Increasing Youth Success from Aspen to Parachute, Colorado
Special Thanks

This action plan was created by a hundred or so leaders from Parachute to Aspen who worked tirelessly through long meetings for over 18 months. While their backgrounds and perspectives varied, they were united by a common drive to help all our youth achieve greater success and thrive. Our regional community owes a special debt of thanks to all who participated:

9th Judicial District Magistrate
A Child's Garden of Peace
Access Roaring Fork
Alpine Bank - Aspen
Andy Zanca Youth Empowerment
Aspen Center
   for Environmental Studies
City of Aspen
Aspen Community Church
Aspen Film
Aspen Global Change Institute
Aspen Historical Society
Aspen Music Festival
   and School
Aspen Santa Fe Ballet
Aspen School District
Aspen Skiing Company
Aspen Valley Ski and
   Snowboard Club
Aspen Writers' Foundation
Aspen Youth Center
Blue Lake Preschool
The Buddy Program
Carbondale Council for the
   Arts & Humanities
Children's Hospital Advocacy
   Initiative
Children's Mini College
Children's Rocky
   Mountain School
College Trek
Colorado Department of
   Human Services
Colorado Mountain College
Community Health Services
Constant Learning Organization
The Cottage
Early Childhood Network
Early Learning Center
Executive Service Corps
Extreme Sports Camp
Family Visitor Programs
Family Resource Centers of
   Roaring Fork School District
Focused Kids
Garfield County Childcare
   Program
Garfield County Human
   Services
Garfield County PREP
Garfield County Public Health
Garfield County Public
   Library District
Garfield County School
   District 16
Garfield School District Re-2
Glenwood Springs
   Chamber of Commerce
Glenwood Springs Recreation
   Center
Glenwood Springs Workforce
   Center
Growing Years
Hispanic Alliance
Houses for Higher Education
Kids First
Little Red School House
The Manaus Fund
Mind Springs Health
Mountain Valley
Developmental Services
Mpower
Mt. Sopris Montessori School
OUR School
Planned Parenthood
Pre-Collegiate Program
Project 18
Raising A Reader
Reach Out and Read
River Center of New Castle
Roaring Fork Outdoor
   Volunteers
Roaring Fork School District
Roaring Fork School
   Health Centers
Rocky Mountain SER
   Head Start
Seltzer Consulting Group
Snowmass Chapel
Spellbinders
Spring Board
Summit 54
Tai Chi for Kids
Teen Gems Coaching
Theatre Aspen
Thunder River Theatre
   Company
Valley Life for All
Valley Partnership for
   Drug Prevention
Wildwood School
Windwalkers
Wyly Community Art Center
Yampa Mountain Schools
YouthEntity
YouthZone
# Table of Contents

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 5  
The Region’s Need .................................................................................................................. 6  
Real and Lasting Change ........................................................................................................ 7  
Goals, Indicators and Rationale ............................................................................................... 10  
Strategies, Programs and Actions for Youth Success .............................................................. 19  
  Goal 1: All Children Should be Ready For Kindergarten .......................................................... 20  
  Goal 2: All Children Should Develop Social and Life Assets for Success and Happiness ....... 22  
  Goal 3: All Children Should Succeed Academically................................................................. 23  
  Goal 4: All Youth Should Graduate High School Ready for College and Career .................... 25  
Engaged and Supported Families and Communities ................................................................. 27  
Additional Important Factors .................................................................................................. 28  
Appendix A: Goals, Outcomes and Indicators ......................................................................... 29  
Appendix B: Action Criteria .................................................................................................... 30
Aspen Community Foundation (ACF) was founded in 1980 to build philanthropy and support nonprofit organizations by connecting donors to community needs, building permanent charitable funds and bringing people together to solve community problems. In the more than 30 years since its founding, ACF has convened local organizations and leading stakeholders to identify regional needs and implement effective solutions through its relationships, institutional knowledge and grantmaking. The Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative (CCI) originated in the Foundation’s recognition of the serious disparity in youth development and educational outcomes between low-income and more affluent youth in our region.

Vision of Change
Through a Collective Impact strategy of convening and uniting the entire community of nonprofits, schools, agencies, governments, civic groups, businesses and philanthropy around a shared vision and evidence-based strategies, programs and actions, the Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative will ensure that all our region’s 22,000 children ages 0-18 are ready for kindergarten and that they graduate from high school ready for college and career.
Introduction

In rural Colorado, the Aspen to Parachute region\(^1\) (the region) encompasses nearly 4,000 square miles of ranch land and mountains on the western slope of the Rocky Mountains. The area is noted not only for its stunning wilderness and popular resort towns, but also for its substantial disparities in wealth and stark variations in youth development and education outcomes.

Improving the outcomes for youth—from birth through career readiness—will have significant and measurable impacts on the region’s quality of life and economy. The Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative (CCI) recognizes that a broad community-based “Collective Impact” effort is required to both respond to the diversity of the region and truly move the needle on youth development and educational success.

\(^{1}\) This region encompasses Pitkin, Garfield and western Eagle counties, including four school districts.
The Region’s Need

A quiet crisis faces many of our region’s 22,000 children. The 80-mile corridor from Aspen to Parachute is home to many working class families struggling to survive. Most commute to work (40% for over two hours each day), and many parents are forced to leave children behind with limited supervision during non-school hours. Our valley is diverse: 77% of Rifle’s elementary school children qualify for a free or subsidized lunch; 65% of Carbondale’s middle school students are Latino.

