



Partnership for the Future of Learning

Progress and Lessons from the First Five Years

September 2020

Evaluation Findings



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Introduction

The Partnership for the Future of Learning (the Partnership) has a vision to shift public education to a more racially just, democratic, and participatory set of systems and supports for deep and meaningful student learning, with modernized, adequately resourced systems and empowered students and communities. Housed in the National Public Education Support Fund (NPESF), the Partnership is a growing network of funders and leaders from major educational and social justice institutions who believe that the United States' well-being depends on a future for public education where meaningful learning serves both the individual and the public writ large.

Since 2015, the Partnership has been growing its network, creating strands (working groups) designed to carry out key components of its strategy, and evolving its approach to become a network that cultivates connections, generates value for its partners, and achieves results in the field.¹ The Partnership engaged ORS Impact and Equal Measure as third-party evaluators to look at the efforts of the Partnership as a whole to date and to document implementation progress over the first five years and the resulting changes. This final report presents key findings emerging from the following sources:

- Ongoing document review
- Interviews with 24 individuals conducted by the ORS Impact-Equal Measure evaluation team between fall 2019 and spring 2020
- Results stemming from a Partnership-wide survey of 118 active partners administered in June 2020, which 65 partners completed, who represented the range of types of participants in the network.²

Structured according to the Partnership's working theory of change, this report addresses learning questions related to the value and contribution that the Partnership has created within the network, as well as value spreading to the broader field. The report is organized into the following sections:

- **Outcomes:** Describes the changes resulting from the Partnership's efforts, including changes **within** partner organizations and **across** partners that lead to different ways of working together, more strategic, and aligned action through engagement in the network.
- **Implementation:** Describes the Partnership's implementation progress and opportunities in building and maintaining the network infrastructure and functions, and how the network approach is advancing efforts in its four strands: Shared Story, Shared Policy, Key Places, and Shared Systems.

¹Connectivity, health, and results are key focus areas for network evaluation. See Taylor, M., Whatley, A., & Coffman, J. (2015). Network evaluation in practice: Approaches and applications. *The Foundation Review*, 7(2), 5.

²For more information on the methodology and overall strengths and limitations of the evaluation, see Appendix A.

- **Overall Theory of Change Observations:** Describes evaluator observations of the overall theory of change, including the dynamics and relationships between the Partnership’s implementation efforts, progress on emerging outcomes, and the assumptions underpinning the network approach. This also includes a reflection on the recommended changes to the Partnership’s theory of change based on data gathered to date.
- **Strategy and Continuous Improvement:** Presents areas that are working and should continue to be invested in and prioritized by the Partnership, as well as areas for reflection and decision making as the Partnership evolves.

This final report provides a point-in-time assessment of the Partnership, against which future progress can be measured. With its focus on providing a holistic view of the Partnership, this report does not provide an exhaustive or detailed evaluation of individual Partnership efforts or specific strands.

It is also important to note that as of the writing of this report, two critical contextual shifts have impacted the work of the Partnership and likely the future direction of the public education effort in the United States: the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the significant and sustained racial justice protests, demonstrations, and calls of public action following the tragic murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, emblematic of the sustained and systemic racism and oppression in the United States. Only a fraction of our data collection allowed us to document the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the interviews and document review. We are uncertain of how the racial justice protests and resulting movements influenced the survey results. We are, however, certain that these two significant events will have implications for the durability and responsiveness of the Partnership and its work.

Acknowledgements

The ORS Impact-Equal Measure team would like to thank the evaluation advisory committee for its generous support this year in lending insights to refine interview and survey protocols as well as engage in a sensemaking process with early findings. Committee members include Shaun Adamec (Nellie Mae Education Foundation), Evelyn Aissa (formerly Reaching Higher NH), Sunanna Chand (Teach for America), Richard Gray (NYU Metro Center), Gaby Lopez (Chan Zuckerberg Initiative), Neha Singh Gohil (William and Flora Hewlett Foundation), and Michelle Renee Valladares (National Education Policy Center). We have benefited greatly from their engagement. As the third-party evaluation team, we also fully own any errors or issues with the report.

Partnership Progress: A 50,000-Foot View

Leading with racial justice as a moral imperative, the Partnership has shown strength in its ability to convene an increasingly diverse national network, across race, ethnicity, roles, and sectors. Meaningful and widespread changes within and across partners signal progress toward longer-term goals.

The success in bringing together diverse partners around a unifying cause - community schools, which resulted in the development and dissemination of the Community Schools Playbook and the adoption of the playbook by the Georgia Department of Education and partners in California and New Hampshire- shows the network can achieve notable and prominent wins.

The network's ability to produce useful, tangible content for field partners, particularly through the Shared Policy and Shared Story efforts, is another example of progress in supporting partners' ability to work as a collective.

At the same time, more time and continued strategic evolution are needed to achieve even greater alignment across the Partnership in ways that influence lasting change in the field of public education. As the network grapples with the evolving impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, its mission and priorities are more relevant than ever. While it doubles down on its highly resonant network priorities (community schools, the teaching profession, and education resourcing), it can leverage its relationships, convening power, focus on racial equity and justice, and use of mixed media to reach intended audiences.

As an active and engaged community of partners, the network is poised to make strategic moves about growth in membership, the direction of its efforts, and the capacity of staff and consultants needed to support the network.



Photo credit: Partnership for the Future of Learning, <https://futureforlearning.org/>

Overview of Key Findings

Theory of Change Area	Key Findings
Outcomes	<p>Changes Within Partners</p> <p>Partners report strong status relative to key short-term outcomes, including their individual capacity, their sense of belonging, and the degree to which they experience reciprocity. Additionally, alignment to foundational Partnership values, particularly racial equity and education as a public good, is notably high for a network at this stage of development. The Partnership is successfully fostering outcomes around how people experience the network as a respectful and mutually beneficial endeavor, but it is less clear how much things like organizational capacity and alignment have changed as a direct result of the Partnership.</p>
	<p>Changes Across Partners</p> <p>Partners report strong levels of connection with a variety of diverse organizations across sectors. They value these connections, including being able to reach out to someone if needed, share information, coordinate, or collaborate. This is true with no statistically significant differences across types of partners. The Partnership has also created new relationships and deepened existing ones. At the same time, there is a continued opportunity to deepen connections across the network, and opportunities to do more weaving across members and elements of the work as the capacity of the Partnership grows.</p>
	<p>Changes in the Network</p> <p>The network is dense, without obvious hubs or significant outliers. The network has grown in diversity among its members, is viewed as highly responsive, and has elements that partners believe represent durability. Partners want to see more diversity among network leadership – staff and governance bodies - especially considering a range of characteristics of diversity, including perspective and role in the field.</p>
	<p>Increased Aligned Actions</p> <p>We see evidence of progress and change in how partners contribute aligned actions within strands, across and between strands, and beyond strands, within their own organizations or with others outside of the At the same time, partners are split nearly in half around the value of the Partnership as a way to take collective action.</p>
Key Activities	<p>Implementation</p> <p>Partners appreciate the focus and values around racial equity and justice but would like to see it better operationalized across all elements of the work. While partners have experienced a shift away from the focus on funders, some partners noted concerns about power dynamics and lack of clarity around decision-making related to both funding decisions and Partnership strategy. Additionally, questions exist about the size of the network and the staff capacity needed to support the work as it continues to evolve.</p>
Strategic Questions and Continuous Improvement	<p>The Partnership has been particularly impactful and valuable through its convening power with a diverse range of stakeholders, the sustained focus on improving public education that keeps equity front and center, and its ability to produce resonant and tangible products like the Community Schools Playbook and narrative changing videos. The time is right to wrestle with tensions over size and balance of emergent or adaptive approaches over a more focused strategy going forward.</p>

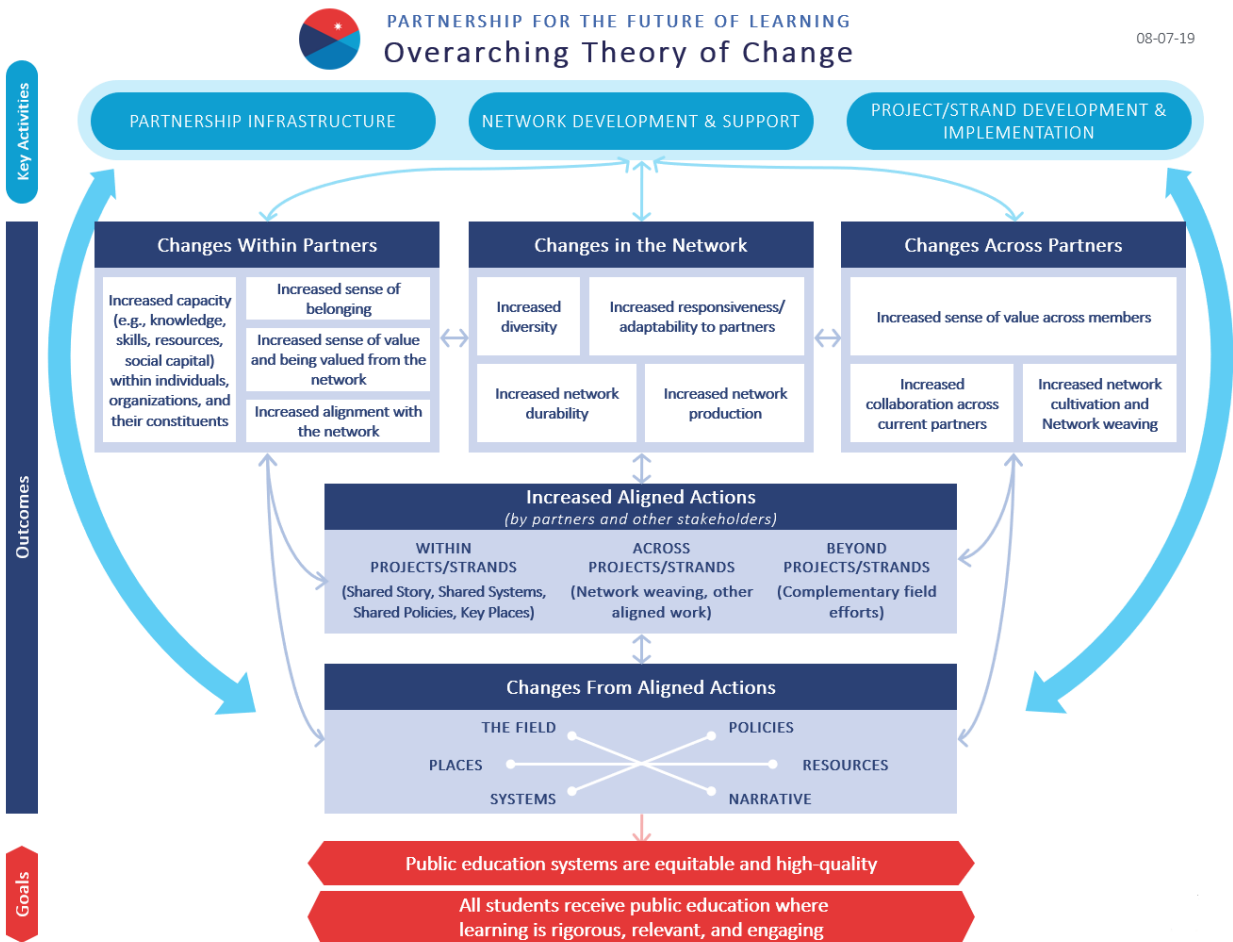
The Partnership's Working Theory of Change

From February–August 2019, the evaluation team worked with Partnership leads and partners to refine the overall theory of change (shown in Figure 1). The Partnership's working theory of change identifies the key activities, outcomes, and ultimate goals of the initiative. It aims to align expected outcomes with the sequence of expected change, helping to communicate the Partnership's work to stakeholders. The theory of change also identifies the following important assumptions that undergird the implementation and outcomes of the work:

- The network is in service to partners. Aligned actions result from the value that individuals and organizations receive from participating with each other in the network, including a sense of belonging and being valued and improved capacities gained through participation, as well as increased alignment and strategic action with and across an ever-changing, diverse set of partners.
- Diversity in the network matters because the network is informed and strengthened by diverse partners (e.g., partner type, geography, constituency type, etc.), and, with each new partner, the Partnership itself is strengthened and shifts by respecting the new perspectives, expertise, and lived history. The Partnership (leadership, staff, partner organizations) enacts the radical equity they want to see in public education system by race, economic status, and gender.
- The Partnership is bigger and more fluid than any one set of organizations; changes occur within, across, and outside of the active participants in the network to achieve broader scale outcomes.
- The Partnership's work is driven by values, rather than existing power relationships (following people with the most power in the network).
- Activities and outcomes interact in dynamic ways that are non-linear. Outcomes will continually affect the key activities, and the achievement of outcomes (or lack thereof) can reinforce or degrade the status of other outcomes in a virtuous or vicious cycle.
- Shifting systems, policies, and narratives is not apolitical, and occurs within a changing external environment. Consistent with an emergent approach, this work must be responsive to changes in the broader context (positive or negative), activities and changes in the network, across partners, within partners, and from aligned actions occur in a broader context that will shape and shift the focus, sustainability of outcomes, capacities needed by partners, etc. Building a diverse and durable network should help the Partnership weather and leverage changes over time, and key activities will need to adapt to emerging needs and opportunities.
- Partners can and will change their own and others' actions by participating in the network.
- Educational quality will increase through the Partnership's efforts.

