



Education Partnerships Coalition

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.99 Education Partnerships Coalition Fund

For more information:

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$1,596.21 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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Legislative Charge

The legislative charge is to report on the education partnership program outlined in [Minnesota Statutes 2025, section 124D.99, subdivision 6](#). By December 15 of each odd-numbered year, the commissioner shall submit a report on the education partnership program to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees having jurisdiction over kindergarten through grade 12 education, early childhood education, economic development, and human services. At a minimum, the report must summarize grantee activities, identify grant recipients and awards, analyze program performance measures and outcomes, and make any recommendations for legislative changes.

Executive Summary

The Education Partnerships Coalition Fund, enacted in 2017, establishes a program at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to support a coordinated network of local education partnerships. The Education Partnerships Coalition (EPC) aims to create a comprehensive, evidence-based support network across state, regional, and local levels. These local partnerships serve as lead organizations or anchor entities, responsible for developing a local, data-driven infrastructure within a specific geographic area. They achieve this by aligning efforts, integrating proven solutions across sectors, removing efficiency barriers to ensure programming is scaled and sustained, and placing schools at the center of family and community supports. The primary goal of this infrastructure is to close opportunity gaps and improve educational and developmental outcomes for children and their families, particularly in communities facing poverty and barriers to economic stability.

Each Education Partnership community works to define solutions that impact key outcomes, including:

- Kindergarten readiness and youth development.
- Grade 3 reading proficiency and middle school mathematics.
- High school graduation and postsecondary educational enrollment and completion.
- Physical and mental health.
- Development of career skills and readiness.
- Parental engagement and development.
- Community engagement and programmatic alignment.
- Reduction of remedial education.

Introduction

The Education Partnerships Coalition is comprised of nine communities across Minnesota.

Seven are Neighborhood Partnership Grants: These are sustaining grants for existing education partnership programs serving a defined geographic area within a single municipality. They include Austin Aspires (Austin), Cradle 2 Career (Rochester), RiseUp Partnership (Red Wing), Generation Next (Minneapolis and Saint Paul), Northfield Healthy Community Initiative (Northfield), Children First (St. Louis Park and Hopkins), and United Way of Central Minnesota (St. Cloud).

Two are Regional Neighborhood Partnership Grants: These are implementation grants for existing education partnership programs serving a defined geographic area encompassing an entire municipality or parts of multiple municipalities. They are the Northside Achievement Zone (Minneapolis) and the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (St. Paul).

The coalition uses the collective impact model to build the necessary civic infrastructure in local communities, driving meaningful change and delivering measurable results. Their cradle-to-career approach actively engages around 310,000 children, youth, and families in the communities served across Minnesota, creating opportunities and breaking down barriers. The EPC and its nine member organizations actively partner with more than 600 organizations and individuals across Minnesota, including neighborhood volunteers, community-based organizations, local schools and school districts, county and state agencies, statewide coalitions, and elected officials at all levels of government.

Goals and Statewide Alignment

All Education Partnerships Coalition grantees focus on a common set of collective goals that prioritize closing opportunity gaps and improving the educational and developmental outcomes of children, youth and families in their communities.

This grant program intentionally complements existing statewide initiatives administered by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Its goals align with and support the state of Minnesota's Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness (CACR) (formerly known as the World's Best Workforce) and the federally required Every Student Succeeds Act accountability systems.

The Education Partnership Coalition (EPC) grant program also aligns with several other key MDE programs and initiatives, including:

- The Grow Your Own grant program.
- The Read Act.
- The Full-Service Community Schools grant program.
- Both the 21st Century Community Learning Centers and the After School Community Learning Grant programs.

Data Infrastructure and National Affiliations

EPC members are working to improve access to better, more reliable data statewide, which connects them with the work of MDE's Data Practices and Analytics division, the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership, and the new Department of Children, Youth and Families.

Additionally, all EPC members are affiliated with either the Promise Neighborhood Institute or StriveTogether, both of which are national collective impact networks that support communities in achieving cradle-to-career success.

Analysis

The overall analysis of the annual reports submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) as well as the department's site visits to each grantee is positive. Each community has a unique set of strategies being implemented that are best suited to address their needs. Through the review of the annual reports, MDE has determined that each grantee is in compliance of the intent of the grant and is working toward goal areas in a proactive and efficient manner.

