathway capacity and connections in early learning, high school completion, and postsecondary readiness.

Early Learning

HPS intentionally used RMP resources to support their strategic plan goals and increase the capacity and connection of early learning pathways. In 2013 HPS hired Anne Arnold as the director of early learning, making it one of the first districts to create an administrator-level position in this field. As they built this department, HPS maximized RTT funds to build capacity for district-level work by "experimenting" with innovative approaches and developing new partnerships with community-based organizations and other districts.

To expand the number of P–3 champions within the district, they used RTT to send a diverse group of school, district, and community leaders to enroll in the P–3 executive leadership program at the University of Washington. As one HPS leader relayed, since "grant dollars don't last forever, we tried to use them to invest in [the] capacity of people not just programs."

HPS utilized RTT funds by investing in programs, training, and initiatives aimed at expanding early access to culturally relevant, high-quality early learning and parent education programming. For example, they expanded PreK Play and Learn in partnership with Child Care Resources and Highline's Kindergarten Jump Start. They also funded job-embedded and aligned professional development for HPS and Seattle Public School teachers, paraprofessionals, special education teachers and administrators, and community partners in early learning and along the B–3 continuum.

Early learning providers working with HPS noted improved alignment, especially in relationship to a shared understanding of kindergarten readiness.

> *They have developed some alignment for school readiness … We make sure that by the time the kids get to kindergarten, they know what they need to know … At our registration we provide a lot of information to families and we help them to register [for kindergarten] … when the district opened the [early learning] department, it was really helpful. Now it's like we're not alone … we are in communication with the district. Also,*

we have access to the trainings and the kindergarten teachers so we get to have a lot of information that we can bring and apply to our classes. (HPS partner)

While there is still work to do to better align their data systems and improve early learning policy, community partners report that they meet more regularly with district staff members to support the transition of children to kindergarten. Since the start of the RMP, HPS moved to full-day kindergarten and collaborated with other RMP districts to adopt a common regional kindergarten registration date and conduct outreach to families.

High School Completion and Postsecondary Readiness

RTT funds were also used to support high school-to-postsecondary initiatives, such as funding a new student support position in schools and providing training for teachers on career-connected learning. They also used resources to build infrastructure to track and support students in credit recovery and on-time graduation. RTT funding enabled HPS to provide free, in-school PSAT/SAT testing for all juniors and seniors, in spite of "pushback."

Giving the SAT during the school day, that's a game changer for our kids. It's not free, and it wasn't without its criticism. We live in an era of anti-assessment, and it was one more assessment … This assessment has a clear purpose in helping kids. This isn't political; this is just giving every kid a chance at college. (HPS leader)

Participants note that RMP encouraged the district to emphasize initiatives related to grade 9 transition and advanced course work, as well as College Bound sign-ups. As discussed earlier, HPS staff members now use data more regularly to inform their postsecondary readiness work. For example, the *Road Map Project Community and Technical College Report* prompted them to reach out to more colleges.

Just even seeing data on high school graduation, college enrollment, and college persistence has been really powerful. And seeing it broken out by school—how many students are going on to postsecondary and where they're going. I think that's informed our practice in terms of which colleges we are trying to build a stronger relationship with since a lot of our students are going there. You know, create bridge and transition programing. (HPS staff member)

While participation in the Open Doors program increased the number and type of re-engagement opportunities for HPS students, participants noted that their involvement in the RMP Opportunity Youth Work Group and subsequent King County Reengagement Provider Network significantly enhanced the quality of this programming.

HPS staff members and community partners all offered examples of how RMP's efforts helped to increase pathway capacity and connections in building a re-engagement system. They gained new resources, increased their knowledge about other programs, and aligned their practices to promote quality.

> *They've also developed web resources and that kind of stuff that just make the whole process of finding alternative options much, much easier. It's been instrumental. We've been going to these meetings since they started, and it's been huge to building my knowledge of programs.* (HPS staff member)

> *The folks in the Opportunity Youth Work Group have been instrumental in encouraging and supporting the system. I think we're all better off because they've done such a great job of building a sense of connection between these disparate programs … There's a lot of community education that Nicole and CCER brought to bear on the conversation. Districts started hearing it. Then they compared notes and models were shared, then United Way jumped in and provided some more funding for organizations to take the leap and be supportive of expansion. All those things conspired to build a system.* (HPS partner)

These cross-programmatic connections are especially critical in the re-engagement space since youth often move between programs and may need assistance in navigating the system. In addition to learning from each other locally, RMP support enabled HPS staff members to participate in national gatherings such as the Back on Track Institute, where they were able to get further perspective on their work and bring new ideas back to the region.