A profound educational achievement gap opens in kindergarten when many low-income students arrive with no early education and poor language skills. Too often, this gap is never closed. For low-income children who cannot read at grade level by the 3rd grade, the odds of failing to finish high school increase by 1,300%\(^i\). The preschools, afterschool enrichment programs, academic tutoring, college counseling, and summer camps that many affluent families take for granted are largely unavailable to low-income parents. Our region’s children and our valley’s future are at risk.

- Close to half of our children are not ready for kindergarten.
- Preschool enrollment rates are low—only 44% overall. For low-income children, the ones who need it most, the rate drops to 7%.
- Reading and math scores are low, especially for the region’s low-income youth: 40% of 3rd grade children are below grade level in reading and 75% of 8th graders are not proficient in math.
- Over one fourth of low-income students in the region do not graduate from high school.
- Many high school graduates are unprepared for college and career: Colorado Mountain College reports that upwards of 60% of its local incoming freshmen require remediation, mostly in reading and math. Students who require remediation, particularly those defined as low-income, are at risk of never graduating college.
- The rapidly growing number of English Language Learners (ELL) in the region and the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and staff provide powerful academic opportunities for many local students and school districts.
- The region’s teen birth rate is high: Garfield County’s rate of 42.1 per 1,000 births is twice as high as the statewide rate, and is the third highest among Colorado’s 64 counties\(^ii\).
- Regional children are not adequately insured: Garfield County has Colorado’s highest percentage of uninsured children at 19.4%\(^iii\).
- Colorado is ranked 49\(^{th}\) in the nation in per capita support for higher education\(^iv\).
Real and Lasting Change

Collective Impact represents the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem.


To address our region’s complex challenges, many efforts have been made over the years by nonprofits, educators, philanthropists, governments and businesses to improve youth outcomes—and some have achieved outstanding success with targeted youth populations—but rarely can any organization working on its own succeed with sufficient speed or at sufficient scale to truly move the needle at the community-wide level.

The Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative (CCI) is a long-term, collaborative effort involving around 100 leaders representing diverse local nonprofits, school districts, civic organizations, government agencies, businesses and community groups. These partners met monthly for 19 months to create a shared community vision and develop this detailed collaborative Action Plan.

This innovative Collective Impact strategy is mobilizing the entire regional community to focus its combined efforts and resources on the target issue of building youth success from Parachute to Aspen. Collective Impact creates opportunities for a community to tackle large social issues through a shared vision and strategy, while still recognizing individual and organizational contributions to achieving sustainable change.

Knowledge Resources and an “Ecosystem of Innovation”

CCI is creating a problem solving framework that is inherently collaborative, knowledge-based, and grounded in community context. To support this ecosystem of innovation, CCI and Aspen Community Foundation have benefited from the extensive knowledge resources of national organizations, including FSG, the Stanford Social Innovation Review, Communities in Schools, the Forum for Youth Investment, the Strive Together Network, Aspen Institute, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Harvard Business School and the Bridgespan Group. Locally, CCI has convened a wide variety of youth development leaders, families and students to seek effective and culturally relevant ways to reduce the region’s educational disparities.
Five Conditions of Collective Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Agenda</th>
<th>All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shared Measurement</td>
<td>Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutually Reinforcing Activities</td>
<td>Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Communication</td>
<td>Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backbone Support</td>
<td>Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific skill set to serve as the backbone for the initiative and coordinate participating organizations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Continuous Communication and Improvement

- **Engaging the community** – CCI will continue to engage with the community-at-large to broaden involvement in the collective impact process and strengthens our ability to achieve CCI’s youth success goals.

- **Sharing successes and challenges** – Through a process of continuous communication, CCI partners will be able to monitor their collective progress, share their successes and challenges, make course corrections as needed and continually improve their success as the Initiative progresses.

- **Ongoing Evaluation** – To ensure future success, CCI will use data-driven evaluation and outcome measurement to assess and evaluate the efficacy of the various strategies, programs and actions implemented through this plan and to monitor their longitudinal impact. When helpful, Aspen Community Foundation may provide technical assistance to build the evaluation capacity of CCI’s partners.
Shared Measurement System

• Collective Impact requires a strong system of data collection, review and shared accountability. This system provides a means for many organizations to track the community’s progress toward shared goals. CCI has met critical milestones in establishing this system and has also identified key next steps.

• A data working group composed of CCI participants gathered baseline data to guide the creation of the CCI Action Plan. As a result, CCI action team members achieved two major accomplishments. First, through readily available data, action team members were able to identify specific gaps in youth success and develop actionable ideas and strategies to address them. Second, team members were able to identify gaps in data availability and evaluation for CCI’s indicators throughout the region, thus prompting a number of data-focused action items in the plan.

• These data-focused action items will improve CCI’s ability to gather specific information needed to guide decisions that will increase youth success in our region. Example: the Action Plan identifies adopting Teaching Strategies Gold as a kindergarten readiness assessment. Why: No widely used kindergarten readiness assessment currently exists. By adopting a universal assessment, our region will gain a common understanding of our youngest students’ school readiness, as well as a way to gauge the effectiveness of CCI’s future Ready for Kindergarten strategies, programs and actions.