Below is a small sampling of highlights from each grantee:

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
Austin Aspires	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Kindergarten Readiness and Youth Development</p> <p>In January 2025, Austin Aspires started the Providers Encouraging Providers and Parents (PEPP) program. This program was created through the vision of a Core Team of convened in-home childcare providers. It continues to serve nearly 80 children weekly. Starting in April of 2025, the Early Childhood Navigator began bringing social-emotional and educational topics directly into in-home childcare settings, while also prioritizing the mental health of providers. PEPP hosts monthly provider socials and produces a newsletter focused on wellness and professional support, thereby creating a stronger, healthier network of caregivers. Through this program, in-home providers also participated in trainings on autism, behavior, and mental health.</p> <p>Development of Career Skills and Readiness</p> <p>In collaboration with the Hormel Institute and the Workforce Center, students from the Aspiring Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT) program participated in a paid summer internship (7 students in June 2024; 6 students in June 2025). The process began with the Workforce Center, which assisted 13 or more students in applying and submitting all necessary documents. Once selected, students attended an orientation before spending 6 days working in Hormel Institute labs and engaging in authentic science research. For most of these students, this was their first time applying for a job/internship and their first work experience.</p>

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
Children First	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Parental Engagement and Development</p> <p>Children First’s Latino Parents Empowerment Group (LPEG) provided empowering workshops for Latino families, focusing on system navigation, resource access, and community connection.</p> <p>A significant increase was noted in parents who knew where to look for services (from 71% to 87.5%). Furthermore, 100% of parents reported a strong sense of community, increased comfort interacting with systems and services, and that they found the workshops useful.</p> <p>High School Graduation</p> <p>Children First’s Youth for Change Coalition (Y4CC) centers youth decision-making on mental health, inclusion, and wellbeing, demonstrating youth leadership as a driving force for community change.</p> <p>Returning members showed 100% "High" hopefulness for the future of youth in St. Louis Park. New members saw strong gains in self-rated leadership confidence, and both groups reported major increases in their sense of involvement in community engagement and decision-making.</p>
Generation Next	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Kindergarten Readiness and Youth Development</p> <p>Generation Next continued to convene its Early Childhood Quality & Access Project Team to coordinate activities around kindergarten readiness</p> <p>The Early Childhood Quality and Access Project Team analyzed and shared local policy impacts to help partners understand how legislation and funding impact access to high-quality early care and education.</p> <p>Postsecondary Education Completion or Attainment</p> <p>Generation Next continued to advance efforts in the postsecondary space through the work of its Postsecondary Preparation & Persistence project team.</p> <p>To strengthen culturally sustaining student support, Generation Next hosted a Practitioner’s Forum for college faculty and staff. The event featured Dr. Calvin Hadley, who presented on the critical role of self-efficacy as a necessary tool for Black and Indigenous men to achieve academic and professional success.</p>

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
Northfield Healthy Community Initiative (HCI)	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Grade 3 Reading Proficiency and Middle School Mathematics</p> <p>Northfield Public Schools has embraced both structured literacy and family engagement for English Learners and is seeing results. Statewide in Minnesota, the percentage of third graders reaching proficiency standards has dropped seven percentage points since 2019. But Northfield's trends are moving in the opposite direction.</p> <p>In March of 2023, 68% of Northfield third graders were reading at grade level, up from 59% the prior year and nearly matching pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>Key Reading Gains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The highest gain in 2024 MCA test scores was seen in third graders with no intervention. • In 2023, kindergarten students' screening scores showed that 81% were at or above reading level. <p>Substantial gains were also seen across key demographics on the STAR reading assessment (at or above the 50th percentile): The percent of students of color increased from 48% to 55%; male students increased from 61% to 64%; and students on free and reduced-price lunch increased from 45% to 51%.</p> <p>Math Success:</p> <p>Recent data shows proficiency rates in Grade 6 Math for students on free and reduced-price lunch increased for the third year and are 9% above the state average.</p> <p>Development of Career Skills and Readiness.</p> <p>Northfield Community College Collaborative served 785 students to date, including associates degrees, state transfer pathway degrees, and certificate programs identified as high-need by local employers - such as public safety, emergency medical technician, and certified nursing assistant. The primary gains in recent years have been an increased understanding of local workforce needs and being able to align education systems towards those needs.</p>

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
RiseUp Partnership	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Physical and Mental Health</p> <p>RiseUp reached 165 youth with mentoring, tutoring, and other supports, totaling 6,627 hours of engagement. This included 252 hours of mental-health or crisis support and 655 hours of tutoring. As a result, 96% of youth report having at least three trusted adults in their lives, and 79% feel more confident handling difficult situations.</p> <p>Parental Engagement and Development</p> <p>RiseUp provided more than 500 hours of one-on-one support to 42 families, helping them with transportation, health insurance, benefits, and even emergency financial needs. During the 2024-2025 school year, 100% of participating families reported they now feel more confident finding resources, more stable, and well-supported by the RiseUp Partnership Family Navigator.</p> <p>Community Engagement and Programmatic Alignment</p> <p>The Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families of Goodhue County represents the strategic merger of three previously independent collaboration tables that worked in parallel toward shared goals. These groups included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Goodhue County Education District’s leadership table (school district superintendents and principals). 2. The Goodhue County Child and Family Collaborative (school district leaders and Executive Directors from community agencies). 3. RiseUp Partnership’s Youth Partnership (school staff, community agency staff, and local government representatives). <p>Recognizing overlapping priorities, duplicated efforts, and the opportunity for greater collective impact, the three groups aligned and merged into a single structure with unified governance, shared priorities, and coordinated action. The new combined group now connects and coordinates with around 40 local and county stakeholders, creating a collaborative system working together rather than separate tables operating simultaneously.</p> <p>This strengthened partnership provides a streamlined approach to policy development, resource alignment, and coordinated support for families and youth.</p>