The RMP strengthened collaboration across districts and sectors region wide, which created an environment that sparked or reinforced these changes within Highline. In response to our questions about RMP's influence on the broader region, most participants offered examples of stronger cross-district collaboration. There appears to be an emerging "culture of collaboration" in which working together across districts is becoming an expectation. Increased collaboration is taking place at multiple levels: among superintendents, among content-area "role-alikes," and even among board members.

> *I'll go back to the relationships, the collective impact - this notion of collaboration across districts versus competition. I think that's a change [due to RMP]. Even with the change in superintendents, I still believe that has happened and that it continues to happen with our staffs, too. [For example], the P–3 leaders get together, the bilingual leaders get together … I think that's changed the culture a little bit.* (HPS leader)

Several participants cited the RTT application and funding allocation process as a critical event that sparked cross-district collaboration. By working together regularly over time, the districts started to develop "a sense of we; not me" as they made tough decisions around priority issues and resource allocation. Those working in the highest levels of leadership noted that cross-district collaboration is a "new way of working" that runs counter to conventional norms.

> *[RMP] have showcased the power of collaborating and that it isn't any one system that can get done what we need to get done. We've got to work together and that means use resources in new and different ways; think about policies and practices that bring*

> *systems together in new and different ways. Leaders have to behave differently—it isn't just my kingdom to make these decisions. I'm a part of an ecosystem, and my part has to work well with other parts for the real dream to happen. I think they've brought all of that to the forefront.* (HPS leader)

Drawing from their experience in HPS as well as in other communities, case study participants described several benefits associated with this increased collaboration. Many cite the value of districts "learning from each other" so that they don't "recreate the wheel." For example, districts are excited about the prospect of learning from each other around issues such as responsive practice, assessment, outreach for kindergarten registration, and community engagement. Districts are also using regionwide data reports produced by RMP to "benchmark" their progress, in terms of celebrating successes and aspiring to reach higher levels of performance, as one HPS staff member noted.

> *I think [RMP has] given us a context or a reference point. I think normally districts see themselves as a … context of one. And, to be in the context of a region … when we can say that we're leading or innovating in a given area, then it's inspiring. And when we're lagging in a given area it can put pressure to … to step up our game. I think it helps in both ways, but it gives us a reference point for where we are ahead and where we are behind.* (HPS staff member)

Finally, participants suggested that there is "power in numbers" when districts take a regional approach to education issues. For example, this strategy proved successful in the RTT proposal, in terms of demonstrating strong regional commitment and "divvying up" the work among districts. Districts have also pooled resources to share costs—for example, to bring in national speakers or coordinate multiple language translations for shared documents in the region.

HPS leaders and staff members also mentioned the power of communicating to the public in a "unified voice" about the value of education reforms. In particular, being part of RMP may provide "cover" for districts as they take bold steps to implement new practices that challenge entrenched norms and require widespread community support.

> *There is power in numbers. There is power in having multiple leaders talk about the importance of building systems from early learning into elementary school. There is power among multiple leaders talking about creating a … postsecondary-going culture in our high schools. There is absolutely power when districts are coming together around issues about racial equity and social justice. I think we see that playing out now with discipline and that sort of thing. The more that's not just one issue in one district, but it is a regional goal and a regional effort, there is strength in that.* (HPS leader)

Given the critical press coverage during the case study of HPS restorative discipline efforts, several participants expressed hopefulness that RMP would speak up in support of HPS and make clear to the public that other districts were adopting similar practices.

To a lesser degree, many participants also cited improved cross-sector collaboration in the region. RMP "pushes" districts to expand the role of community-based organizations and relays the message that "districts can't do it alone." RMP does this by highlighting the value of community-based organizations and convening sectors in a "common conversation" about their shared goals and progress.

> *They [RMP] has really brought folks together in a different way … there are system folks, there are K–12 folks, there are postsecondary folks, there is workforce development council, there is policy, government—really just bringing people together to … say what are we up against, what are our best solutions, and how can we work together to move further and fast?* (HPS staff member)

Chapter 4
Challenges and Recommendations

In addition to describing the Highline experience with RMP, we asked participants to speak more broadly to the lessons learned about collective impact in the region and beyond. While some of the themes presented below echo previous evaluation findings, they offer a more detailed look at how K–12 educators perceive the RMP. A number of participants were able to draw upon experiences beyond Highline since they were involved in the RMP through other districts and organizations.