Aspen Community Foundation and its “Backbone” Role in the Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative

Aspen Community Foundation acts as the collective impact “backbone organization” for CCI. In a collective impact strategy, the backbone organization convenes sector leaders, guides the vision and strategy, establishes and maintains a shared measurement system, supports aligned activities within the collaborative action plan, builds public will and advances policy, and mobilizes funding. In addition to providing initial funding for staffing, operations and programming, ACF also set in motion three initial CCI projects: Gus the Bus and the Sunshine Bus, a preschool on wheels program; Boost Camp, an educational summer camp; and Basalt College Counseling, a dedicated college counseling program at Basalt High School.

ACF is dedicated to holding the long-term vision and goals set forth in this document for the Cradle to Career Initiative.
Goals, Indicators and Rationale

The initial community consensus building work of the Cradle to Career Initiative focused on developing high-level goals, outcomes and measurable indicators for improving youth outcomes (see Appendix A). Then, baseline data related to the indicators was gathered and shared with the CCI partners. This set the stage for the next phase of the Initiative: action planning.

The community roundtable groups reformed themselves into four “action teams,” one for each goal of CCI. These teams, each led by three co-chairs with input and support from ACF, worked on short- and long-term collaborative action plans to move the needle on youth success.

Through a series of action planning sessions over seven months, the CCI action teams identified certain key indicators to be targeted first based on their ability to make the largest positive impact on youth success in our region. The Strategies, Programs and Actions for Youth Success summary (following this section) lists these key indicators and their actions in greater detail.
Goal 1: All Children Should be Ready for Kindergarten

*If we invest early, the dividends for society are tremendous...less dropouts, less teenage pregnancy, less crime, more high school graduates, more people working, more people becoming productive members of society.*

—Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education (2013)

Ensuring that all children in the region are ready for kindergarten is the foundation of youth success.

**Desired Outcomes**

- Healthy, well-timed births
- Supported and supportive families
- Visible system of early education and family support
- Community commitment to school readiness
- Children prepared for school

**General Indicators**

- Access to and participation in: quality early education, childcare and preschool; and early intervention services
- Percent of mothers with one or more risk factors receiving family visits
- Meeting developmental milestones as defined by assessment tools
- Instances of child abuse

Additional contributing indicators include: prenatal care; positive birth outcomes (birth weight, mother’s education level, teen birthrate); increased implementation of developmental surveys; child overweight/obesity rates; and reliance on low-cost food.

**Rationale**

Because 90% of brain development occurs before age five, educating and caring for young children to set them up for success in kindergarten and later life is critically important (Lenroot & Giedd, 2006). When young children are exposed to educational programming, they learn social and emotional skills at the time that their brains are the most malleable. This opens an opportunity for decades of success. Ensuring broad access to quality early education helps children to gain equal footing when they begin school.

Family engagement is a critical element in children’s healthy development, early development and school readiness. Research demonstrates that home visitation programs are an effective way to boost parent knowledge and engagement (see e.g., Brooks-Gunn, Berlin & Fuligni, 2000\(^{ix}\); Kitzman et al., 2010\(^{x}\); Olds et al., 1998\(^{x}\); Ounce of Prevention, 2013\(^{x}\)). Home visitation programs typically involve
an educator who teaches parents about a wide variety of topics, such as forming healthy bonds with children, talking to them, teaching school readiness skills, and providing nutritious meals.

As an example, the Nurse Family Partnership approach, which is utilized by Family Visitor Programs (FVP), a local home-visit provider, is supported by 35 years of research from randomized controlled trials that suggest a $2.88 to $5.70 return on investment for every dollar invested in the program. Through CCI, local home visit providers and hospitals are now working together to dramatically increase the number of young mothers receiving home visits. This collaboration has resulted in Valley View Hospital initiating a new policy of automatically referring all new mothers for home visits.

The number of spoken words heard by a young child has a dramatic effect on the child’s cognitive development. “Language exposure not only bears an obvious relationship to a child’s linguistic development but also significantly influences a child’s overall cognitive and educational achievement” (Hart & Risley, 1992, 1995; Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman, & Levine, 2002; Kashinath, Woods, & Goldstein, 2006). The number of words a child hears by age three is correlated with the child’s later IQ and academic success. Typically, children of professional parents will hear three times as many spoken words by age three as children in welfare-recipient families, and the three year-old child of professional parents will have a vocabulary over twice as large (Hart & Risley, op. cit.).

Likewise, studies demonstrate that quality preschool can have strong, positive effects on the success of low-income children. These effects include higher scores on achievement tests at age 14, higher high school graduation levels, less special education required, higher wages, lower welfare rates, lower incarceration rates and higher homeownership (Heckman, 2013).

Early education is one of the best investments a society can make. “The Institute for a Competitive Workforce, an affiliate of the United States Chamber of Commerce, found in a 2010 report that ‘for every dollar invested today, savings range from $2.50 to as much as $17 in the years ahead.’” (Pepper & Zimmerman, 2013).
Goal 2: All Children Should Develop Social and Life Assets for Success and Happiness

Social and personality skills are malleable into the early twenties, although early formation of these skills is still the best policy because they boost learning. Adolescent strategies should boost motivation, personality, and social skills through mentoring and workplace-based education.