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
Rochester Cradle 2 Career (C2C)	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Kindergarten Readiness and Youth Development</p> <p>Rochester C2C's Prenatal to Age 3 Network has identified that pregnant people in Olmsted County are accessing prenatal care less than the state average. Furthermore, access rates are even lower if a pregnant person identifies as Black/African American, is age 15-19, and/or has less than a high school diploma.</p> <p>Using these data, their network has implemented two strategies related to doula supports. The first is about building relationships between doulas (specifically those from diverse backgrounds) and medical teams. To date, both Mayo Clinic and Olmsted Medical Center have hosted meetings between these groups.</p> <p>The second strategy focuses on building relationships with communities within Rochester C2C's community to provide doulas education so that more are aware of these resources. Rochester C2C was recognized, along with its county partners, with the Department of Health's Betty Hubbard Award last year!</p> <p>High School Graduation and Postsecondary Educational Enrollment</p> <p>Rochester C2C's High School Graduation Network used disaggregated graduation rates to implement a strategy for students, specifically Black/African American, Hispanic/Latine, and students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds, around financial aid completion. Data shows that just by completing a financial aid application increases graduation rates and significantly impacts post-secondary enrollment. From year 1 to year 2 of strategy implementation Rochester C2C's network has offered more sessions, seen more students and these students have had a 50% gain in submission rates. Rochester C2C is planning for one more year of this pilot. After collecting 3 years of positive data, they plan to propose a scalable strategy to their board that would impact policy and practice.</p> <p>Reduction of Remedial Education</p> <p>Rochester C2C held its annual Education Summit. The Education Summit is a free networking and professional development event for youth-serving organizations and individuals in Rochester C2C's community. The event showcases the work of Cradle 2 Career, other collaboratives in our community and all the required components in the state legislation for EPC funding.</p>

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
United Way of Central Minnesota (UWCM)	\$200,000 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Grade 3 Reading Proficiency</p> <p>UWCM partnered with community organizations and St. Cloud Area Schools to identify needs for out-of-school programming related to the READ Act and Family and Community Engagement. UWCM designed and coordinated the facilitation of staff and volunteer training for local out-of-school partners and created a digital literacy resource site for the community. This site includes short videos featuring strategies backed by the Science of Reading, guidance for designing literacy-rich programming, tangible activities with opportunities to “check out” manipulatives that support literacy development, and activities that intentionally incorporate literacy with a focus on Black youth.</p> <p>Development of Career Skills and Readiness</p> <p>UWCM plays a key role in the Exploring Potential Interests and Careers (EPIC) coalition, which hosts over 4,000 students annually at St. Cloud Technical and Community College for a day-long, hands-on career exploration event. During the event, local businesses, government agencies, and employers design experiences aligned with the career cluster wheel.</p> <p>In addition, UWCM collaborates with school districts to provide students with support that creates clearer post-graduation pathways. This support includes the exploration of local higher education institutions, assistance with college applications and FAFSA completion, and exposure to internship and apprenticeship opportunities.</p> <p>Community Engagement and Programmatic Alignment</p> <p>UWCM facilitates five community-led networks that convene partners and parents monthly to drive action around identified needs.</p> <p>These networks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Childhood Network: Focused on creating shared language around the "Successful Learner Equation" for all caregivers. • Somali Youth Network: Focused on early literacy and family engagement. • Black Youth Network: Centered on elevating youth voice. • Post-Graduation Pathways Network: Connects employers, schools, and youth to support successful transitions into the workforce.