- The network will increase in density because of institutional collaboration across strategy strands.

Figure 1 | Theory of Change



Achieving the Partnership’s goal of creating more just and equitable public education systems in which all students engage in learning that is rigorous, relevant, and engaging will require significant changes in systems, narratives, resources, places, policies, and the field at many different levels: nationally, in states, and in school districts and schools. The Partnership’s theory of change posits that more aligned actions across a diverse set of stakeholders can be built by developing and supporting relationships and cultivating a network that has adequate infrastructure and can act on specific strands of activities (referred to throughout the report as “strands”). This includes those who actively participate in the network, those in partner organizations more broadly, and other stakeholders who do not have direct involvement with the network but may be influenced by the network’s partners or actions. While much of the work to date has focused on individual strands of work (e.g., the Shared Story strand), the theory of change attempts to look across the strands to understand the outcomes resulting from the network as a whole.

The theory of change draws from the following theories: systems thinking, complexity theory, fidelity theory, transformation network theory, iceberg theory, and triangulated social change theory (Action Science). The theory of change represents current thinking and is a living, working document that the Partnership can revise as it reflects on implementation and outcomes over time.

Outcomes

This section describes the changes resulting from the Partnership's efforts, including changes within and across partner organizations that lead to different ways of working together and more aligned action through engagement in the network. For each major section of the theory of change, we provide an overall summary of the related outcomes, followed by additional supporting data and findings.

Changes Within Partners

Summary: Partners report strong status relative to key short-term outcomes, including their individual capacity, their sense of belonging, and the degree to which they experience reciprocity within the network (i.e., that they benefit from the network and contribute value in turn). Additionally, alignment to foundational Partnership values, particularly racial equity and education as a public good, is notably high for a network at this stage of development. The Partnership is successfully fostering outcomes around how people experience the network as a respectful and mutually beneficial endeavor, but it is less clear how much things like organizational capacity and alignment have changed as a result of the Partnership. It seems likely that partners are recruited because these elements exist versus being things that are later cultivated or developed through their engagement with the network.

Network partners gain a lot of value and enhanced individual capacity from the access to others that the Partnership grants them in the field, and they use the network to build social capital and to inform their work.

- **Deliberate network building efforts have provided partners the opportunity to connect, communicate, and exchange knowledge supporting partners' individual capacity and assets to do their work.** The Partnership's ability to convene stakeholders is a powerful asset. The Partnership has cultivated a safe, productive space for idea exchange among individuals from various levels of power across organizations. Partners view the annual in-person Assembly as an especially rich platform for connection. Individuals gain useful information and access to others that enhance their professional practice. For example, partners have adopted frameworks and tools to their work and appreciate having ongoing access to experts on community schools and other important education issues. They see themselves connected to a national conversation and that being involved helps keep them in the loop, with greater awareness of all that is going on in the education field. They have an opportunity to learn from

*"It is very easy to stay in your bubble and your silo and just do your work, especially when you are spaced all over the country. But this is a platform that brings organizations all over the country together. **We constantly get resources or suggestions on how we can each do our work better**, so I think that being a convener and a connector has been one of the most important values that the Partnership brings."*

new relationships made within the Partnership and to broaden their professional and social networks. These sentiments were repeated in survey results: the majority (70%) of **partners find the Partnership valuable to their organization**. Specifically, partners find the Partnership valuable to their organization in connecting to other partners (91%); contributing new perspective, knowledge, and resources (85%); deeper understanding and commitment to racial equity (75%); accessing resources (77%); learning about the impact of funding in education field (69%); and taking collective action (54%).

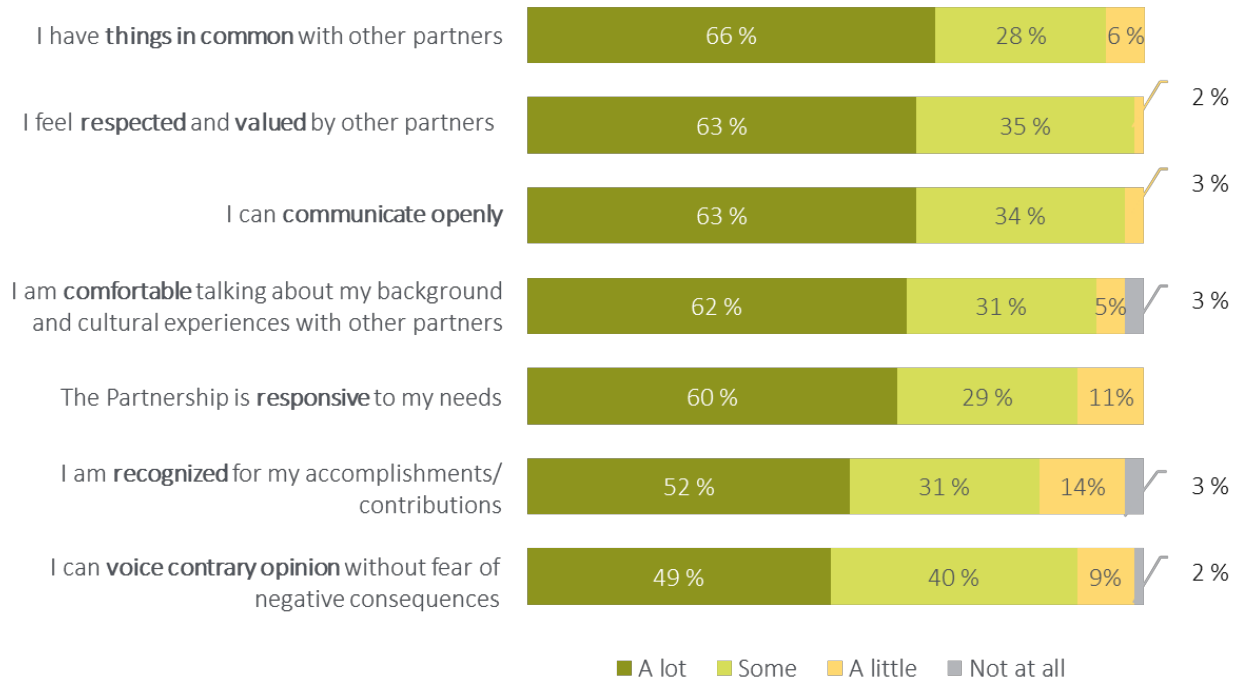
- While interview and survey results show a lot of appreciation for the additive value they get from the Partnership, when asked directly, only half of partners agreed that they have **increased their organizational capacity** “to some extent” as a result of being in the Partnership (50%); a small number (7%) agreed with this statement “a lot.” It may be that many partners’ strong capacity means they don’t experience these benefits as increases to organizational capacity writ large. Additionally, only about half of partners (57%) surveyed reported changing the way they do their work “some” or “a lot” as a result of being in the Partnership. There were no significant differences across partners in this finding. While the theory of change shows a hope for extending benefits beyond the individual people who participate in Partnership activities, the Partnership also sees the real benefit is in the combined force of being in network as a radical act.
- **While funding opportunities and access to funding partners exist through the network, few partners reported this as a benefit.** The network has nearly 20 national and regional funding partners providing both financial support to field partners across the country, especially in Key Places, as well as general support to the network as a whole. A September 2018 financial mapping document showed that to date, network funders provided coordinated funding (meaning that funds did not flow through the Partnership, but rather went directly to other organizations aligned with the Partnerships strategies or vision) to 41 organizations, each receiving \$5,000 or more of coordinated investment, totaling an estimated \$27.6 million. Network funders and partners have leveraged local funding as well. These funding opportunities increased the capacity of partners to carry out their work on the ground. The survey results reflected some divergence from the document review: fewer partners (34%) find the Partnership valuable in creating a shared strategy for funding, and only a quarter of partners who completed the survey agreed “some” or “a lot” that their organization secured funding as a result of the Partnership. When we look only at respondents who are not funders, there is a slight increase, from 25 to 30 percent agreeing that they had secured new funding, though 70 percent agreed with this statement “a little” or “not at all.”

Partners experience the network positively, experiencing a sense of belonging within this diverse network and reciprocity between giving and receiving.

- **Partners feel a strong sense of belonging through the opportunity to work toward shared goals with field colleagues.** Participation provides a sense of community. Being among like-minded individuals, who are also working hard on social justice, boosts morale. Their alignment on issues like the codification and promotion of community school practices and education resourcing policies enables them to work together to shift the narrative about public education and advance community schools. The community that they share cultivates relationships for both within-network activities and beyond-network activities, supporting creative thinking and alliances.
- The survey results support the fact that partners feel a strong sense of belonging in the Partnership. In the survey, partners were asked to rate their level of agreement on several scale items measuring their **sense of belonging**, as shown in Figure 2. The vast majority (>80%) agreed “a lot” or “to some extent” on the following items: that they can **voice contrary opinion** without fear of negative consequences; that they were **recognized for their accomplishments and contribution** to the Partnership; that they can **communicate openly**; and that they have **things in common** with other partners and are respected and valued by other partners. While there was some variation in the balance between “a lot” and “to some extent” across these items, we did not find significant differences based on race, sector, and level of engagement³ in the Partnership.

³ For comparison purposes, we compared responses from those who self-identified as white compared to any other choice (i.e., race), those who were funders compared to all others OR those who said they were grassroots organizers compared to all others (i.e., sector), and those who said their engagement had increased since they joined the Partnership compared to those who did not (i.e., level of engagement).

Figure 2 | Partners' Sense of Belonging

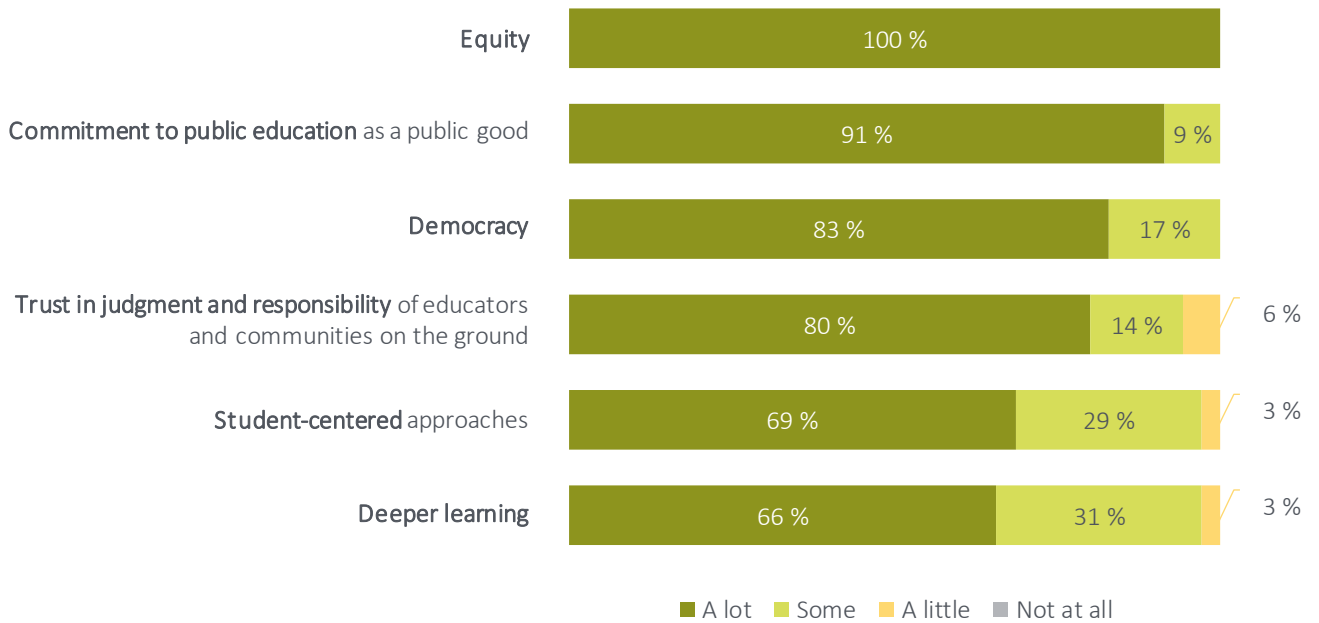


- Partners feel a sense of reciprocity within the network.** Through interviews, partners described the feeling that there is an exchange, a give and take, from the individual to the network community and vice versa, an important aspect of how the network functions. They participate because they receive value and provide value. The survey results support this finding, both in terms of partners contributing value to the Partnership and receiving value from it personally and for their organization. Almost all (97%) partners experienced the Partnership as **personally valuable** to them, and three quarters (74%) perceived that the value they get **outweighs their investment** by some or a lot. This is especially true for more deeply engaged partners; those who reported they had become more deeply involved over time were significantly more likely to gain value and report that the value outweighed their investment. In looking at network diversity, when we compared white partners to partners who self-identified as people of color (POC), white partners were significantly more likely to perceive that they provide more value to the Partnership compared to POC.

Alignment with the Partnership’s principles and values is very high among partners, particularly around racial equity and education as a public good.

- Partners report extremely high levels of alignment to the Partnership’s principles and values. Though the survey did not assess the degree to which individuals had changed their perspectives on these topics, as shown in Figure 3, survey results show that all partners (100%) agreed that their work is aligned to **equity**. Almost all partners agreed “a lot” that their work is aligned to a commitment to **public education as a public good** (91%); **democracy** (83%); and **trust in judgement and responsibility of educators and communities on the ground** (80%). There was still high, though less strong, alignment around partners’ work in **student-centered approaches** and **deeper learning**.