Developing social and life assets of all children in the region will help set them on a path to success early in life.

Desired Outcomes

• Sense of hope, purpose and optimism for future
• Growth Mindset
• Grit and resiliency
• Civic engagement and community service
• Creativity and innovation
• Self-regulation, social competence
• Problem solving, goal setting and completion skills

General Indicators

• Establish social emotional baseline data of local children and youth by year-end 2013
• Engagement in extracurricular and community activities
• Social emotional competence such as wellbeing, hope, optimism, grit

Additional contributing indicators include: students in juvenile justice system; disciplinary referrals; mobility rates; and attendance rates.

Rationale

Developing strong life skills and character assets will help our region’s youth achieve success in and out of school. Research demonstrates that social-emotional development is a core competency that helps youth handle the many challenges of school (Hair, Halle, Terry, Lavelle, & Calkins, 2006; Li-Grining, Votruba-Drzal, Maldonado-Carreno, & Haas, 2010); and Social and emotional wellbeing is also a key predictor of current and future school readiness (Hair et al., 2006).

Teaching children social-emotional skills (Denham & Brown, 2010) early on is linked to a child’s increased participation in childcare and early education activities (Magnuson, Meyers, Rhum, & Waldfogel, 2004). In the early school years, research illustrates that school success—measured by
meeting benchmark math and reading scores in 3rd grade and progression to 4th grade—is linked to social and emotional predictors, including persistence, ability to regulate emotions, and attentiveness (Hair et al., 2006xvii).

Middle school children who show strong social-emotional development by pursuing academic goals that may prove difficult or frustrating is another strong indicator of future success. The Grit Scale, a test analyzing a student’s focus, follow-through and commitment—all characteristics of grit, resiliency and self-regulation—is another way to measure these indicators. Students who score higher on the Grit Scale also have higher academic grade point averages and fewer career changes over their lifetime (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009xviii).

Engagement in extracurricular activities and community engagement provides children an increased opportunity to improve social-emotional wellness, especially characteristics such as grit and resiliency. Research shows that activities such as sports can provide an optimal learning environment for developing such skills. In community and extracurricular engagements, children are pushed to do better; performances—including wins and failures—are publicly showcased; and effort, improvement and collaboration are essential to success in these activities (Hoerr, 2013xix).

In the fall of 2013, as an early CCI action, all four regional school districts agreed to implement the Gallup Student Poll. Early results from the 2013 survey indicated that schools implementing a student “advisory” or “crew” model (a strategy for building relationships and accountability between students, teachers and peer groups) showed promising results in student levels of wellbeing, hope, and engagement. The Action Plan reflects this data-driven strategy.

Adding to these regional data, national research supports the positive impact of school-based social-emotional learning (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schlellinger, 2011xx). In addition, schools that pursue social-emotional learning (SEL) in partnership with community organizations can increase their likelihood of success (Greenberg et al. 2003xxi). By supporting focused SEL through the collaborative efforts of many youth service providers, CCI can be more effective in helping our region’s youth cultivate the essential life skills and character assets essential to both academic and non-academic success. Overall, the promotion of social-emotional curricula that encourage the development of grit, hope, innovation, self-regulation and problem solving will help our region’s youth to achieve their goals in and out of school.
Goal 3: All Children Should Succeed Academically

Academic grades and achievement-test results are very good predictors of all kinds of outcomes in life: not just how far you’ll go in school and how much you’ll earn when you get out, but also whether you’ll commit crimes, whether you’ll take drugs, whether you’ll get married, and whether you’ll get divorced.


Academic success is a universally recognized strategy to improve lifelong outcomes.

Desired Outcomes

• Demonstration of 21st century skills
• Academic achievement and growth
• Proficiency in reading, writing and speaking
• Proficiency in grade-level math

General Indicators

• Adequate academic growth
• 3rd grade reading
• 8th grade math
• Full day kindergarten

Additional contributing indicators include: access to and participation in tutoring, afterschool programs and summer education opportunities; 8th grade design and use of Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP); percent of children qualified for special education services; 3rd grade writing; and 5th grade writing.

Rationale

To improve the academic success of all school-aged children in the region, CCI focuses on the indicators of 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math as primary target goals. Studies show that children who master 3rd grade reading on time are usually proficient later in middle school reading and language arts, illustrating the importance of building a solid foundation early on. Similarly, scores on 8th grade math assessments are correlated with future academic success in high school, including an increased likelihood that students will enroll in accelerated and honors-level classes (ACT, 2008xxii; Silver & Saunders, 2008xxxiii).

A CCI analysis of the root causes of barriers to local students’ success revealed that, because learning builds upon itself, students’ academic proficiencies (or lack thereof) can be traced back to their “best first instruction.” A key CCI strategy is therefore to ensure that teachers have the
adequate tools not only to provide “best first instruction” but also to provide appropriate and effective interventions to help students who are behind to catch up.

The CCI Succeed Academically Action team is also committed to adequate academic growth beyond 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math. For instance, research shows that on-time/on-target completion of Algebra as a high school freshman decreases the need for remediation classes at the college level (CRIS Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2010xxiv; Klepfer & Hull, 2012xxv; Lee, 2012xxvi, Lee 2013xxvii). Further, high school students who enroll in honors classes and receive passing scores on their Advanced Placement tests are positively correlated with increased rates of college enrollment (Karp, Calcagno, Hughes, Jeong & Bailey, 2007xxviii; Nagaoka, Roderick, & Coca, 2009xxix; Rumberger & Larson, 1998xxx; Wiley, Wyatt, & Camara, 2010xxxi). These studies illustrate the importance of continuing to champion on-target academic growth at all school levels.