The Challenge of Collective Impact

The RMP invites HPS and their partners to approach their work—and each other—in a different way. The idea of being part of a larger South King County "ecosystem" presents new opportunities as well as challenges for districts.

Case study participants cite three main challenges associated with their participation in this collective impact partnership: tension between local and regional priorities, disconnects between the RMP and their everyday work, and difficulty in maintaining a focus on systems change. We describe each of these challenges below.

Tension between local and regional priorities makes it difficult to align efforts across organizations. Each of the seven school districts has its own strategic plan. While there are similar issues across the districts, many participants noted that districts are often in different phases of implementation. For example, some districts have staff members who are ready to implement a new strategy that emerges through the RMP, while others are in a pre-planning phase or are concentrating their energy on an entirely different aspect of the cradle-to-career pathway. This makes it difficult to identify regionwide strategies and maintain momentum.

> *Sometimes districts are at different places so they might not all work on the same strategy at the exact same time. They have to build on where they are, where they have momentum. That's just some smart thinking that districts have to do when they join on to a collective impact project: Is this going to further the work that you have laid out that you're going to do in your community? I think many times it can and does, but you have to think that through. You might not move on the early learning piece this year. You may be stuck in the middle of some really critical high school to college things that you're trying to fix … and you can't take this on at this time. You're going to start that work maybe next year, and that has to be okay.* (HPS leader)

> *It really needs to be driven by the districts themselves because their needs are specific … Then it becomes tricky because one or two districts have a need in one area and another*

> *couple districts have a need in another area … when you have districts that are significantly involved in the work and districts that are new to the work, the people who are significantly involved are the ones who are sharing all the time. You end up leaving thinking, 'Well, I'm glad to share but I've learned nothing that I can then use to further my work … You have to have some common ground.* (HPS staff)

Similarly, community-based partners expressed that they struggled to maintain their involvement in "bigger picture" regional work when faced with pressing needs in their own organizations and neighborhoods. For both districts and community partners, participation in the RMP has required them to "make hard commitments" and "sacrifices" by reallocating time, staff, and resources from within their own organizations.

RMP partners experience "disconnects" that pose a barrier to deeper engagement. While they see great promise in collaboration, they note that there is a need to make RMP more clearly relevant to the everyday experiences of partners, to use RMP data for continuous improvement, and to increase understanding between community-based organizations and schools.

First, many participants highlight a need to better explain how RMP activities, such as meetings, are relevant for "building-level practice." They suggest that this is important for maintaining their own interest and involvement and for ensuring that the collaborative work has impact on the day-to-day work in communities and schools.

> *If you would survey your average Highline employee … if you ask about the Road Map, there's about a 25 percent chance they would know about the RTT grant, about a 5 percent chance they would know about anything else. Their awareness of even its existence or its purposes is very limited. So, I feel like the first step is to really make sure there is a clear shared theory of action, and it would require people to fundamentally shift their orientation to their work … I think that if the Road Map Project is going to impact instructional practice and ultimately outcomes for kids, that sense of purpose and identity needs to strengthen.* (HPS staff member)

> *When I think about how much you can pay attention to internally and externally, Road Map is kind of in between—it's not really external, but the people do not live here in the building or take the same hits as they come; that makes them external to some extent.* (HPS leader)

Several participants echoed this idea that RMP remains "external" to the work of many HPS staff and partners. For example, some view RMP activities as an "obligation" they need to fulfill to a funder. Without a common sense of purpose and a theory of action to connect their work, several participants struggled to maintain their involvement in RMP work groups. They expressed that sometimes the groups were "meeting just to meet," in terms of reporting out on their work rather than moving forward in taking collective action around a set of "deeper" strategies.

> *What were we trying to achieve by coming together? … I understand the complexity of this so I'm not meaning it to be a criticism. It just feels really surface level, so I'm interested in being in a space where the work goes deeper. I get why you bring people together for celebrations and all that, but me walking around and looking at people's posters is not going to get me where I need to go. Really digging into whatever the focus is more deeply, looking into the research, figuring out what others are doing, and how we can learn from that. What outcomes are being achieved using which interventions—that kind of thing.* (HPS staff member)

The second set of disconnects relate to the limited use of data for continuous improvement. District leaders and staff members noted a "missed opportunity" to use RMP data beyond "benchmarking" their progress against other districts. While there may be discussions taking place within departments, there is "no districtwide discussion" about the RMP report. Part of this challenge is the timing—districts are looking at their data more frequently than RMP. Another is that HPS is able to "drill down" and further disaggregate their data on issues such as school discipline, as one district staff member explained.