Figure 3 | Partners’ Alignment to the Partnership’s Values



Changes Across Partners

Summary: Partners report strong levels of connection with the variety of diverse, cross-sector organizations that comprise the Partnership. They value these connections, including being able to reach out to someone if needed, share information, coordinate, or collaborate. This is true with no statistically significant differences across types of partners. The Partnership has also created new relationships and deepened existing ones. Though we did not ask about this directly, these results suggest partners are achieving the short-term outcome of valuing others around the table. At the same time, there is a more opportunity to continue to deepen connections across the network, and opportunities to do more weaving across members and elements of the work.

Almost all partners value being able to connect with other partners, and partners are collaborating at various levels, including more intense ways, such as coordinating and collaborating. This level of activity suggests a strong sense of value across partners in the network.

- Most partners who answered the survey (91%) reported that the Partnership has been valuable for helping their organization connect to others, and 88% of partners agreed “some” or “a lot” that their involvement in **the Partnership had helped them personally make connections with other partners.**
- The Social Network Analysis (SNA) provided additional insights into these self-assessments.⁴ For each organization listed, partners completing the survey considered if they had
 - shared information with them or could reach out to them if needed;
 - coordinated activities or collaborated on a project; and/or
 - if they became familiar with the organization only through the Partnership.

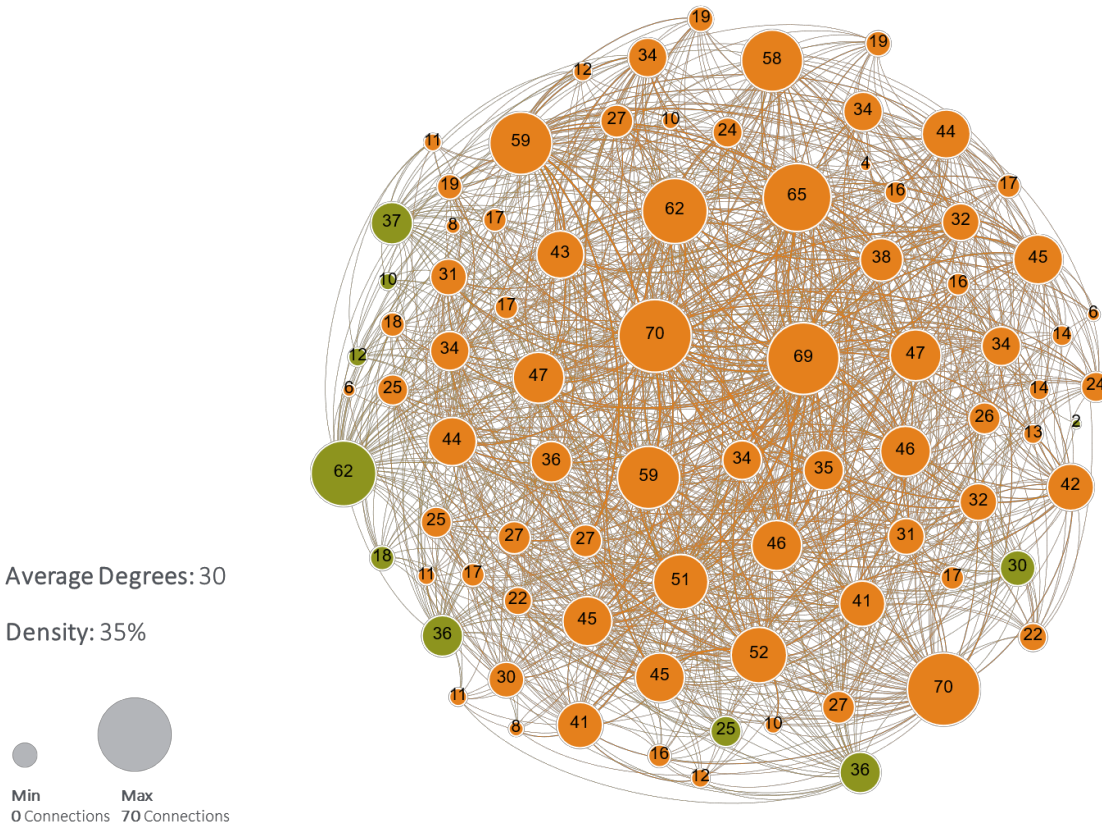
Through this inquiry, we wanted to learn how much connection was happening through the Partnership, at what levels of collaboration, and to what degree the Partnership created opportunities for connections that might not happen otherwise. The SNA includes 74 organizations and 11 individuals not affiliated with an organization, for an overall set of 85 nodes or points of possible connection.⁵ While the SNA provides an incomplete picture of the entire network, we think the findings may be instructive. When looking at the network as available

⁴ Detailed information about the SNA analysis can be found in Appendix A.

⁵ The number of nodes is based on the number of organizations listed for respondents to rate (n=80), not on the number of survey respondents (n=65). Because some respondents did not select any of the 80 organizations as their affiliation, they are additional nodes in the network. On the networks maps, the additional individual nodes are green.

through survey data, we found that organizations⁶, **on average, had 30 connections with whom they had, or could, share information**, with a range of 0 to 70 reported. This represents 35% of the potential number of connections that could exist in the network. A visualization of these connections is shown in Figure 4, showing a relatively dense set of interconnections across organizations in the network.

Figure 4 | Organizations' Information Sharing Connections



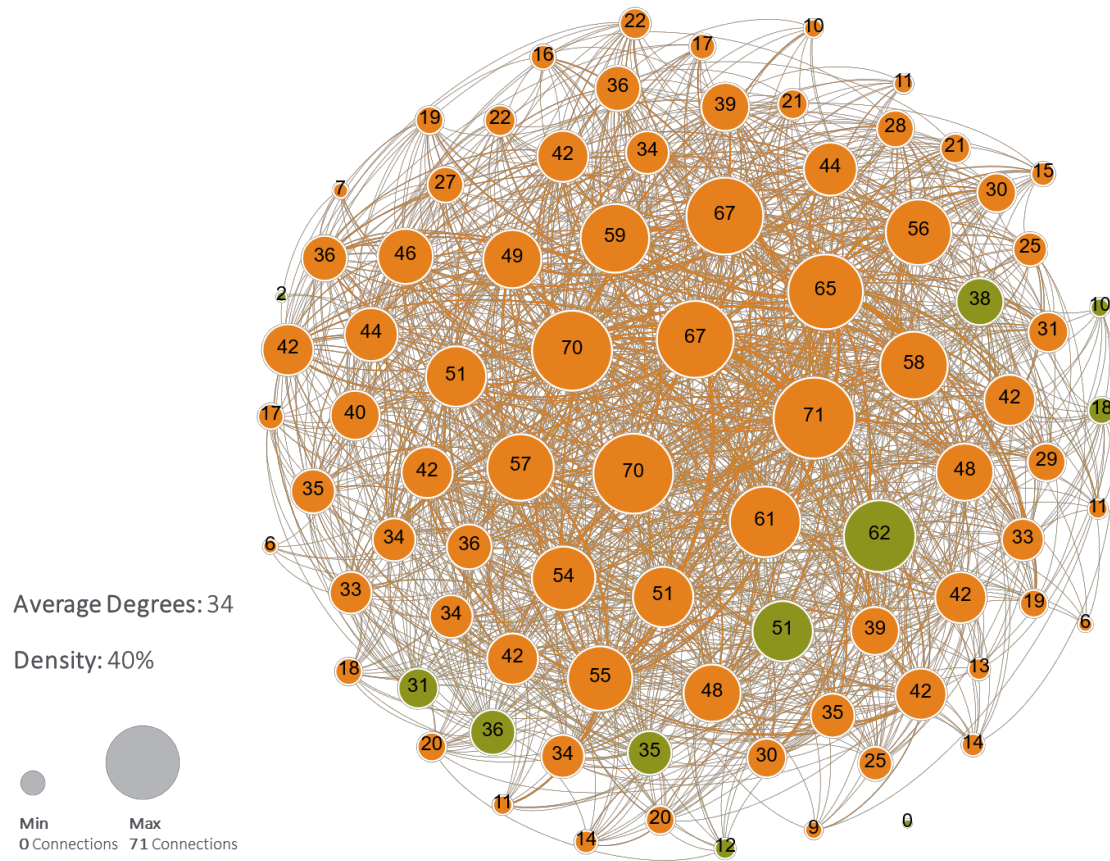
Orange nodes reflect organizations included in the network question; *green nodes* represent survey respondents who were not affiliated with one of the listed organizations.

- Not surprisingly and typical for most networks, the number of connections based on actions that require more effort, such as coordinating or collaborating, decreases to an average of 18 and a range of 0 to 54. But **when looking at cases when partners reported *either* level of collaboration, the average increases to 34, and the density of the connections increases to 40%.**⁷ A visualization of these connections is shown in Figure 5.

⁶ Please review the methodology notes on the social network analysis in Appendix A for more detail on this method. For reading ease, we use the term “organization” for each node, though some (11) are individual respondents without an organizational affiliation.

⁷ Ten respondents said they had an organization they had partnered or collaborated with through the Partnership that wasn't in the SNA question set, suggesting the sample was reasonably comprehensive in scope for this purpose.

Figure 5 | All Organizations' Connections (Information Sharing and/or Coordinating/Collaborating)



Orange nodes reflect organizations included in the network question; *green nodes* represent survey respondents who were not affiliated with one of the listed organizations.

Importantly, the Partnership is fostering new connections, connections across different parts of the education ecosystem, and deepening those that already exist.

- Of the partners who had shared information or coordinated/collaborated, **an average of six of those connections was new**, or with an organization the partner said they were familiar with only because of the Partnership.
- Additionally, when we looked at whether connections were largely intra-sector (e.g., funders with other funders, or grassroots organizers with other grassroots organizers), we found **the vast majority of connections were with organizations that had a different type of sector.**
- Additionally, while new connections are valuable, **more than half (59%) of partners agreed that the Partnership had deepened or increased their work with organizations that are part of the Partnership and with whom they had prior relationships.**

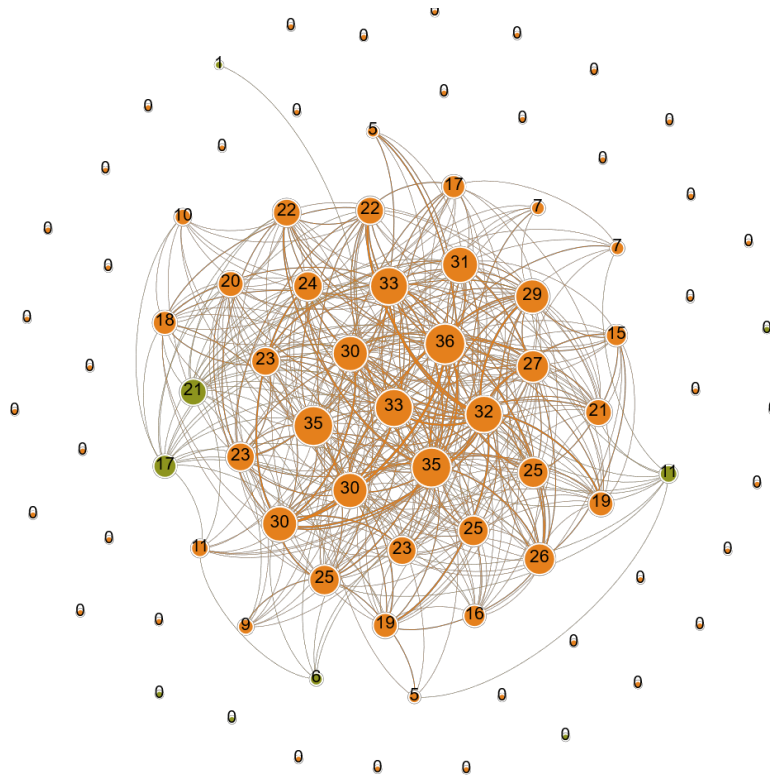
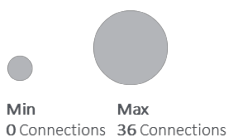
- We did not find significant differences in rates of connectivity and collaboration based on individual characteristics we reviewed, including comparing white partners and partners of color, grassroots organizations to others, or based on level of engagement. Comparing those in a strand (i.e., connected to a working group like Shared Story) versus those not connected to a strand of work, we found a slightly higher level of collaboration among those connected to a strand, but with a lower level of significance (90% versus 95% certainty that this did not occur by chance).

Participating in a strand can help build connections, but connections are not limited to those in strands.

- We were curious about the levels of connectivity within strands. Because of high rates of response to the survey by strand members, and a high level of strand maturity, we looked at connections within Shared Story. As shown in Figure 6, the connections within the Shared Story strand are relatively high and consistent across strand members, and account for 30% of all the connections that exist in the overall network analysis from this survey.

Figure 6 | Organizations' Connections Within the Shared Story Strand

30% of connections within the network are between those within the Shared Story Strand, more than for any other strand



Orange nodes reflect organizations included in the network question; green nodes represent survey respondents who were not affiliated with one of the listed organizations.

- We also wondered about the degree to which strands could create more insular clusters within the network, which may reduce network connectivity or create operational and relationship silos. Table 1 shows the proportion of connections that exist for organizations both within the strand and with those outside the same strand. Because of the maturity of the Shared Story strand (and their higher rates of participation), aligned with the Partnerships value of inclusion, it is affirming to see that its members only have half of their connections with others in that strand; half of the connections that exist for those in that strand extend to others in the network.