To ensure elementary, middle and high school student success, ample professional development and lesson planning time for teachers is critically important. Furthermore, in schools with high English Language Learner (ELL) student populations, teachers need not only skills for teaching specific subject matter but also skills at teaching their subject matter to ELL students at different stages of language acquisition. As a result, the Action Team recommended a focus on math, literacy, and ELL teaching strategies to support the success of our region’s teachers and students. The action team also called for greater expanded learning opportunities for students and a robust new effort to engage the business community as an ally in building youth success.
Goal 4: All Youth Should Graduate High School Ready for College and Career

ACT research shows that college readiness is highly related to college completion. Unfortunately, of the 1.5 million 2010 high school graduates who took the ACT test, only 24 percent met all four College Readiness Benchmarks in English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science—indicating that fewer than 1 in 4 graduates were academically ready for college.

–ACT, College Readiness (2011)

Students need to develop skills to be employable in occupations that bring them both fulfillment and economic success.

**Desired Outcomes**

- Graduate from high school
- Develop and implement a college or career plan
- Students able to articulate a personal story

**General Indicators**

- Access to and participation in college and career counseling
- 9th grade completion of core classes
- High school graduation
- ACT score
- College/vocational enrollment
- College/vocational completion

Additional contributing indicators include: student surveys of college and career plans; apprenticeships/internships; frequency of reference to Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) in high school; remediation rates; and return for second college year.

**Rationale**

The Graduate Ready Action Team called for creating a stronger “culture of college” in our region. This college-going mentality is too often lacking in students’ home and school environments, likely because many students and families are not aware of the importance of graduating or scoring well on the ACT, students and families have other immediate needs and priorities, and the cost of post-secondary education is too high.

A regional improvement in graduation rates could make a substantial positive impact on student lives, as well as the state’s economy. For example, raising the state’s high school graduation rate to 90% would increase the gross state product by $93 million a year and increase state and local tax revenues by $4.1 million annually (Johns Hopkins University, 2013xxx).
CCI’s emphasis on college and career readiness is supported by research indicating that properly preparing students is an important marker of continued youth success. For instance, meeting benchmark scores on college entry tests, such as the ACT, correlates positively with college and career readiness; increased post-secondary enrollment, completion of the first college year, and freedom from remediation classes (ACT, 2010). The action team’s emphasis on ensuring that students achieve minimum ACT scores is crucial to helping students be better prepared for the rigor of college and career. Similarly, the Action Plan’s emphasis on completion of ninth grade core classes is echoed in studies illustrating that students who fail one or more 9th grade subjects is a predictor of not finishing high school (Kemple, Segeritz, & Stevenson, 2013).

One path to strengthening student achievement is to increase access to programs that offer college and career advising services. The Center for Higher Education Policy and Analysis (2002) reported that college advising promotes students’ college aspirations; increases their understanding of college; and strengthens parental roles in encouraging college. Research shows that participation in summer bridge programs, senior year transition courses and school year transition programs, all which encourage academic counseling, guidance counseling, and preparation for college entry exams, correlates to increased secondary and post secondary success (Barnett et al., 2012; Mishook, 2012). Career advising, which is often found in these programs, helps students develop their personal story about their future career path by recognizing each individual student’s interests, characteristics and values.

As regional college/career counselors are scarce, CCI is expanding the use of the Naviance platform, which helps students plan for college and career. The program also enables teachers, counselors and administrators to collaborate with students to chart their post-secondary paths. In partnership with Colorado Mountain College, Garfield County School District Re-2 and Garfield School District 16, CCI is helping to introduce Naviance in western Garfield County. CCI aims to increase its use among English Language Learner families to improve college participation in homes where college has not previously been considered an option. Aspen High School has been using Naviance with its entire population of 561 students (11% Latino) for the past 10 years. Basalt High School, through an early CCI program, began using Naviance in fall 2012 with 365 students, 60% of whom are Latino; and Coal Ridge, Rifle and Grand Valley high schools are now beginning to use Naviance with 1,501 students, 42% of whom are Latino.
Strategies, Programs and Actions for Youth Success

Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative

May 1, 2014
Goal 1: All Children Should be Ready for Kindergarten

Key Targeted Indicators:
- Mothers with multiple risk factors receiving home visits
- Children meeting developmental milestones
- Access to quality early education

The action team agreed on the following understanding of School Readiness:
School readiness describes both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the need of all students enrolled in preschool or kindergarten. School readiness includes the status and ongoing progress a child makes within the domains of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, cognition and general knowledge, literacy, and mathematics. We recognize that school readiness begins at birth and is enhanced when the entire community – families, teachers, schools, nonprofits, business, government, and individual citizens, work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning. Information gathered from school readiness assessments is to be used for supportive and instructional purposes and cannot be used to deny a student admission or progression to kindergarten or first grade.