> *Those education results quarterly meetings—I would say that's valuable for comparing ourselves to other districts. What's difficult is that we have our own internal measures and datasets based on the goals that we've set as a district. Sometimes the datasets through Road Map are in alignment and sometimes they're not … through years of looking at that data and … [and] trying to really drill down on disproportionality … we recognize the need to drill down even further. In some respects we're a little bit ahead of what Road Map is doing.* (HPS staff member)

Echoing themes from the 2015 Road Map Project evaluation report conducted by Education Northwest, participants also called for the increased use of formative data to reflect on the interim progress of the initiative and "celebrate incremental wins." This may help to fine-tune the goals and strategies that guide collaboration, especially as RTT funding winds down.

> *That's why it might be time to circle back, look at our maps, what did we accomplish? I think you might find that there are areas where we did a whole bunch of stuff and areas where we kept hitting the same barrier. Other districts might have done this work, but not that work, and that's where I think you could learn and figure out some things … It might still be too early, but you might get to a point pretty quickly—did it change outcomes? Did it do what we thought it did? My biggest annoyance [with] Race to the Top was all the outcomes were kid outcomes. There were no midrange adult behavior outcomes.* (HPS partner)

The final disconnect is that several participants perceive that there a lack of understanding from many RMP partners about how K–12 schools and districts operate. They cite several factors—schedules, budgets, regulations, bureaucratic processes—that constrain the ability of schools and districts to be responsive to the innovative ideas that surface through the RMP. There is a

sense that community-based organizations, grantmakers, and the CCER staff sometimes make recommendations and requests that are not realistic and that may have unintended consequences.

> *If I could say anything to the Road Map Project … it is to keep in mind the building-level practice and the context that we're all working in. I could solve a lot of problems with a lot of personnel. We have great ideas, but we don't always have the resources for those. It really hurts because we want to encourage people to be creative and think outside the box. We think outside the box, and are creative, and then we shut it down and say, 'Well, we can't pay for that.'* (HPS staff member)

> *Trying to navigate and work in a school system is very difficult. It's very bureaucratic … so if you haven't worked in a bureaucratic system and you haven't actually done the work then I would ask that you just stop judging me. That was also a place where the meetings got very tense: You had community partners really district-bashing and making assumptions about what they were seeing.* (HPS staff member)

Given these competing priorities and disconnects, many participants suggested that the region has not yet adopted a full set of systems-level strategies. For example, they said that many RMP districts struggle to move from a "project mentality" focused on their own district to one of collective action that benefits the entire region. There was a desire to see more shared work across districts and organizations rather than reporting out in meetings about their individual work. Several participants noted that there was still a lot of "parallel play" among the districts, where they were working on the same issues but in isolation.

> *I actually don't think the Road Map districts are leveraging each other very much … I think there's a lot of parallel play going on and there's not a ton of sharedness. I think there have been a couple small wins, like the common kindergarten entry dates, but in general I think there is a lot of room for improvement in terms of coverage of the entire region.* (HPS partner)

In summary, HPS leaders, staff members, and partners suggested that competing priorities and disconnects from everyday practice pose a challenge to realizing the type of regional, systems-level change the RMP seeks to achieve.

Stakeholder Recommendations

Study participants offered several recommendations for strengthening the RMP and engaging school districts and their partners.

Focus RMP on "high-leverage" strategies that require a regional approach. Given the challenges of aligning a cradle-to-career agenda across diverse districts and partners, many participants wanted to see the RMP support collective action on a set of priority strategies.

Participants stressed the importance of selecting strategies on which there is a strong sense of urgency, opportunities for cross-district learning, and a clear rationale for collaboration.