Table 1 | Proportion of Total Connections Within and Outside Strands

Strand	n	Proportion of Total Connections* <i>Within</i> Strand	Proportion of Total Connections* <i>Outside</i> of Strand
Shared Story	42	50%	50%
Shared Policy	14	18%	82%
Key Places	15	18%	82%
Shared Systems	17	20%	80%

*Connections include information sharing and/or coordination/collaboration.

Some signs point to more connectivity options that can be bolstered, if strengthened connections within the existing network would support the work.

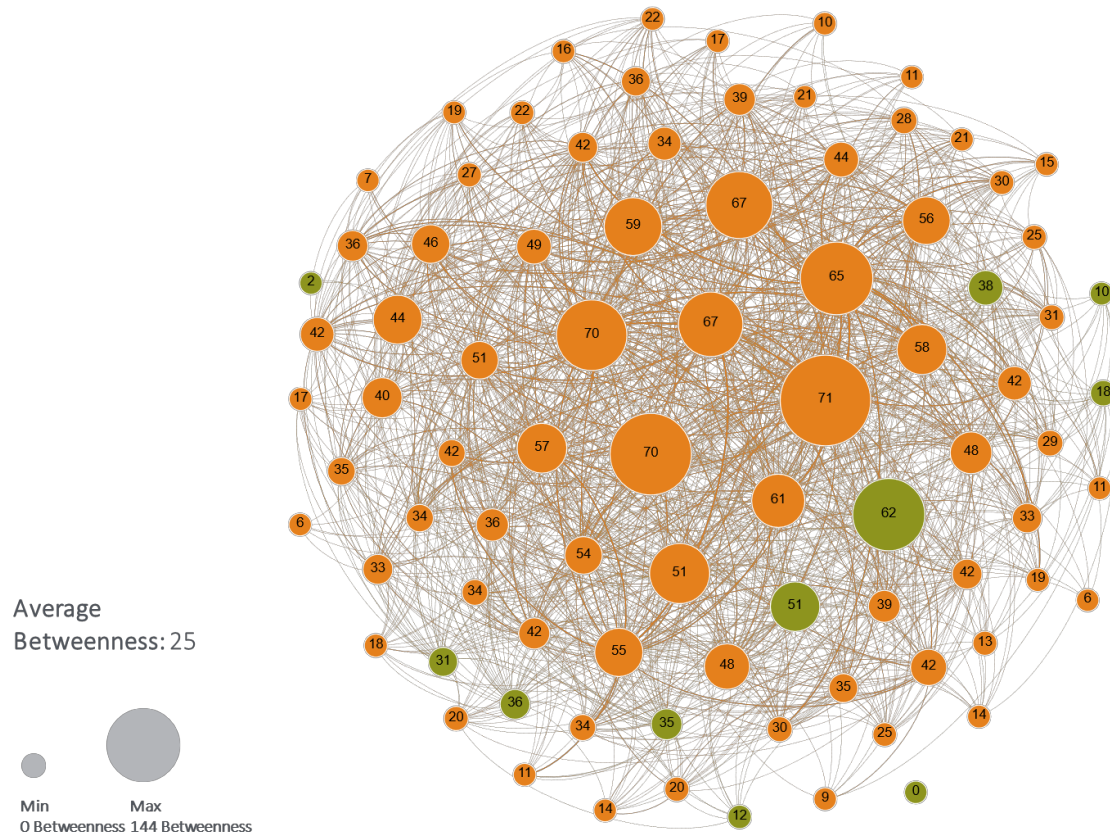
- Interestingly, **partners noted that 25 organizations, on average, were new to them because of the Partnership but with whom they hadn't yet connected in a deeper way** (i.e., shared information, coordinated, or collaborated). With these types of connections representing 29% of the possible connections in the network, this suggests there is some opportunity for more connections to be made and converted into deeper forms of connection and collaboration; requiring additional network weaving support and capacity.
- **Additionally, all 74 of the organizations listed had respondents who selected "I don't know this organization" within their ratings.** Seventeen organizations weren't known by more than half of respondents, and 36 were unknown to one quarter to one half of the partners who answered. While more and deeper connections is not always better for strategic purposes, the Partnership may want to consider if they would like this result to be different and consider ways to build familiarity as a base for more shared work.

The network is not overly centralized, but more connected organizations and individuals could foster more network benefit.

- When looking at networks, measures of centrality can help identify who is most influential in a network. Influence, in this case, is around those who have the shortest distance between them and others in the network. Beyond just looking at the relative number of connections, the concept of betweenness centrality quantifies the number of times a node - generally an organization⁸ - acts as a bridge along the shortest path between two other nodes. It was introduced as a measure for quantifying the control of a person on the communication between other humans in a social network. Figure 7 scaled the nodes so that those with higher betweenness are larger, showing that **a number of organizations in the network have the potential to be effective communicators and connectors**. These organizations are potential brokers: they can connect people who do not have direct contact to one another and are well-positioned to gather and combine knowledge, ideas, etc. from members of the network who are not able to share directly. They can be more efficient and effective influencers, knowing that the individuals they are in contact with will not have direct contact with each other.
- Having more partners with relatively high betweenness is healthier from a network building perspective, than having fewer, and **it could benefit the Partnership to foster more of these kinds of partners over time**.

⁸ As noted previously, nodes are the organizations listed for respondents to rate (n=80), not on the number of survey respondents (n=65). Because some respondents did not select any of the 80 organizations as their affiliation, they are additional nodes in the network.

Figure 7 | Organizations' Betweenness Centrality



Orange nodes reflect organizations included in the network question; *green nodes* represent survey respondents who were not affiliated with one of the listed organizations.

Even with all these connections, partners see an opportunity to weave the four strands together more intentionally.

- An explicit example of network weaving potential is the community schools work, described more in the next section of this report. Implementing community schools requires passing local and/or state education policy (Shared Policy and Key Places strands) and disseminating content in a compelling way to various audiences (Shared Story strand).

*“Does the story work advance the policy agenda, does the policy agenda advance story work, does the work align and make sense to larger priorities? **Are folks getting a better understanding of how the strands braid together?** Can you pull the pieces together? Can a partner make sense of how those things fit together and use the contributions of the network to advance their work at different altitudes?”*

Another example is that of the Shared Systems strand which is exploring the role of narrative change in systems change, although there is a sense that more intentionality is needed to connect the Systems Change and Shared Story strands of work given the emerging and evolving nature of the Systems Change strand. In theory, the strands would converge in the Key Places, but our interviews did not reveal that people are aware that is happening in the way that it is intended. The survey results further show some divergence in partners’ thoughts about weaving, with more than half feeling there’s enough, but **40% report there is not enough weaving between strands.** This level of weaving requires both capacity, in the form of staff, consultants and partners to support efforts to connect the strands or work, and requires a certain level of strand maturity and development (to ensure that there is substantial enough work to “weave” into).

Changes in the Network

Summary: In addition to changes within and among partners, the Partnership also wants to see ways in which the network itself, as a distinct unit of analysis, experiences changes over time. We found that the network has grown in diversity among its members, is viewed as highly responsive, and has elements that partners believe represent durability. Partners want to experience more diversity among network leadership, across staff and governance bodies, especially considering a range of characteristics of diversity, including perspective and role in the field. The network is dense, without obvious hubs or significant outliers.

Resulting from strategic efforts, the Partnership saw growth in the overall racial/ethnic and sector *diversity* of the network, but not necessarily within leadership.

- Partnership leaders, including the steering committee, made network diversity a strategic priority and recruited partners that reflected a greater mix of knowledge, perspectives, and experiences.

Partners agreed that the network brings together people who would not otherwise have the space and opportunity to meet and connect, including funders and organizers.

This was evident as mentioned above as far

“[The network has brought] people who historically had not been at that table together, into a room together, whether that means bringing in students to talk to funders or it means bringing in equity and civil rights groups into the education setting.”

as connections supported by the Partnerships, and has been especially evident at the annual Assembly, where there has been overall growth in the number of attendees. A related form of diversity is perspective-based. For example, there is a mix of perspectives within the network on charter schools, and while partners may not agree on every topic, there is a standard of alignment about the role and value of public education in our society. In the survey, **almost all (91%) partners agreed that the Partnership represents different voices in the education field, and 86% agree the Partnership can break silos** between these diverse people and organizations. When partners were asked whose voice is missing from the Partnership, the majority of partners (66%) identified students. Additionally, interviews revealed that educators and parents are among the less represented groups in the Partnership.

- While partners unequivocally see increased racial/ethnic and sector diversity in the network, **they expressed less certainty about the extent to which network leadership has become increasingly diverse.** Funders, who comprise about one third of the steering committee, are overrepresented. According to interviewees, and from convening observation, grassroots organizers, whom the Partnerships seeks to engage as change drivers given their proximity to network priorities, tend to have different capacity, or bandwidth, to serve on the steering committee.

Network leaders have been responsive to partners by soliciting input on strategic priorities, dedicating resources to emergent needs, and being prepared to address pressing issues in the field, thus supporting a *responsive* network overall.

- **Partners view the network as responsive and proactive to urgent field developments.** For example, upon learning about the rollback of school discipline guidelines by the Trump administration, the network quickly mobilized to counteract the change. A more recent example is the COVID-19 response. The Partnership has shared resources compiled from across the network to support partners' capacity to respond to the crisis. Partners view the network as very attentive to their needs, building one-on-one connections among partners and tending to individual partner needs, despite its small staff capacity. Besides the strategic response, people also appreciate the personal outreach and sensitivity toward individual experiences during the crisis as demonstrated by network leadership.

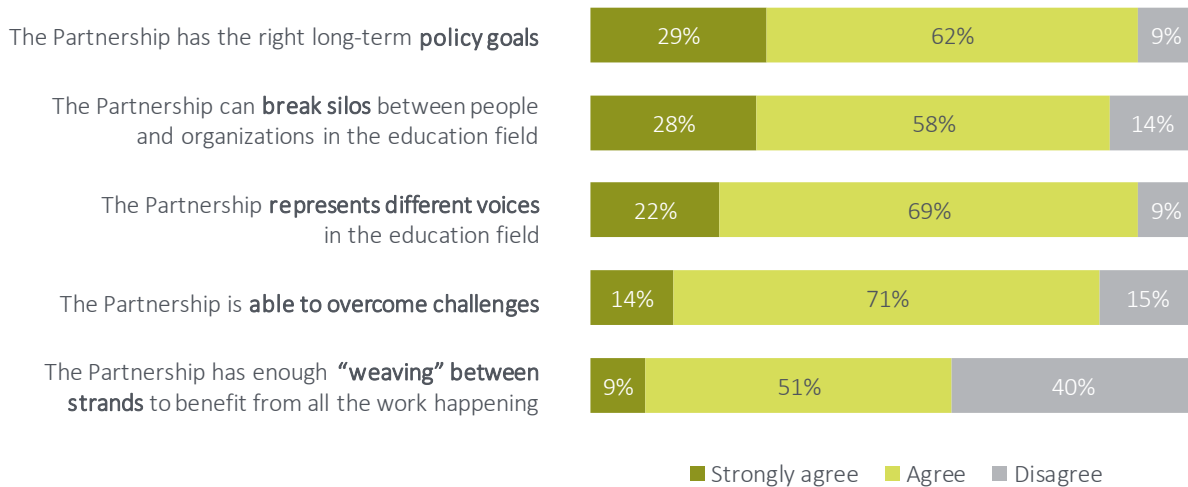
*"We actually can't do everything, but there are some things that we are in a unique position to do because **we are a collective of organizations rather than one organization**. So there have been things that the Partnership has done in response that **have really sat in that space**, and I have appreciated that."*
- **NPESF-based staff and Partnership consultants provide responsive support to partners.** They are attentive regarding technical assistance needs (e.g., strategy building, learning, and communications frameworks) and help to bridge connections among partners to address their needs. The network is especially responsive to those who ask for help, suggesting that those with the greatest capacity and access to network staff and consultants get the most attention, and underscores the competing demands on current staff and consultant time and capacity. The survey results support this finding, with 94% of partners agreeing that the Partnership is responsive to their organizational needs.

The Partnership has laid the foundation to be *durable* through its cultivation of lasting, productive relationships among partners.

- According to interviewees, **network durability means that the network is sustainable, relevant, consistent (in who shows up), easily able to integrate new partners, led by strong facilitators, made up of partners who support each other, and able to withstand philanthropic shifts.** As previously described, we see evidence of many of these factors, suggesting that durability has been built and fostered through the way that the network has been developed and supported. This finding is further supported by survey results, though we found statistically significant differences. **When we examined the data by race/ethnicity, white partners are significantly more likely to agree on network durability measures compared to partners of color,** underscoring that partners experience the network differently along racial lines.

*“The fact that we have held together for at least four to five years through shifts in leadership (of foundation program officers and presidents) and survived in a hostile political environment is a major accomplishment. It’s survived departures of several funders... So, the fact that **we have been able to not only survive but to thrive in the midst of change** and recruit new funders during this time is a testament to our durability.”*

Figure 8 | Network Durability and Weaving Measures



Note: Within this area, one short-term outcome is increased network production. We believe this outcome is best understood by seeing what aligned actions result from Partnership work.