Timeline Key
The below color coding indicates the anticipated timeline of implementation:
- End of summer 2014
- 2014
- 2015

Strategies, Programs and Actions:
1. Create a System of Continual Family Engagement that Begins with Prenatal Care and Continues through Early Childhood Development
   A. Increase Parent Referrals for Family Visits to Mothers with Multiple Risk Factors
      • Ask hospitals to make automatic referrals to home visit programs for every birth [DONE]
   B. Coach parents to play a critical role in the healthy development of their children by helping them understand the importance of talking, singing, reading and playing educational games with children; and providing tools and resources to support their children.
   C. Build adult capabilities to improve child outcomes and school readiness including increasing adult literacy, providing workforce training and connecting families to community resources.
   D. Increase community partnerships to provide information and increase awareness of preschool programs and other child development services.
   E. Increase access and entry into prenatal care
F. With the local University of Denver Masters of Social Work program, conduct a community assessment to determine the number of babies born each year in the region who are thriving and who need help.

2. **Identify Common Early Education Assessment Tool and Expand Use Across Region**
   A. Identify and endorse Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) as the common assessment tool to be used in preschool and kindergarten classrooms. [DONE]
   B. Hold information meetings with preschools that are not using TS GOLD or using it only for children supported by the Colorado Preschool Program. [UNDERWAY]
   C. Provide training, support and technology for expansion of use. Explore ways to manage the wider use, including cost and time required to implement, ensuring consistent use of the tool, and sharing data. [UNDERWAY]
   D. Use TS GOLD assessment data to identify which children need improvement and support, where these children live, and how to help them.

3. **Expand Access to Quality Early Education**
   A. Create kindergarten “jumpstart” programs
      • Help schools develop programs to serve incoming kindergartners with little to no prior preschool experience to help prepare them for kindergarten. [DONE]
      • Assess need and feasibility for other school districts. [UNDERWAY]
   B. Expand early literacy program models and mobile preschool classrooms to address immediate needs for quality early education.
   C. Expand use of current preschool facilities by adjusting schedules, enlarging facilities and using facilities year-round.
   D. Investigate new locations such as new housing developments or community centers, and explore program models that provide comprehensive services for children and families such as the Grand Valley Center for Family Learning in Parachute.
   E. Increase financial support for early education including expanding access to Colorado Child Care Assistance and Colorado Preschool programs, and investigating policy changes, ballot initiatives and social impact bonds.

4. **Continue to Support and Improve the Quality of Early Education Providers**
   A. Support advancements through quality ratings improvement system with coaching and mini-grants improve quality to licensed programs.
   B. Working with Colorado Mountain College (CMC), further develop the local early childhood education certification process to increase the pool of early childhood providers and build capabilities of traditional neighborhood caregivers.
Goal 2: All Children Should Develop Social and Life Assets for Success and Happiness

Key Targeted Indicators:
- Hope, wellbeing, engagement and grit
- Participation in extracurricular activities

The action team identified the following Life Skills and Character Assets important to youth success:
- Hope, purpose and connection to the future
- Growth mindset
- Grit and resiliency
- Civic engagement
- Creativity and innovation
- Self-regulation, social competence
- Problem solving, goal setting and completion skills

Strategies, Programs and Actions:
5. Training and Organizing around the Life Skills and Character Assets for Youth Serving Organizations
   A. Agree on a short, simple and clear definition of each skill and asset.
   B. Build curricula around the skills and assets to develop a “common language” and identify evidence-based approaches. Experiment with and pilot program models, and use lessons learned to create a handbook.
   C. Create a program of ongoing coaching, training and mentoring for program providers.
   D. Encourage all youth program providers to teach one or more of the skills and assets. Ask, “What would this look like in my organization?” Provide examples of how organizations can incorporate the skills and assets.

6. Increase Experiential and Career Programming for Students
   A. Create a system to help organize experiential and career programming including expanded learning opportunities, volunteers and the use of “Crew,” a structure for each student to develop a one-on-one relationship with an adult advisor, in addition to being part of a consistent and ongoing small-scale peer community.
   B. Engage with business and agency partners to help students understand career opportunities.
   C. Create program opportunities that extend throughout the region.
   D. Plan to add extra focus and support for the most at-risk students.
   E. Create interventions for kids who have already dropped out.
Goal 3: All Children Should Succeed Academically

Key Targeted Indicators:
- 3rd grade reading
- 8th grade math

To address 3rd grade reading and 8th grade math, the Succeed Academically Action Team identified key focus areas that would build Teacher Effectiveness and increase Student Academic Success:
- English language learning (ELL)
- Best first instruction
- Effective intervention
- Clear expectations of grade levels
- Assessment through dialogue
- Social emotional learning
- Early literacy

Strategies, Programs and Actions:
7. Increase Regional English Language Learning (ELL) Program Efficacy to Promote Teacher Effectiveness
   A. Create teacher exchanges among all four school districts. Schedule opportunities for teachers to visit classrooms in other schools to share intervention strategies and learn from each other. Create more ELL coaches to continually improve practice and guide educators.
   B. Explore new ideas from around the nation. Consider holding a symposium with national English language learning thought leaders. Follow up the symposium with a dialogue with teachers from all four school districts.