> *My advice moving forward has been to pick two or three things that are high leverage but also—and most importantly—are better done together than apart … I think when the RMP is at its best it's lifting up positive examples in the region and promoting the idea that we should learn from each other.* (HPS leader)

> *Is there something that we all own equally? That is what I get excited about. Then I am going to be at the table, because a) no one is going to make decisions without me, b) it goes in the direction I think it should, and c) I am going to make sure that people know that I buy in and that I fully support it, and that I have named people in my district and not just let ESD or someone else carry it. It's a passion*. (HPS leader)

In terms of specific issues, participants most frequently suggested that the RMP cohere around a "regional approach" to promoting racial equity. This includes aligning strategies around responsive practice, recruitment and retention of a representative workforce, and family engagement. They note that these are systems-level issues that all the districts are grappling with. For example, participants noted that districts currently compete with each other to recruit and retain teachers of color, when they could be working together on a regional approach. HPS district leaders and staff members offered several ideas for how RMP could support a regional approach to equity.

> *What if Road Map did like an affinity group for teachers of color, and then we did something around that, and there was this way to help school systems think about how do you attract and retain teachers of color … That could create that sense of community/urgency around that and create some shared experiences where people like me and principals would have to really force ourselves into a room where power would be neutralized, and we would have to think about and talk about how to work together to improve conditions so that we retain those teachers [of color].* (HPS staff member)

> *Culturally responsive teaching, culturally responsive family engagement … If we can come together as a region, then we can take it on and be one strong school district voice about our expectations and what we believe … We are tackling social justice and equity in Highline; we shouldn't be tackling that alone. We share very similar demographics with Renton, Tukwila, certainly with South Seattle … We are taking hits on our lower suspension policy. All of our other districts also adopted similar policies around the process, but they have been silent … Why can't we come out regionally about it? … Say it's the right thing to do and tell people why*. (HPS leader)

Other priority issues identified by participants include a regional approach around high school graduation and postsecondary transitions, more policy work in the B–3 space, and data alignment and sharing across sectors (e.g., community-based organizations and schools). To

make this regional work sustainable, several participants would like to see RMP plan more intentionally to "on-board" new district leaders since superintendent turnover is "inevitable."

Move beyond convening work groups to supporting more aligned action across the districts. This includes identifying more opportunities for the RMP to "be a model for the state" around data and policy, brokering resources on behalf of the seven districts (e.g., negotiating reduced assessment costs), and building public will for reform. A key motivation for joint community outreach is helping districts "tell our story" so that the public understands the rationale for systems changes.

> *I think documenting our work and telling our story, both successes and challenges, is really important … there is a lot to be learned from what we've gotten right and what we've gotten wrong. I do think Road Map can help tell the stories a little bit more because districts just don't have the capacity or resources or necessarily the expertise. If we were marketing geniuses we'd be in marketing. We're not; we're educators. We're so busy doing the work we don't often talk about how we talk about the work. Especially today, in the climate that we're in and especially with the ubiquity of social media, there are plenty of people telling our stories for us, and they're not getting it right … because there is so much criticism of what's happening in public schools right now, and I think the Road Map could maybe do more around being that external voice that helps people in the community understand what is and what isn't.* (HPS leader)

Continue to "lift up" scalable models, yet do so in a way that provides resources and respects the autonomy of school districts and organizations. While participants expressed a lot of support for RMP's effort to promote learning across the districts, they also expressed the need for caution. First, some practices are more easily scalable than others—for example in-school SAT testing versus aligning math or professional development curriculum. Participants recommended that RMP concentrate on promoting models and practices that are most easily integrated into existing structures.

While they are interested in mutual learning, both community partners and districts expressed some resistance to outside influence on their internal organizational activities.

> *If we have somebody else coming and telling us how to do it I would say, 'No thank you,' because what we are doing is working and is working well for us … I think we [need to be able] to get to the space where we can explore and see what we can get from each other.* (HPS partner)

> *At the very beginning of this work, a lot of communication happened within district to executive leadership that felt like people were taking credit or playing external watchdog versus actually supporting the work. I think that has been a big transition—figuring out how we can work together and not just have folks on the outside shining a light on the work but how can we actually find ways that our partners can engage in the work and*

support the progress of the work. I think that has been an important evolution. (HPS staff member)

There is also a strong interest in how this collective effort can increase resources in the region and can improve how current resources are used. Participants suggested that RMP could do more to "build capacity" of local community-based organizations and to map the "service deserts" within the communities served by HPS.