Aligned Actions

Summary: Partners within the network contribute aligned actions within strands, across and between strands, and beyond strands, within their own organizations or with others outside of the Partnership. We see evidence of progress and change across all these areas, with clear examples of aligned actions particularly around community schools and the Key Places, the Shared Story strand, and partners' promotion of resources beyond the network itself. At the same time, partners are split nearly in half around the value of the Partnership as a way to take collective action. Given the focus of this work and the stage of the effort, this evaluation did not deeply explore the degree to which the network has contributed to changes from aligned actions on systems, policies, places, or narrative.⁹

Aligned Actions Within and Across Projects/Strands

The Partnership has produced aligned actions through the different strands, depending on each individual strand's developmental stage.

- **Community schools provided an area of consensus and common effort among network partners.**

The composite development and dissemination of the Community Schools Playbook from 2018 to the present provides the strongest example of aligned action and network weaving. Network partners most

"[Community schools] gave us all a place of alignment despite wherever organizations are focusing on education."

often cited this body of work as a significant win for the Partnership. They view aligned actions and network weaving as similar processes, both built on relationships and driven by shared goals, tools, messaging, and products. A highly resonant agenda, the community schools priority provided a common ground approach to advance the Partnership's mission to help the field improve the quality of public education and increase racial equity through an evidence-based and community-honoring approach. Examples of collaborative efforts—focused on promoting community schools and developing the Community Schools Playbook¹⁰—weaved together Shared Policy and Shared Story across the Key Places of California, New Hampshire, and Georgia as well as other states. Regarding policy, the Georgia Department of Education began using the Community Schools Playbook to reshape its strategy for supporting struggling schools, steering away from a takeover or privatization approach towards Community Schools. The Shared Story strand was especially impactful through the creation of short videos, such as those elevating the campaign for Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers, which are part of the district's long-running community schools initiative. Framing guidance, a press statement

⁹ Additionally, the original evaluation design had anticipated conducting focus groups around some key areas of accomplishment to learn more. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, closure of schools, and other changes this year, the design was slightly curtailed and this part of the effort was not included in the scope of work.

¹⁰ See <https://communityschools.futureforlearning.org/assets/downloads/community-schools-playbook.pdf>

with language to use, and social media content have reached policymakers, including Representative Abe Marshall Hudson Jr. (D) from Mississippi, who sponsored bill “MS - HB1405 Community Schools Planning and Implementation Grant Fund Program; establish for purposes of providing assistance to public schools to provide additional educational and social services.”¹¹ All these tools, resources, and communications serve as examples of network production and results.¹² The Playbook created a template as well as a test case for future topics that the Partnership takes on to support network weaving. The Playbook created an opportunity to activate partners from across the network and across strands, building stronger relationships and alignment among different nodes of partners.

- **As some partners reflected, the Community Schools Playbook and related activities have contributed to strong momentum around this cause within the network but have not translated to statewide change in the Key Places.** Partners universally view the Playbook as a useful resource, yet several we spoke to are unsure if it has led to any immediate shifts, such as the uptake of the community schools model in places where it was lacking or an increase in places where it was already established. Interviewees noted that there are several important implementation factors to advance the model including training educators, local policy to convert schools into community schools, and additional financial resources to implement community school activities and services, which may require focus or prioritization to increase adoption.
- **Shared Story has enabled partners to align their messaging as they collectively work to shift the narrative about public education.** The strand has drawn from expertise in strategic communications and issue framing to present content in various forms (e.g., videos, social media prompts, issue framing language, research) that helps partners reach their intended audiences in clear and compelling ways. Partners reflected that Shared Story has provided “a huge service” to the network and helped to align their communication efforts with tangible and practical tools. It is also the longest-running strand with the most substantial investment of all the strands to-date. The strand’s efforts have increased individual partner capacity to explain their work amid the increasingly virtual culture in the U.S., alleviating a good deal of the burden for partners to

*“I’ve seen the videos and the social media content and so forth from folks who are not part of the Partnership. **It’s gotten out there and embedded**, so I think that’s a win.”*

¹¹ Sources: October 2019 email communication; TrackBill:

Mississippi Rep. Abe Hudson (D), <https://trackbill.com/legislator/mississippi-representative-abe-hudson/627-14703/>. The bill ultimately did not pass, as noted on Bill Track 50, available at <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/1043992>.

¹² Network connectivity, health, and results are the key components of an evidence-based network evaluation framework. See

Network Impact and Center for Evaluation Innovation (2014). Framing paper: The state of network evaluation. Available at http://www.networkimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/NetworkEvalGuidePt1_FramingPaper.pdf; Taylor, M., Whatley, A., & Coffman, J. (2015).

develop content and messaging on their own. They have seen content stemming from the Shared Story strand's efforts disseminate beyond the Partnership to the broader field. For example, the Southern Education Foundation led a project to compile the education policy stances from the Democratic and Republican gubernatorial candidates seeking election in Kentucky, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Supported by the Shared Story strand, the Partnership succeeded in having this work spotlighted in *Politico's Morning Education* October 25, 2019 email newsletter.¹³

- **The Community School Playbook and Shared Story videos bring partners together to take action.** Over half of partners indicate that they have taken action with other partners. More than half of partners are **using the Community School Playbook** and/or **Shared Story videos** to inform their work. Less explicit examples of aligned actions include participation in the annual Assembly and various virtual meetings, which help to identify and pursue opportunities for network weaving and leveraging the Partnership's communications assets to help partners promote shared messaging and ideas. These aligned actions suggest pockets of network activity that present important examples of network responsiveness and agility. The Partnership creates space and support for both "*intentional and unintentional collaboration*," noted one partner. These opportunities are possible because of the infrastructure and relationship-building that the Partnership has cultivated over the last five years.
- **Partners have collaborated to advance education equity, particularly in the Key Places.** Within each of the Key Places (California, Georgia, and New Hampshire), there are rich ecosystems of communities, organizations, teachers, and policymakers grappling with the challenges of modern education. Key Places work intends to weave the separate work done by the Shared Story, Shared Policy, and Shared Systems strands into one nexus to encourage collaboration among local partners and partners. The following are examples of collaboration within each of the Key Places:¹⁴
 - **California:** Building on years of collaboration, partners in California have built their own state-level network focused on advancing a racially just public education system. This includes creating a new public narrative about public education and advancing full and fair funding policies. While the California groups have not relied on Partnership staff and consultants for technical guidance, this effort has benefited from direct and pooled funding and other capacity-building supports from the Partnership, particularly in its early stages of development. A larger group

¹³ Source: November 6, 2019 email communication.

¹⁴ The following source is the primary basis for these examples: April 2019 memo to the Hewlett Foundation, "Key Places' Contribution to Hewlett Strategy on Building Demand for Deeper Learning: Impacts and Options for Continued Support."

of organizations area also involved in the narrative work and in learning and capacity building opportunities. The California Shared Story Table succeeded in placing op-eds in the *Mercury News* and the *San Francisco Chronicle* on the need for increased investments in California schools.

- **Georgia:** Has made progress in advancing the community schools model as an asset-based, non-privatization “school turnaround” approach.
- **New Hampshire:** Collaboration has focused on elevating the voices and experiences of students, families, and educators to shift the narrative on public education in New Hampshire. These engagement efforts have led to 46 school districts adopting the Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE), which is designed to support deeper learning and to be more **integrated** which is “designed to support deeper learning and to be more integrated into students’ day-to-day work than current standardized tests.”

The introduction of the COVID-19 pandemic during spring 2020 created significant uncertainty about the future, yet the Partnership aligned around solutions to address the crisis head-on and to build the case for improving public education infrastructure and education resourcing.

- **Given the severe impacts of the pandemic on students, educators, and families, the network quickly came together to communicate, coordinate, and collaborate to generate a response and potential solutions.** The pandemic began to severely affect all large-group activities in the United States during mid-March 2020. Schools closed to reduce the spread of the virus, and stay-at-home orders suddenly required many people to work and learn from home. Grappling with the disproportionate impact on students of color and students from low-income communities who attend public schools, Partnership staff, consultants, and Strategy Council members met in April to brainstorm the Partnerships’ role in mitigating the effects of the crisis and to consider strategic pivots and deeper engagement in existing efforts, including budget decisions. The crisis became a test of the network’s durability and adaptability amid urgent needs in the network and divergent viewpoints about how to respond.

- **The pandemic made clear that the existing network priorities that are still highly salient in light of COVID-19, and in fact more important than ever.** Partners agreed that COVID-19 would deepen inequities in public education, particularly the access to and quality of the education that students receive, amid the need for remote education. On April 17, they publicly launched a statewide alliance of community organizing and advocacy groups “advancing a shared vision of a transformational, racially just education system built for us all.” It released a Community Needs Assessment outlining the critical needs of students and families during the pandemic, and a call to action which included engaging students, families, and community in local and state decisions related to the pandemic response. With substantial budget cuts expected in California, other Key Places, and across the country, the education resourcing topic identified prior to the pandemic became an increasingly pressing topic to pursue. Managing editor of a magazine, and senior vice president for state fiscal policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, connected through the Partnership and coordinated around this topic. An op-ed was posted in the magazine on estimated funding cuts that could be inflicted on school budgets.¹⁶ This example speaks to the Partnership’s relationship building and the resulting collaboration and impact of the coverage in the newswire service.

Beyond the pandemic response, the network has produced resources and supports for other emergent moments.

- One example is the network activation around the January 2020 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Espinoza V. Montana Department of Revenue*, about the use of public funds for religious schools. The Partnership developed editorial guidance and shared it with 150 partners of the Shared Story strand and 35 Partnership ambassadors, resulting in quotes published in *TIME* and *New York Times* articles.¹⁷

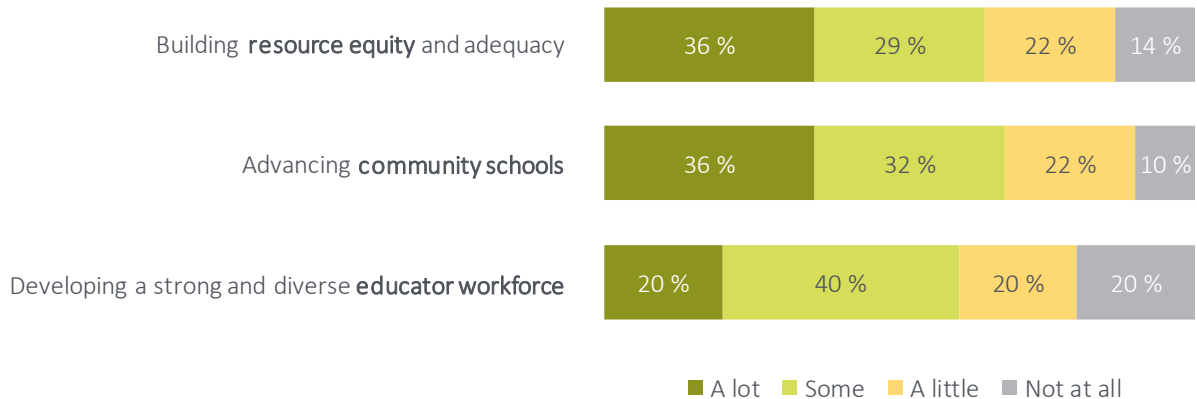
¹⁶Source: May 21, 2020 email communication; ¹⁷Source: January 23, 2020 email communication

Aligned Actions Beyond Projects/Strands (Complementary Field Efforts)

As would be suggested by earlier findings around connections in the network, partners are engaged in aligned efforts together outside of the strands, changing things in their own work, and sharing resources with those outside of the network, extending the impact of the Partnership beyond the bounds of its direct partners.

- More than half (59%) of partners agreed that they have **worked on Partnership-related work with other organizations outside of the Partnership.**
- To understand what changes have occurred as a result of partners’ involvement in the Partnership, we asked to what extent **partners are focusing their work on the Partnership’s priorities.** In all instances, more than half agreed they are focusing on the priorities “a lot” or “to some extent”: advancing community schools (68%); building resource equity and adequacy (64%); and developing a strong and diverse educator workforce (60%), as shown in Figure 9. There is also evidence of other opportunistic aligned actions dispersed across the network, typically initiated or mobilized around a discrete event by a set of partners, and often less visible or known to the broader network. One example is a relatively small organization that aligned its strategic planning with the Partnership’s priorities. This approach may have better positioned the group to receive funding through the Partnership and other mission-aligned funders. As one funder commented, “Some partners lean very pragmatically and may reflect, ‘Well, this is how they’re funding now, so we better get on it’.”

Figure 9 | Partners’ Degree of Focus on Partnership Priorities



- **Partners are taking action as a result of being in the Partnership.** In the survey, over half of partners (57%) said they had changed the way they do their work “some” or “a lot” as a result of being in the Partnership, and about one third reported “a little” (32%), as shown in Figure 10.

- **Partners are sharing resources beyond the Partnership.** The majority of partners are sharing their knowledge and resources with partners who are not in the Partnership "to some extent" (38%) or "a lot" (50%).

Figure 10 | Actions Taken as a Result of Being in the Partnership



- **Changes are made unevenly within the Partnership.** We used a statistical test to understand if the number of changes individuals reported making had any connection to other characteristics, like the type of organization they were affiliated with or their level of engagement with the network. A deeper look at the organizations that made the most organizational changes revealed that in general, respondents from grassroots organizations and those who have become more engaged since they joined the partnership were significantly more likely to make changes as a result of their engagement in the Partnership compared to non-grassroots organizations. Overall, partners who reported being more likely to take individual actions as a result of being in the Partnership also found the Partnership more personally valuable to them. On the other hand, funders who completed the survey reported significantly lower rates of organizational change compared to partners from non-funding organizations and found the Partnership less valuable to their organization.