8. Expand Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers
   A. Create a regional professional development coordinating group with a leader from each school district, plus the Board of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES). [DONE]
   B. Conduct a four-district assessment of professional development needs. [DONE]
   C. Use current school schedules (Wednesdays in Aspen School District and Roaring Fork School District; Fridays in Garfield School District Re-2; Mondays in Garfield County School District 16) to increase quality professional development time for school staff. [UNDERWAY]
   D. Bring in resources from BOCES, the Colorado Legacy Foundation and the Colorado Department of Education to offer trainings to all four districts together. Ensure ongoing exposure to ideas from beyond our region. [UNDERWAY]
E. Provide training to school staff in identified best strategies related to the key areas listed above. In addition, improve ongoing coaching for teachers by encouraging principals and superintendents to model active leadership.

9. Increase Expanded Learning Opportunities for Students
   A. Create “Enrichment Wednesdays” in the Roaring Fork School District to engage students with the community and expand their access to community programs [UNDERWAY]
      • Community programming examples: Mentoring for ELL students; tutoring; sports programs; college application assistance; career counseling with local business professionals; social-emotional learning programs in areas like positive mindset, grit and hope; programs in art, music and theater; career & technical training.
      • Create the logistical structure to accommodate interested community organizations.
      • Add community coordinators in schools to connect students and schools with community resources. Explore the Communities In Schools (CIS) model.
   B. Work with Re-2 and District 16 to expand enrichment opportunities for students on Fridays and Mondays, respectively.
   C. Identify and support additional expanded learning opportunities for out-of-school-time afternoons, weekends and summers.
   D. Widen the use of free web-based programs such as Khan Academy as a tutoring aid.
      Train community volunteers to assist students in using Khan Academy videos identified by local schools.

10. Expand Access to Full Day Kindergarten
    A. Increase financial resources to provide funding for at-risk children to attend full day kindergarten.
    B. Seek policy changes such as increasing State funding that would provide full day kindergarten.
Goal 4: All Youth Should Graduate High School Ready for College and Career

Key Indicators:
- ACT scores
- High school graduation rates

The action team agreed on the following understanding of College and Career Readiness:
The level of preparation a student needs to enroll and succeed in a college course or technical school. This includes both academic skills such as reading, writing, oral communication, mathematics, academic conventions, problem solving, and critical thinking required for college-level study, and non-cognitive or 21st century skills such as adaptability, perseverance (tenacity), problem solving, collaboration and teamwork, creativity, responsibility, professionalism, ethics, and technology use necessary for college and work. Students will need, through later preparation, to develop technical skills to be employable in occupations that bring them fulfillment and economic success.

Strategies, Programs and Actions:
11. Align High School Curricula with College and Career Readiness
   A. Convene our region’s guidance and college counselors, school district curriculum planners and other school leaders to identify challenges preventing high school students from being better prepared for college readiness assessments.
   B. Schools could conduct their own internal curriculum reviews to explore opportunities for alignment with college/career readiness.
   C. In partnership with CMC, offer the Accuplacer college readiness assessment before and after 11th grade to track student readiness.
   D. Offer concurrent enrollment courses through additional CMC partnerships.
   E. Offer ASCENT (Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment) scholarships to students wishing to earn college credit during a fifth year of high school.
   F. Promote the use of Post-secondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) high school diploma endorsement criteria.

12. Infuse Schools and Families with a College-Going Culture
   A. Inculcate a college-going culture in schools by exploring additional and creative ways to introduce college to young students and their families.
   B. Send automatic CMC letters of acceptance to all local high school seniors.
   C. Inform families about the importance of college/career readiness. Demystify the culture of school, the high school graduation pathway and the college application process.
   D. Engage churches, libraries and others to help with family outreach and education. Create parent groups to help with communication and education.
13. Expand College/Career Advising and the Use of the Naviance Platform in Schools
   A. Add Naviance to the current college/career advising partnership between Re-2, District 16 and CMC. Naviance is a web-based platform that enhances college counseling. [DONE]
   B. Complete the expansion of Naviance to all high schools in the region.
   C. Pursue the model of a college/career advisor at each high school and middle school, and provide support needed to implement.
   D. Expand systemic approaches, like the Pre-Collegiate Program, to mentor more students for college and career. [UNDERWAY]
   E. Expand the CollegeTrek model (young volunteer professionals working with college/career advisors to provide college application mentoring and assistance inside schools) throughout the region.
   F. Offer ACT WorkKeys exams through CMC to assess the career readiness of students not planning on college.

14. Provide Support and Financial Aid for College-Bound Students
   A. Create further support mechanisms for students “to and through” college.
   B. Increase financial resources to provide additional aid to more students.
   C. Experiment with a “Future Center” in local schools based on the model of the Denver Scholarship Foundation.

15. Recruit and Coordinate Volunteers to Provide Tutoring, Mentoring, College Readiness Support
   A. “Pirate Stores.” In each interested community and school, recruit community volunteers for tutoring programs in the style of 826 Valencia.
   B. Recruit college students to speak to current high schools students about college life and what it takes to get there.
   C. Create opportunities for older students to tutor younger students in math and reading, and to be role models.
   D. Create a database of mentors and tutors in our region as a resource for schools, parents and youth serving organizations.