What I've observed in my time here is that [White Center] has become a hotspot for resources and support, which is good but then it kind of reaches a point of saturation or there are gaps in the resources that are available. So I would have partners come to me, just random, we really want to get into White Center. Well, actually we have nothing down in Des Moines … There are actually significant needs down there and there are not resources … it would be really cool for Road Map to be able to identify available resources and where there are gaps. (HPS staff)

Through the aligned funders group, participants noted that the RMP has an important role to play in bringing new resources to the table to support implementation of new models and practices. One participant suggested that in the future RMP could do more to engage smaller South King County municipalities as a source of funding for schools and community-based organizations.

Part of the political landscape is that—as the demographics have shifted—the suburban cities haven't really managed to shift resources to support those changing demographics … There's a need for advocacy and encouragement on the part of the suburban cities to step up their commitment to making sure all families are successful in their communities. (HPS partner)

Finally, partners would like to see a more concerted effort to plan for the end of RTT funding.

Maximize CCER's external position to be a "bridge" and "referee." Study participants view the "external" nature of RMP as both a challenge and as a resource. First, RMP could do more to "bridge" the differences between community-based organizations and schools. Some partners say this involves helping community-based organizations better understand how schools work, while other partners highlight the need for schools to understand what "authentic engagement" with the community looks like. While there is a strong foundation in place, many participants suggest that CCER is still learning how to support this work, especially in terms of engaging grassroots community-based organizations.

Authentic community engagement [means understanding] that not all of those relationships are going to be provided by academically oriented organizations. They are going to be provided by community-based organizations that may not have any academic orientation at all, but they [can help] build strong community through effective

engagement of parents and families within a cultural context. That sort of exploration about what it is that builds strong communities and how that leads to better educational outcomes is a narrative that could be explored a little more in depth. (HPS partner)

One part of it is helping to mobilize the region around difficult issues that superintendents and other key leaders have to take on to get the outcomes we're after. The other part is mobilizing and supporting the community [organizations] that are sometimes at odds with the districts. I think CCER is still figuring out how to do that. Sometimes it's like bringing together two people who represent maybe the district and maybe the CBO and starting to do the work to help build trust, but that starts out pretty messy. It starts with people who don't care for one another, who are pissed off at one another. You have to figure out your way in that. You don't want to make it worse, you want to make it better, but you want to be value add in doing it. Helping with the will on both sides is something that I think CCER has to continue to figure out. (HPS leader)

One way to do this is to facilitate RMP meetings in a way that "neutralizes power relationships" that exist between districts and their contracted partners. This includes making sure that smaller organizations are represented and that districts don't dominate the conversation.

As part of this process, some participants suggest RMP could use its outside position to help districts "shift their mindsets" about students and families. One HPS leader applauded recent efforts to amplify the voices of students and families in the RMP, such as a speech by an undocumented student at a recent Education Results Network meeting. Another idea proposed by an HPS staff member was for RMP to present more qualitative data from the perspectives of students and families, which may offer a "counter narrative" to the emphasis on deficits.

I think something that could create a counter narrative to that story and really highlighting stories of resilience and strength, [and] that our communities know how to do stuff. If there's a way that Road Map could tell those stories … it helps school districts understand the conditions that they need to create to foster and … how to come to terms with our own racism. (HPS staff member)

Summary

Overall, participants reported many benefits from HPS' involvement in the RMP collective impact initiative and expressed a desire to move to action on aligned, high-leverage strategies shared by the entire region. Participants also suggested that CCER, as the backbone organization for RMP, should continue its supportive work while also highlighting scalable models and resources for customized use within the region. Finally, participants suggested that CCER could do more to capitalize on its external position, for example by serving as a bridge to more cross-sector communication, collaboration, and coordination.