Despite some notable progress around aligned actions, partners’ perspectives diverge on the value of the Partnership for taking collective action, a measure of network productivity.

- In a survey question about how valuable the Partnership has been to their organization in taking collective action as a measure of network productivity, 46% of partners found it not very valuable or not valuable at all, with 54% finding it valuable or very valuable. While roughly half being in agreement is not a negative result, it is a notably low proportion compared to other survey results.

Implementation

This section describes the Partnership's implementation progress and opportunities in building and maintaining the network infrastructure and functions, and how the network approach is advancing strand efforts.

The Partnership has led with an explicit focus on achieving racial equity in public education, which is evident in current implementation efforts. Interviewees offered recommendations on how to sustain and deepen the focus moving forward.

- The Shared Policy strand, informed by long-standing and prominent community schools actors in the field, framed community schools as a model designed to increase racial equity, and led implementation efforts, including the Community Schools Playbook, to present evidence of the model's effectiveness in meeting the needs of racially and culturally diverse students and families. Through film, complementary written products, social media, op-eds, and public relations efforts featuring people with diverse lived experiences, the Shared Story strand has both promoted community schools as a strategy and worked to shift the broader narrative on why public education is important. Other equity-driven priorities that are in early development include building a diverse, qualified, and well-supported teaching force and ensuring fair funding formulas to enable schools to best support students and educators. These strategies are presented in the Partnership's visualization of its network priorities, shown in Figure 11. Document review data suggests that the Partnership has likely directly influenced the Nellie Mae Education Foundation's recent shift toward funding community-based organizations focused on racial equity work.¹⁸

"[Equity] is pretty integral to the way that the Partnership talks about itself and to foreground what it's doing in actual practice."

"[Besides racial diversity], equally important is the conversation that we have. We seek to center questions of race and racial equity in virtually every conversation we're having about the work and the process."

Although survey data indicates that almost all partners' work is focused on racial equity, insights from interviewed partners suggest that there are ways to strengthen the network's focus on equity. For one, the emphasis on equity varies across strand and is not formally operationalized across the network. In other words, equity is perceived to be a common value and related to the

¹⁸ In addition, amid the late May to early June 2020 uprisings across the country in response to the police killing of George Floyd and a renewed awareness and outrage toward racial injustice, the Partnership shared via email with partners a compiled list of statements, resources, reports, and fundraising efforts that network partners produced recently and in the past. Noting that "antiracist work is crucial to the future of learning in the U.S.," the Partnership reaffirmed its shared commitment to achieving racial justice.

network's vision for public education, but all partners do not see the value embedded in the day-to-day work. Partners can prioritize and have deeper discussions about their understandings of what it really takes to advance racial equity and how these insights should show up in strand work and other network activities. Other one-off responses from partners on the survey included ways to expand this work:

- More community voice and leadership and/or more divergent voices
- Bringing education justice into a larger social justice tent
- Accelerating work in the Shared Policy and Shared Systems strands for racial equity
- Expand focus to different groups/topics, including Native/Indigenous communities, engaging more deeply around police brutality, and more actions that white people can take to become better advocates

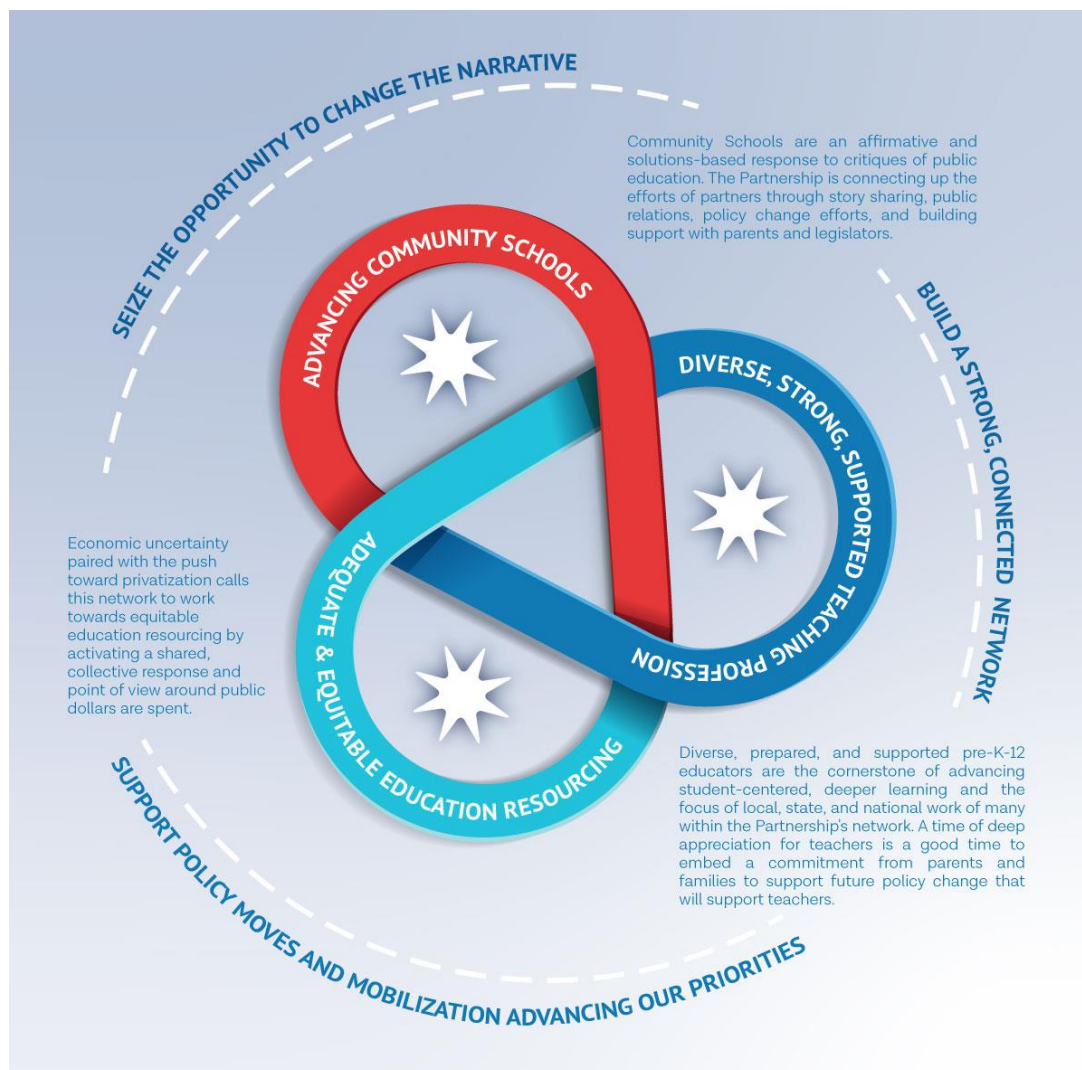
In recent years, the network has intentionally shifted from a funder-oriented decision-making approach to cultivating reciprocal relationships between funders and field partners, yet power dynamics persist.

- In the past, the network was driven by funders who would consult with field partners due to its origins as the funder-led New Models Working Group. More recently, the network has shifted toward centering around community, organizers, and communities of color, while de-centering funders. Partnership leaders (NPESF staff and consultants, Steering Committee) have sought a democratic approach to governance through norming outreach that solicits input and engagement from partners to inform priorities, decision making, and directions for moving forward. They have also been working to mitigate inherent power dynamics between funders and field partners.

*“The fact that **funders have been willing to come to the table and listen to community...has been a good thing.**”*

However, partners continue to view funders as especially powerful because they decide who gets funded. Despite seeing the network operate in a democratic way, they tend to lack understanding about how final decisions are made. It is unclear whether this is because partners are unaware of the governance structure, the actual governance framework is unclear, and/or whether the funding decision-making criteria are not known to partners. With the exception of seeing the Steering Committee as key leaders and decision makers, they are unclear about both the specific infrastructure, mechanisms, and protocols involved in funding decisionmaking and Partnership strategy decisions. **This is especially true for partners, such as strand participants, who are detached from the centralized activities of the Partnership.**

Figure 11: The Partnership's Priorities



Source: May 5, 2020 newsletter to the network on COVID-19 response

While most interviewees agree that the current size and infrastructure of the Partnership serves its purpose, some partners expressed concern about the capacity of NPESF-based staff and Partnership consultants to support network-wide activities and strand-related projects, and see a lack of strategy for growth.

- The partners we interviewed reflected that the Partnership is at a manageable size right now. Every partner can own a piece of the work, even as the network continues to grow. The size still allows a desired level of intimacy when meeting with others across the network. The structure allows for the work to remain actionable, with the strands helping to move agenda items forward. The structure also intentionally allows individuals to depart from their organizational affiliation and to connect with others on an individual level to explore interests beyond those attached to their job roles. However, some fear it would be difficult for the Partnership to get much bigger and

still have direction without added staff capacity and an intentional strategy to effectively manage the growth.

- The survey data supports this lack of agreement among partners; more than half (61%) agreed that the Partnership is the **right size**, but over a quarter (26%) perceived the Partnership's size to be **too small**.

- Themes that arose on this topic included:

- **Capacity to “run the show” is an increasing concern.** Current staff and consultants are over extended given the substantial workload to operate the network. The size, structure, and strategy may be decreasingly commensurate with staff capacity.

- **Partners are curious about the extent to which the structure of the network will need to change as new partners become engaged.** Based on the data collected to-date, the evaluation team would assess that the network resembles a “task network” in which tasks are carried out by “small, diverse, but cohesive groups”²⁰; and a “hybrid action/learning network,” made up of a core team facilitating network coordination across collaborative teams.²¹ Partners suggest that achieving an optimal size and appropriate structure of the network should be driven by the Partnership's goals and related scope of work. These elements act as “a means to an end” and should inform “curation” of partners within the network. If participation within the various strands grows, increasing clarity will be needed about how the strands are expected to weave together and how to meaningfully engage different groups for aligned action.

“The network needs to determine how to be inclusive about bringing new members in and maintaining intimacy for older members.”

²⁰ Slaughter, A. (2017). *The chessboard and the web: Strategies of connection in a networked world*. Yale University Press. (p. 134).

²¹ Ehrlichman, D., Sawyer, D., & Spence, M. (2018). *Cutting through the complexity: A roadmap for effective collaboration*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. Available at <https://ssir.org/articles/entry/cutting-through-the-complexity-a-roadmap-for-effective-collaboration>.

Project development and implementation often feel slow, but many see the pace as reasonable given the collaborative and process-intentional nature of the work.

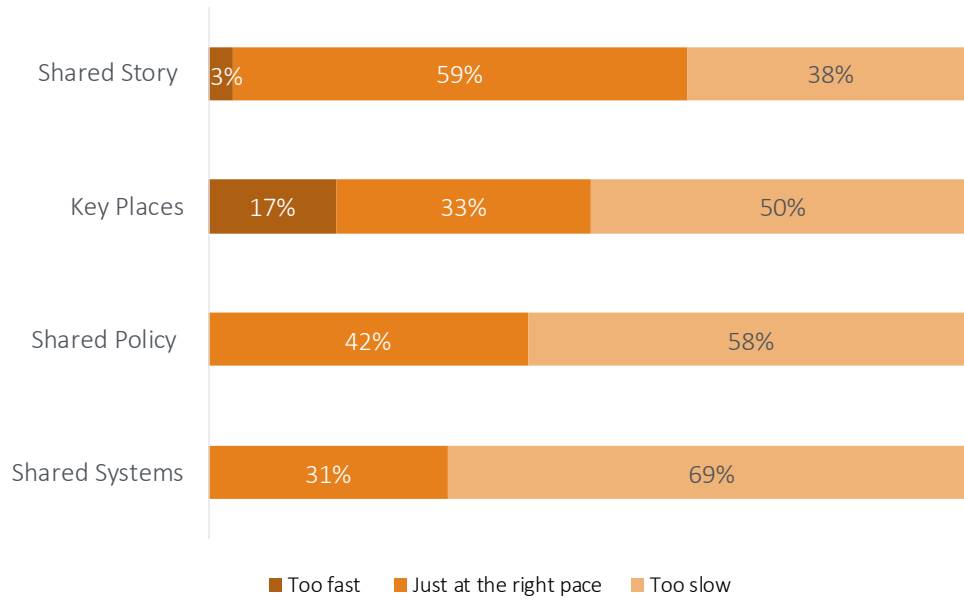
- Partners organize around discussions to generate ideas, identify solutions, and work toward consensus. **Using a deep, thoughtful process and democratic style to achieve alignment takes time.** Once partners are in agreement on an approach, many need to then garner commitment from their funders and supporters, an additional process. Some suggest that the sometimes slow pace of decision making and action may be a function of the limited staff capacity in addition to simply being a function of a collaborative process. This may be especially pronounced when leaders must weigh evolving urgent demands from the field against the network's existing strategy and capacity to respond. For example, the following statement was in the May 5, 2020 newsletter to the network about its COVID-19 response:

"While we plan to stay true to these priorities [community schools, teaching profession, and education resourcing] and stay focused on the long-run, we also are slowing down or speeding up in different ways that partners will witness in the coming months."

The survey data further revealed differences among partners; over half (57%) agree the work is happening at the **right pace**, but nearly half (43%) say it's happening **too slowly**.