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ)	\$1,300,00 (FY24 and FY25)	<p data-bbox="561 300 1154 325">Kindergarten Readiness and Youth Development</p> <p data-bbox="561 352 1464 699">NAZ provided 220 early childhood scholarships and placed 329 scholars in quality early childhood education programs. Scholars demonstrated growth in meeting or exceeding developmental expectations, as measured by the Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) assessment. In Fall 2024, 40% of scholars met or exceeded expectations across six developmental domains, indicating kindergarten readiness. This increased to 55% in winter and held at a tentative 49% in spring. This progress reflects the increased engagement of families, facilitated by NAZ Scholar Success Coaches, along with the implementation of child development supports, including NAZ’s Early Childhood Toolkit.</p> <p data-bbox="561 735 1300 760">Grade 3 Reading Proficiency and Middle School Mathematics</p> <p data-bbox="561 787 1464 1134">NAZ implemented a pilot of Carnegie Learning’s digital tutoring platforms at Hospitality House and later expanded it to Nellie Stone Johnson Elementary and Ascension Catholic School, delivering personalized learning in reading and math. The RISE curriculum was also integrated into summer programs to accelerate learning recovery and support grade-level success. This was layered on top of NAZ’s existing suite of in-person literacy and math supports for NAZ scholars, which includes one-on-one tutoring with Reading Partners, ServeMN’s Total Learning Classroom, math tutoring with Project Inspire, and the Network for the Development of Children of African Descent’s Sankofa Reading Program.</p> <p data-bbox="561 1161 1406 1329">NAZ’s work resulted in more than half of NAZ scholars demonstrating typical or aggressive growth in reading and math on standardized assessments. Scholars with consistent attendance achieved the highest rates of growth, underscoring the importance of deep and sustained engagement in NAZ programming.</p> <p data-bbox="561 1365 1045 1390">Parental Engagement and Development</p> <p data-bbox="561 1417 1448 1619">In FY25, NAZ and its partners supported parent and scholar leadership across North Minneapolis through advocacy initiatives, community events, and cohort-based programs. Key activities for parent involvement included Sankofa strategy sessions, voter education, Read-In events, and the launch of the Parent Advocacy Cohort and NdCAD (Network for the Development of Children of African Descent) Parent Power cohorts.</p>

Grantee	2023 Legislation	Performance Highlights*
		<p>NAZ's data shows that 79% of parent leadership participants engaged in 1-3 leadership activities, while 27% of Family Academy graduates became leaders within a year, which is below their 35% goal. To address this, NAZ convened a cross-sector task force to design a new intergenerational leadership model launching in FY26. This model will more intentionally engage Family Academy graduates and community members in advocacy and decision-making roles, building a sustainable pipeline of engaged parent leaders with lived experience.</p> <p>These efforts, supported by partners such as Greater Twin Cities United Way, NdCAD, and the State of Minnesota, highlight NAZ's ongoing commitment to community leadership while underscoring opportunities for deeper engagement.</p>
Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood (SPPN)	\$1,300,00 (FY24 and FY25)	<p>Kindergarten Readiness and Youth Development</p> <p>Saint Paul Promise launched Thrive by Five in July 2023, a community-informed initiative focused on ensuring all Promise Neighborhood children arrive at kindergarten ready to be successful learners. Rooted in the evidence-based Parents as Teachers home visiting model, Thrive by Five has expanded significantly in scope and impact since its inception. In FY25, Thrive by Five engaged over 30 families and 20 children (ages 0-5) and now has a team of three dedicated home visiting staff, supported by one full-time project supervisor.</p> <p>Grade 3 Reading Proficiency and Middle School Mathematics</p> <p>Saint Paul Promise engaged six community partners to provide summer learning programs for 844 scholars (an increase from 783 in 2023) while engaging over 350 parents throughout the summer of 2024. Summer program partners include Rondo Freedom School, STEM Freedom School at the Science Museum of Minnesota's Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center, Arts Us – Camp Teranga, Saint Paul Public Schools' Power Scholars Academy, Walker West Music Academy, and the University of St. Thomas.</p> <p>Parental Engagement and Development</p> <p>Throughout the school year, across SPPNs four partner schools, Saint Paul Promise implemented Project BOLD, our flagship academic success and family wraparound support program that works with enrolled families and scholars to improve school attendance and academic achievement. Through success planning and resource navigation support, families improved household stability and school engagement, and scholars work towards specific attendance and academic goals. In the past year, 124 families participated in Project BOLD.</p>

*Performance highlights are summarized as reported by grantees and 2024-2025 EPC reports.

Conclusion

The grant program enables under-resourced communities to expand access to compressive, holistic services by forging meaningful partnerships so all children can have equal access to these high-quality services and educational opportunities. MDE has met with the Educational Partnership Coalition and is in full support and agreement that this holistic approach to programming across sectors is an effective and efficient strategy to meet the goals of each community. This approach to the whole child, whole family, whole community and the partnerships that are developed is as important as raising achievement levels and closing opportunity gaps. Through these collaborative community partnerships across the birth through career learning continuum, children and families are better served, and communities take on the collective responsibility for ensuring all children and youth's needs are met. For more information, review the [Education Partnership Coalition webpage](#), including the [EPC 2024 Highlights](#).

Bibliography

Education Partnerships Coalition. (n.d.). *Education Partnerships Coalition*. Retrieved November 2025, from <https://www.epc-mn.org/>