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Appendix

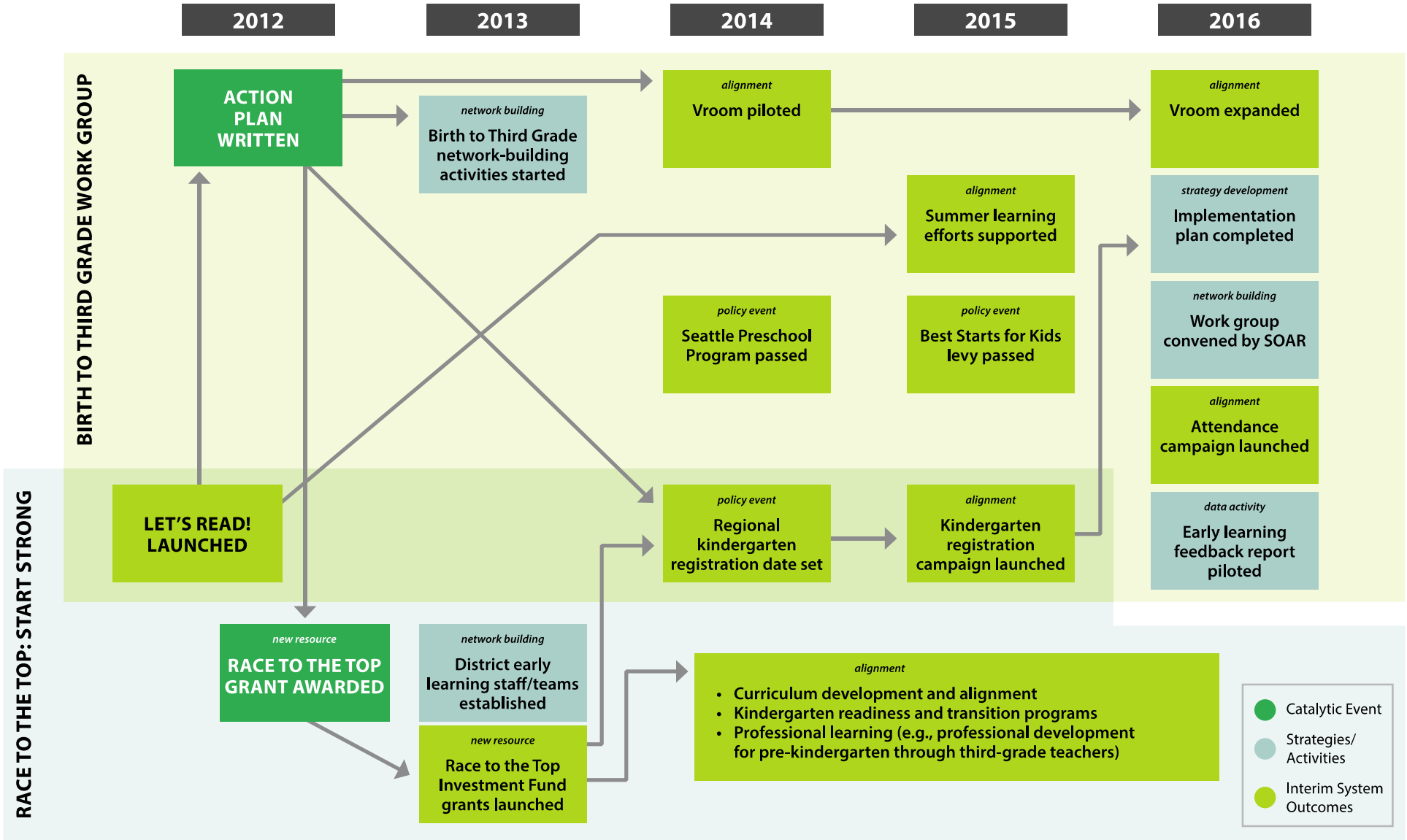
Table A1. Key events in the history of Road Map Project (RMP)

2010	• RMP outreach and mobilization phase started • RMP goal and indicators chosen • RMP launched with a conference • Education Results Network and work groups began
2011	• *Road Map Project Baseline Report* released • Community Network Steering Committee and Advocates Council established • Small Grants Fund debuted • College Bound Scholarship signup campaign launched
2012	• Birth to Third Grade and High School-to-College action plans (version 1) finalized • Let's Read! summer reading campaign launched • Road Map to College system of supports created • RMP receives Race to the Top funding • *Road Map Project 2012 Results Report* released (first in series)
2013	• English Language Learner action plan finalized • Regional parent forum hosted • Parent engagement indicators developed • First Discover U week held • *Road Map Project 2013 Results Report* released
2014	• Opportunity Youth work began with grant from the Aspen Institute • Re-engagement Provider Network launched • High School to College Completion (version 2) and Opportunity Youth (version 1) action plans finalized • World Language Credit Program implemented regionwide • Education Results Roundtables brought data to communities • Rapid Resource Fund created • First-ever RMP Awards Ceremony held • RMP sent regional delegation to Harvard Family Engagement Institute • *Road Map Project 2014 Results Report* released
2015	• Opportunity Youth work won Social Innovation Fund award • Reconnect to Opportunity effort launched
2016	• *Road Map Project 2015 Results Report* released • *Community and Technical Colleges* report published • Birth to Third Grade implementation plan (version 2) completed • Strategic Refresh Process launched to revisit goals, strategies, and governance • Black Student Project launched • First regional family engagement institute hosted