- Another consideration for the pace of work is that **the strands are in different stages of development or maturity, staffing and scale of investment.** For example, the Shared Story strand was created first and is the most established group. It has produced and/or promoted over 40 compelling short videos that cover the value of public education, the science of learning, and racial equity. With a wide array of highly visible products or results, partners view Shared Story as faster and more productive than other strands. On the other hand, the Shared Systems strand is the most recently developed (started fall 2019) and is in an early, research-oriented phase of its work, with partners focused on developing definitions and exploring perspectives to determine what they should prioritize and their future activities. Pace also depends on the nature of the work and the demands of the strand. Currently, there are no urgent demands on the Shared Systems strand given the long term nature of its goals, whereas the videos produced by the Shared Story strand for community schools were timed in conjunction with the rollout of that priority. Overall, similar patterns held for partner perspectives on the pace of strand work, with 40% of partners perceiving that it's happening **at the right pace**, and 37% perceiving it as happening **too slowly**. Perceptions varied more among strand members, as shown in Figure 12.


Figure 12 | Perception of Pace of Work Across Strands





Overall Theory of Change Observations

This section describes evaluator observations of the overall theory of change, including the dynamics and relationships between the Partnership's implementation efforts, progress on emerging outcomes, and the assumptions underpinning the network approach. This section also includes recommended changes to the theory of change based on data gathered to date.

Based on our findings, we color coded the evaluation status of the theory of change as follows:

-  Darkest green denotes strongest weight of evidence of change/quality/likelihood of predicted relationship.

-  Lighter green denotes less strong evidence of change or less clarity around the Partnership's contribution.

-  Yellow represents less strong achievement but outcomes that are not absent.


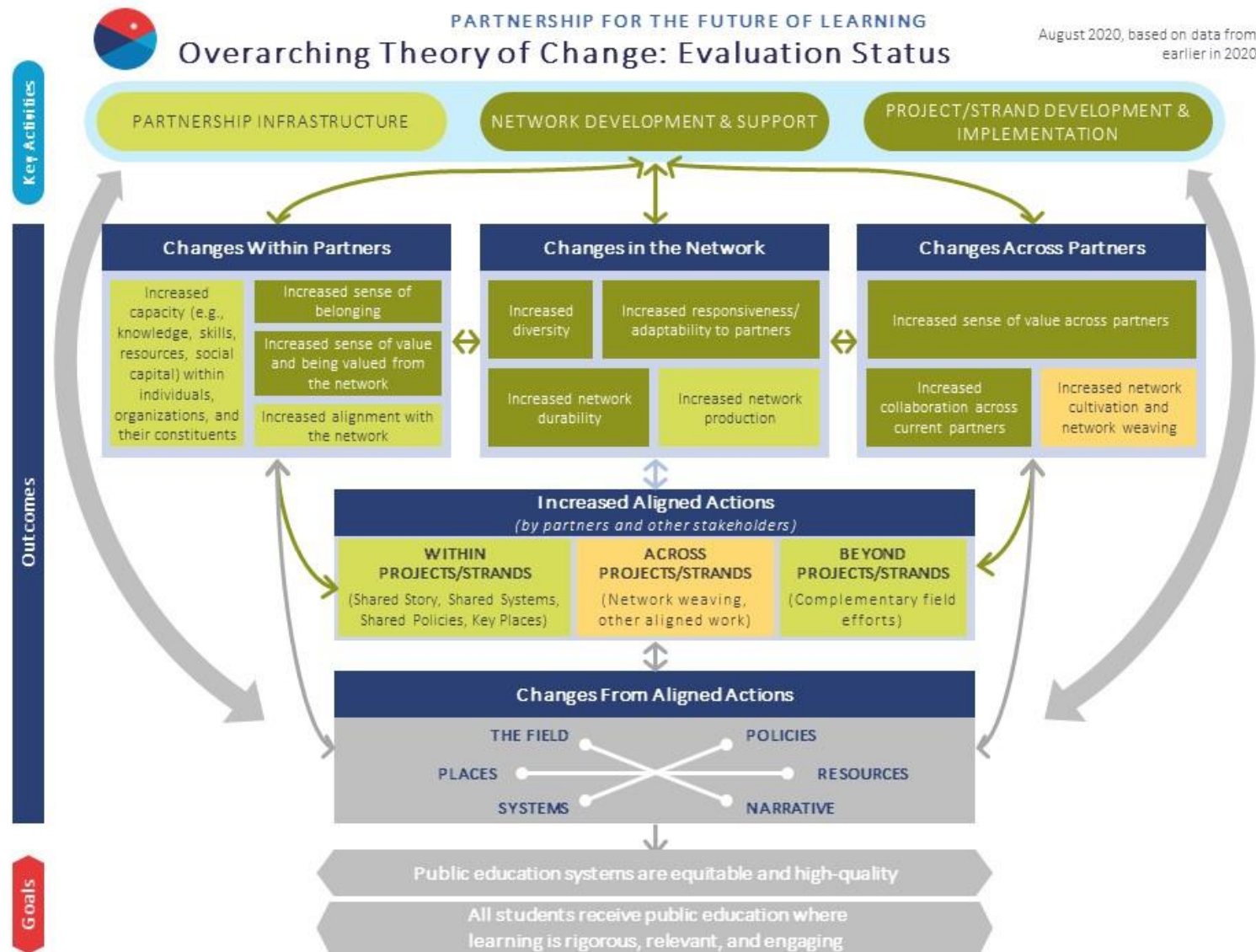
-  Grey represents those areas we couldn't assess in this evaluation effort.

Figure 13 | Overarching Theory of Change Evaluation Status



As the color-coded graphic shows, we see great strength in a number of strategies, short-term outcomes, and predicted relationships. Our data suggest a number of reciprocal relationships, including that changes within members, changes in the network, and changes across members help to strengthen other short-term outcomes as well as the achievement of later results, like changes from aligned actions. Some core assumptions are affirmed:

- Building alignment and a sense of belonging and bringing together diverse and highly capable partners can lead to more aligned actions than seem likely to happen otherwise.
- There is strength in diversity, and the Partnership can support connection across perspectives, roles in the field, and different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Partners can take what occurs in the network back to their own organizations and to others who are not actively involved.

We also observe that the more adaptive and emergent approach to Partnership strategy, responsive to partner needs and assets, and community context to date has been effective in these regards. Building from Adrienne Maree Brown's work,²² we see evidence of strength in some elements of emergent strategy:

- **Fractals:** This element speaks to the ways in which values and approaches should be mirrored at all scales. We see strong consistency in the principles and values of the Partnership at all levels: in strands, Strategy Council meetings, all partner convenings, Steering Committee meetings, and within staff and consultants.
- **Adaptation:** This element speaks to the ways groups make intentional changes to shared aims. Prior data speaks to strong examples of this, from the response to the pandemic to ongoing evolution of new strands, such as the Shared Systems strand, over time.
- **Interdependence and Decentralization:** This element speaks to mutual dependence and shared power. As the network visualizations in the Outcomes section of this report show, the Partnership has a dense shape, suggesting that relationships and connections are well distributed, not managed centrally. One area for growth in this area is related to network weaving, continuing to strengthen the interdependence across strands of work over time.
- **Non-Linear and Iterative:** This element recognizes that change doesn't happen only in a linear way. The original theory of change had this built into its structure, with many double-sided arrow relationships between components, and the recognition that changes across the theory of change can reinforce or dampen elements that precede or follow them.

²² brown, a. (2017).

Recommended Changes to the Theory of Change

This evaluation suggests a few modifications to the theory of change:

- In general, the short-term outcomes focus on increases, but in many cases we are finding that the status of outcomes among and across members, and for the network, are strong. It may be useful to change the theory to focus on outcome quality – the quality of relationships or aligned actions and not just more of them (i.e. increased quantity). Additionally, for the capacity outcome, partners find value but don't necessarily attribute capacity changes to the Partnership. This raises a question about the degree to which the Partnership can and will raise capacity if it expands to include new or different partners who may come with different personal or organizational assets, or how important changing capacity is for the overall theory of change.
- There are some duplications between the short-term outcome of network production and aligned action. We recommend treating aligned actions as an indicator of network production and removing the concept of network production entirely.
- There is a need for clearer thinking and discussion about what network weaving is and how it happens. In our assessment network weaving, like network production, is an indicator of aligned actions that cross strands, and therefore should be removed.

Strategy and Continuous Improvement

In this section, we present what is working and where the Partnership should continue to prioritize and invest. We also present areas for reflection and decision as the Partnership moves into its next stage of network maturity.

Evidence gathered to date suggests there are three areas where the Partnership has been particularly impactful, creating significant value with and for its partners, and filling a unique need in the education reform field.

- 1. Convening power, especially the ability to connect philanthropy and the education field, that represents a diverse range of stakeholders.** The network's convening power – and the impact of being in a Partnership together period - has allowed partners to leverage, elevate, and share knowledge and expertise across a broad range of diverse partners and public education stakeholders, including funders and social change investors, practitioners, advocacy and grassroots organizations, policymakers, institutional leaders, and others.
- 2. Advocacy agenda and a commitment to improving public education that keeps equity front and center.** Interviewees valued the Partnership's sustained stance on improving educational resourcing, supporting teacher quality and diversity, and expanding community schools. Partners underscored the network's unique ability to identify highly resonant education reform efforts, like community schools or school financing, that coalesce wide swaths of public education stakeholders. The Partnership also balances longstanding agendas and calls to action—like education finance—with emerging priorities like the response to COVID-19. This demonstrates a unique mix of network responsiveness and durability amid shifting local and national contexts and impending political changes.
- 3. Ability to produce resonant and tangible products like the Community Schools Playbook and narrative changing videos.** The Partnership develops and disseminates products that are of immediate and high value to partners. This allows the Partnership to garner support, visibility, and momentum-building activities while tending to longer-term advocacy efforts.

These assets suggest that the Partnership has fulfilled many of its functions, including innovation, diffusion, combination, alignment, mobilization, exchange, and, to some extent, advocacy and delivery, as shown in Table 2. The multi-purpose nature of the Partnership to date is a direct reflection of the emergent and respondent nature of the first five years of network formation. The top three functions that partners think the Partnership should prioritize are **exchange** (59%), **advocacy** (55%), and **diffusion** (45%).

Table 2 | Common Functions of Networks²³

Function	Description	Historic Focus?	% Prioritizing for Future Focus
Exchange	Network's purpose is to share information widely	✓	59%
Advocacy	Network's purpose is to influence existing decision-making structures	✓	55%
Diffusion	Network's purpose is to promote rapid spread of ideas, products	✓	45%
Innovation	Network's purpose is to generate novelty (new knowledge, products)	✓	42%
Mobilization	Network's purpose is to reach and activate many people	✓	40%
Combination	Network's purpose is to assemble new capacities	✓	27%
Alignment	Network's purpose is to form or promote coalescence around a new identity/brand	✓	26%
Delivery	Network's purpose is to develop or channel resources and assistance to increase capacity	✓	23%
Assessment	Network's purpose is to provide diverse feedback or evaluation		5%

Somewhat reflective of these multiple functions and the responsive nature of the network to date, our data collection also elevated four tensions that partners are currently facing.

- **Tension 1: Clarity of network function(s).** Interviewees indicated that this is a good time to reflect on the function(s) of the network and possibly undertake a strategy reset, noting that the future of learning will look significantly different following COVID-19. In some ways, the emergent nature of the Partnership has resulted in multiple, sometimes not explicitly stated, purposes as noted above in Table 2. At this stage of network development, partners are interested in both more clearly understanding the network function, and exploring the possibility of more intentionality. Most partners noted that the stated function(s) of the network will have implications for its size and composition, suggesting an openness to thinking through the network's form to best align with these intentions.

²³ Plastrik, P. and Taylor, M. (2003)

- **Tension 2: Network participation and the need to increase in size and diversity.** Interviewees consistently noted the need for more strategic thinking and decision making about who is in the network and its growth (if that is desired). As one interviewee noted, *“Growth ought to be for some purpose, not just for the sake of growing.”* Thoughtful partner curation and activation are necessary components of a complex, expansive network like the Partnership. Interviewees underscored the need for intentional on- and off-boarding of new partners to maintain continuity, especially if the Partnership be shifts efforts or evolves its purpose.
- **Tension 3: Network structure and functions including strands.** Interviewees expressed different levels of understanding of the structure of the Partnership, including the reasons for, prioritization of, and activities within the strands. Partners lack clarity around the strategy and value-add of the Key Places and Shared Systems strands, and how the strands connect to the function of the Partnership and to one another, suggesting more intentionality is needed for network weaving efforts. In addition to looking across strands, this may be an opportune time to reassess efforts within strands. Interviewees also warned to not overcomplicate the network structure, but to closely match it to the network function.
- **Tension 4: Network support and improved communication methods.** Interviewees recognize the behind-the-scenes nature of supporting the network and expressed some concern about capacity and building leadership redundancy in case of future transitions. Interviewees also noted the difficulty of keeping communication methods and information flow among Partners simple and accessible, and at the same time keeping everyone connected to the information that is most salient to them. A few interviewees specifically expressed the need for communication transparency related to funding opportunities.

These tensions are not necessarily things to be resolved, but rather considerations to manage, to minimize the downsides of going in a particular direction.²⁴ In most cases, there is a balance between leaning more into emergence or becoming more focused and targeted. Neither direction is right or wrong, but the Partnership may prioritize or heed different things depending on the direction it leans over the course of its lifespan.