16. Educate Students about Career Paths and Options by Enlisting the Professional Community to Provide “Real World” Connections
   A. Enlist business leaders to help make the connection between the relevance of high school and success later in life.
   B. Create regular opportunities for leaders to make career presentations to students about their professions; offer job shadowing opportunities and technical and career internships; and provide incentives for academic excellence.
   C. Develop high school career exploration programs and pair classes with CMC.
   D. Partner with CMC to create new career/vocational programs in fields with job opportunities in our local economy.
Engaged and Supported Families and Communities

All four CCI action teams share a common belief that family and community engagement are critical to the success of the Cradle to Career Initiative. To support them, we must build a community infrastructure or “scaffolding” to link schools, families and community and strengthen their ability to support the success of our youth.

Strategies, Programs and Actions:

17. Engage the Business Community in Supporting Youth Success
   B. Engage business leaders and civic organizations in supporting specific actions from this collaborative, collective impact process.
   C. Provide examples of additional ways businesses could help: sponsoring a professional development program; allowing employees to attend parent/teacher conferences without penalty; adding printed youth-success messages to paychecks; offering internships; making career presentations in schools, etc.
   E. Ask business and civic leaders to declare each town to be “A Child Centered Community”

18. Launch a Regional Public Awareness Campaign on the Critical Importance of Supporting Youth Success
   A. Target both families and community to educate and raise awareness.
   B. Communicate the importance of early education, social emotional and life skills, academic success, and the value of college and career readiness.
   C. Inform families of existing resources including early education, out of school time, and college/career readiness programs, and funding options.
   D. Find alternative routes to communicate (word of mouth, home visits, churches, social media, cultural and school events, and traditional media campaigns).

19. Create a Data Sharing System to Link and Support Schools, Families and Youth Serving Organizations
   A. Contract with CiviCore to link community resources through an internet platform for the region. Use it to connect schools, organizations, students and families.
   B. Connect school databases with CiviCore to alert youth organizations when participants need extra help.
   C. Track post-secondary matriculation and alumni. Track students’ final high school transcript deliveries to confirm actual college enrollment.
Additional Important Factors

Our regional community must also address the following underlying issues in order to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to succeed:

A. Student health and health care access, including behavioral health
B. Violence and substance abuse
C. Stable housing
D. Hunger and nutrition
E. Teen pregnancy

The Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative is conferring with leaders of local and state health initiatives to explore creation of a comprehensive plan to address these critical issues.
## Appendix A: Goals, Outcomes and Indicators

### Cradle to Career Initiative
Building Youth Success from Aspen to Parachute

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1</th>
<th>Goal 2</th>
<th>Goal 3</th>
<th>Goal 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ready for kindergarten</td>
<td>Develop social and life assets</td>
<td>Succeed academically</td>
<td>Graduate high school, ready for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for success and happiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>college &amp; career</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Youth Outcomes

- Healthy, well-timed births
- Supported and supportive families
- Visible system of early education and family support
- Community commitment to school readiness
- Children prepared for school

- Civic engagement and community service
- Self-regulation, social competence
- Problem solving, goal setting and completion skills
- Sense of hope, purpose and optimism for future
- Grit and resiliency
- Creativity and innovation

- Demonstrate 21st century skills
- Academic achievement and growth
- Proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking
- Proficient in grade-level math

- Graduate from high school
- Develop and implement a college or career plan
- Students able to articulate a personal story

#### Targeted Initial Indicators

- Access to and participation in:
  - Quality early education, childcare and preschool
  - Early intervention services
- Percent of mothers with one or more risk factors receiving family visits

- Establish social emotional baseline data of local children and youth by year end 2013

- Access to and participation in full-day kindergarten

- Access to and participation in college and career counseling
- 9th grade completion of core classes

#### Targeted Long Term Indicators

- Meeting developmental milestones as defined by assessment tools
- Instances of child abuse

- Engagement in extracurricular and community activities
- Social emotional competence such as wellbeing, hope, optimism, grit

- Adequate academic growth
- 3rd grade reading
- 8th grade math

- High school graduation
- ACT score
- College/vocational enrollment
- College/vocational completion

### Health and Social Emotional Development on Track
**Engaged and Supportive Families and Communities**
Appendix B: Action Criteria

Aspen Community Foundation

Aspen to Parachute Cradle to Career Initiative (CCI)

**ACTION CRITERIA**

**Criteria for identifying priority CCI actions:**

1. Action has an *evidence base* demonstrating substantial improvement in youth outcomes.
2. Action has potential to *significantly move* one or more CCI Indicators.
3. Action has potential to make *progress quickly*.
4. Action can lead to change *at scale*.
5. Action can *benefit from collaboration* - geographic or across the youth education and services continuum.
6. Action can *benefit from community advocacy and visibility*.
7. Action has a *clear lead organization* with commitment and capacity.
8. Action should offer a *strong cost/benefit ratio* (see cost/benefit guide on following page)
9. Action may require *relatively little*, if any, *new funding*.
10. Action should entail *more than simply an existing program*. (A modified version of a current program might qualify if it incorporated new collaboration with other community resources or organizations, and/or if it were repurposed, realigned, redirected, scaled up or otherwise enhanced to accelerate the community’s progress toward one or more of CCI’s targeted Indicators.)

**NOTES:**

- A priority action need not meet all criteria.
- Criteria are not all weighted equally.


ACT. (2008). *The forgotten middle: Ensuring that all students are on track for college and career readiness before high school.* Iowa City, IA: Author.