Road Map Project

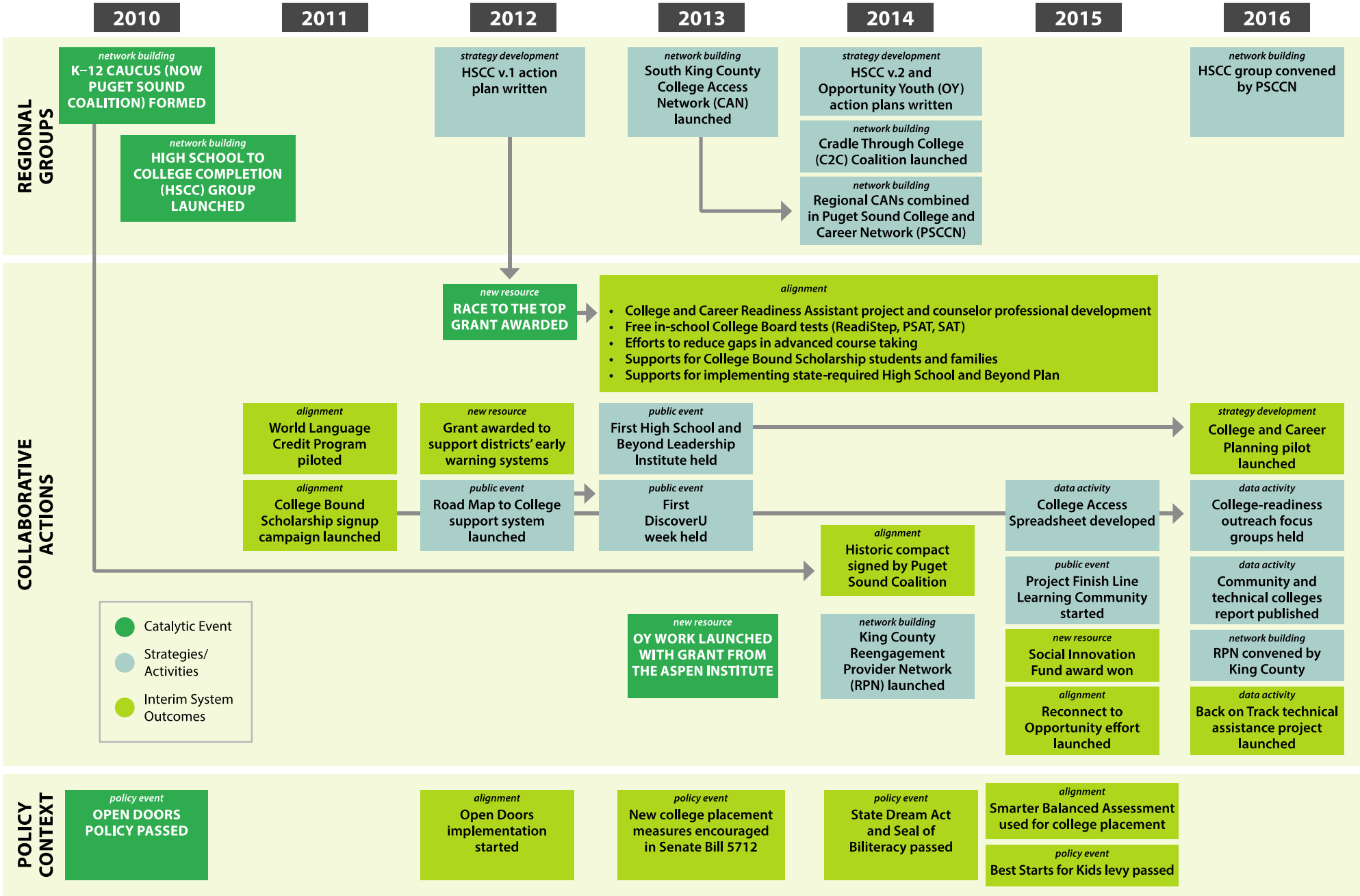
Critical Events in the Birth-to-Third-Grade Space

Aligned practices are increasing in the region, with new structures, targeted funding, and cohesive strategy development supporting the work



Highline Case S

Road Map Project

Critical Events in the High School-to-Postsecondary Space

Continued strategic and system alignment work supports regional network building, postsecondary readiness and completion, and reengagement efforts