²⁴ To see more descriptions of polarities and how they can be managed within a philanthropic context, this piece looks at polarities for the advocacy and policy function of the Colorado Health Foundation: https://www.orsimpact.com/DirectoryAttachments/1232019_12041_41_CHF_Managing_Polarities_Brief_FINAL.pdf

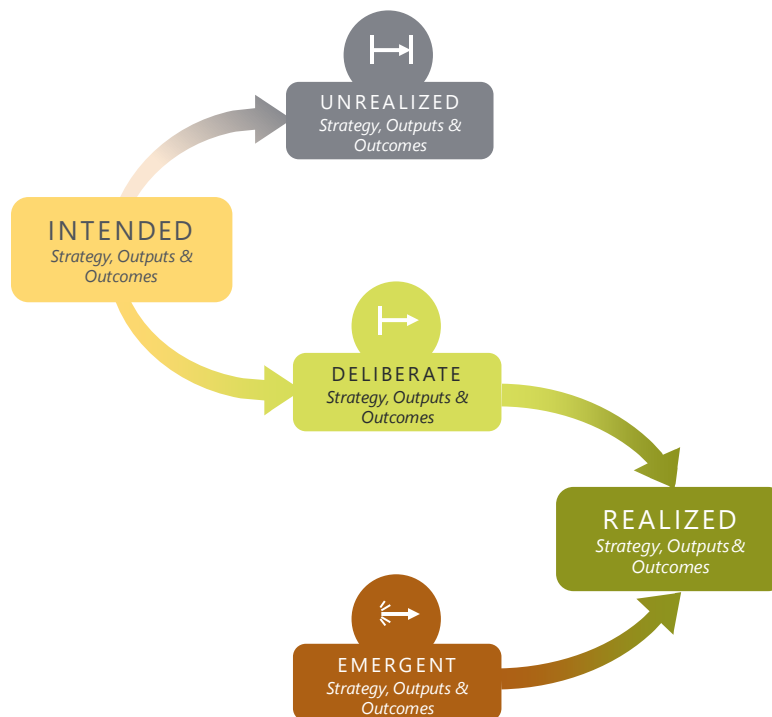
As the Partnership enters its next phase, this is an opportune time to consider its explicit functions and determine a future strategy approach.

Taking into consideration the significant progress and assets of the network, the four tensions, the current and unique moment in time, and the longer-term evolutionary arc of the Partnership, this is the right moment to step back to ask: Looking ahead, what explicit function(s) does the Partnership need to fulfill in order to “protect, strengthen, and advance education equity and meaningful learning—and support the policies and practices that get us there”?²⁵ What will success look like, and what type of approach to strategy best aligns to those desired ends?

If the Partnership takes a more focused and narrowed approach:

- Consider how it might benefit from strategy thinking by Henry Mintzberg²⁶, shown in Figure 14. A more traditional strategy approach still acknowledges emergence. In Mintzberg’s description, realized strategy is the combination of completing things as anticipated, adding in emergent elements, and dropping elements of the strategy that do not ultimately come to be realized. It’s valuable in this approach to be mindful of what is being dropped.

Figure 14 | Strategy Development Process



Created from: Mintzberg. (2007, Chapter 1)

²⁵ <https://futureforlearning.org/what-we-do/>

²⁶ Patton, M. & Patrizi, P. (2010).

- An emergent learning approach like the Triage Tool²⁷, shown in Figure 15, can be useful for discerning what you are planning to pause but later resume, what you may keep unknown for a time, or what you will honor and let go. At the same time, identifying what you are newly prioritizing and considering how and why you are making shifts can provide valuable learning overall, such as the degree to which you are changing tactics because of system changes or changing a more fundamental part of your theory of change.

²⁷ <https://centerforcommunityinvestment.org/blog/reimagining-strategy-context-covid-19-crisis-triage-tool>

Figure 15 | Triage Tool

<p>Guiding Question/Line of Sight*: What will it take to . . . ?</p> <p>The guiding question defines the line of sight: Where are you heading? What are you trying to achieve? The question should be open-ended and future focused. It should not make assumptions about who is responsible or what the solution is.</p>	
<p>Current Priority—Still Relevant—Continues Forward (with modified approach)</p> <p>These are items that are relevant and possible and will go forward, though perhaps not as planned. Make a few notes on likely modifications.</p>	<p>Pause & Resume when crisis “over” (assuming a 6-18 month delay—high uncertainty)</p> <p>These items will be paused. They are either not feasible now, or they need to be paused to make room for emergent priorities. You don’t really know for how long. Six to nine months is a ballpark and may be too long or too short.</p>
<p>Emerging Priority or Existing but Newly Prioritized (because of current conditions)</p> <p>These items are new or newly prioritized items that are on the table (or front burner) because of current conditions. You are being asked to do them or you realize they are necessary and/or urgent.</p>	<p>Unknown Status/Approach (need more data, too much in flux to know)</p> <p>These are items that are either unclear or too much in flux to decide. You need to have more data, talk to others, or let the dust settle a little bit before deciding.</p>
<p>Honor and Let Go (not going to happen)</p> <p>Conditions make these items impossible.</p>	



- This also potentially provides opportunities to identify and test different hypotheses within the strategy to strengthen the Partnership's thinking and implementation over time. By setting more concrete parameters and priorities, you may better be able to assess effectiveness over time and learn more about what does and doesn't work, when and under what conditions.
- Becoming more traditionally "strategic" could feel like a culture change to those who have been involved. If the Partnership moves in that direction, you may want to think about how to manage change and what it might mean for supports, operations, ongoing measurement, etc.

If the Partnership decides to continue to focus on an emergent approach:

- If the Partnership chooses to continue to grow, it will likely be important to continue to find ways to help get new partners onboarded and oriented so they can effectively join and contribute to the dynamic, interconnected group. As the group grows and evolves, it may require new or different approaches than in the past, when the group might have been closer knit or starting with greater alignment. brown²⁸ pulls a lot from the natural world and speaks to things like the murmuration of birds, how a flock of birds or school of fish can seamlessly move as a whole. What will it take for the network to murmurate – including from a capacity and resource perspective - if there are new, different, or more partners?
- Similarly, consistency across levels of the Partnership has been a strength. Continuing a strong consistency in applying values and principles across all levels will be important, especially if more changes are made in approaches or ways of functioning. This will likely mean also focusing on strong onboarding, communications and network weaving efforts to help drive this consistency across levels over time.
- Learning and assessment are still important and possible in this strategic approach. The Partnership might consider whether there are opportunities to beef up system sensing efforts, to help support effective iteration and adaptation. Additionally, finding ways to test ideas at smaller scales could provide ripe areas for focused learning and evaluation to share back to the network at greater scales. Finally, it would be important that the values and principles of the network are similarly replicated in any measurement and learning work.

²⁸ brown, a. (2017).

Closing

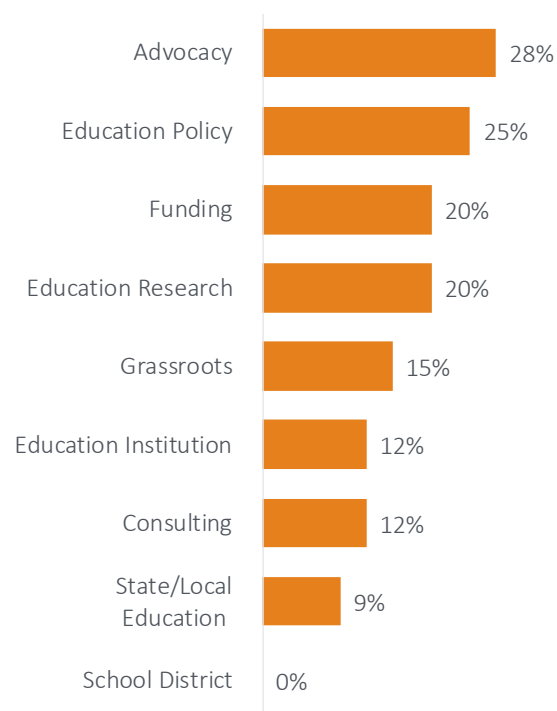
Over the first five years of development, the Partnership has evolved into a broad, diverse network with a strong, resonant, and recognized equity-centered public education reform agenda. It has gained important wins both within the network—changing the ways that partners interact—and with local education policy and practice changes. As the Partnership enters its next phase, and given the dramatically changing national context, this is an opportune time to reflect on this current progress and begin to determine the extent to which the Partnership will continue to be emergent and responsive, or the extent to which it can be more intentional and strategic so that it can realize the vision that public education systems are equitable and high quality, so that all students receive public education where learning is rigorous, relevant, and engaging.

Embedded in the interview sampling approach were 1) strong nodes/connectors within the network, 2) individuals who were participating on the periphery of the network, and 3) partners identified through snowball sampling (i.e., recommendations through earlier interviews). The team coded the interview data according to theory of change components and developed themes in each area. A representative from the team attended and observed the November Assembly in Chicago.

Partner Survey

In the spring of 2020, the team also administered a survey²⁹ to 118 partners, and 65 completed the survey (55.1% response rate), representing 45 affiliate organizations in the Partnership (11 of the 65 respondents were members of the network but not affiliated with an organization). The organizations represented different groups (as shown in Figure 16), including funding, policy advocacy, teaching and learning, and grassroots organizations.

Figure 16 | Organizations Represented in Survey Sample



The survey was analyzed using Excel, SPSS, and Gephi, and the data was used to triangulate findings with other data collection tools.

²⁹ The survey was reviewed by the Partnership advisory committee.

Partner Demographics

The majority of partners have been engaged with the Partnership for three or more years (65%). Almost all partners (94%) reported that they had participated in an event held by the Partnership and had joined a strand (90%), with 39% selecting to work in one strand and 48% selecting to work in more than one strand. More than two thirds (82%) of partners reported that they have been using Partnership's resources, and slightly fewer (72%) had shared resources, tools, and publications produced by the Partnership.

Partners represent well-distributed roles in the education field, with 25% representing education policy. More than half (52%) of partners are from nonprofit organizations. The majority of partners are white (60%). Other partners identified as African Americans (20%), Latinx (8%), and only 5% identified as Asian. There are slightly more female (52%) vs. male (43%) partners. More than one third (34%) of partners are between the ages of 35 and 44.

More than half (57%) of partners are engaged through the Shared Story strand. More than one third (39%) reported being engaged through the Strategy Council. Another one quarter reported being engaged with the Shared Policy strand (25%) and the Shared System strand (25%). Fewer partners (22%) are engaged through the Key Places strand. More than half (57%) of partners reported being more engaged since they first became a partner, and most of these partners reported being more engaged in the Shared Story strand. Few partners (17%) reported that their engagement had not changed or that they were less engaged (1%) since they first joined the Partnership.

Social Network Analysis

In the Social Network Analysis (SNA), we assessed connectivity at both the individual and organization levels. For both analyses, the goal was to learn about how much connection was happening within the Partnership, at what level of collaboration, and the extent to which the Partnership was creating opportunities for connections that might not have happened otherwise.

For data collection, individuals completed the survey, meaning that multiple individuals from one organization could complete the survey. For connectivity, individuals rated their degree of connection to organizations, not other individuals, to reduce burden on collecting connectivity data (e.g., 80 versus >120 individuals). Finally, 11 individuals completed the survey but were not affiliated with any of the 80 listed organizations, so the final number of organizational nodes (possible connection points) included 74 organizations and 11 individuals not affiliated with an organization, for total of 85. To move from a mixed data set, with individuals rating connectivity to organizations, we created organizational-level data. To analyze network connectivity at the organizational level, we aggregated individual responses and counted a connection if at least one person from the organization had identified a connection, and all levels of connections (higher and lower) were counted for the analysis.

We conducted some analysis at the individual respondent level (n=65) to understand if there were differences in connectivity based on individual characteristics such as race, level of activity, and engagement in the network, and the sector of the individuals' organizations.

The organizational-level analysis (n=85) sought to understand the extent to which connectivity was or was not concentrated among organizations participating in the strands. When assessing the extent of connectivity concentrated within strands, we considered an organization as having participated in a strand if at least one respondent reported participating. For strand assignment, we used self-reported data on the survey. For organizations that did not have a partner responding, we used existing data to connect to strands.

Network analysis was conducted using Gephi, an open source network analysis software. We assessed a number of network connectivity measures, including degrees (the number of connections going into a given node), density (the proportion of existing connections in the network of the total possible connections), and betweenness centrality (a measure of how often a node appears on the shortest path between other nodes in the network).

Overall Strengths and Limitations

Every evaluation engagement includes tradeoffs in scope and design choices; as your partner, we sought to maximize benefit and minimize limitations, and be transparent about each.

Some strengths in this design include utilizing a mixed methods approach. In many cases we were able to triangulate findings across different types of information (e.g., qualitative interview data, quantitative survey data, and documentary evidence), which increases our confidence that the findings are more broadly true and generalizable across different stakeholders. We also sought to go beyond the most knowledgeable voices; the survey and the snowball sampling approach with the interviews helped us get a broader set of voices and perspectives, a process aligned with the Partnership's values. Additionally, the engagement of the evaluation advisory committee helped us make sure our questions were salient and more reliable across those from whom we collected data and allowed us to test our interpretation beyond our team.

There were, of course, limitations. Within the methods we chose, a higher response rate would add confidence that we are understanding a broader set of experiences in the Partnership, though the diversity among respondents was enough to not make this a major concern. Our interview sample probably still reflects more of the experience of those more closely tied and connected to the network than those who are newer or less close to the work overall. From a design perspective, by looking at the network as a whole, the evaluation will not have captured every positive outcome that occurred, nor very detailed information about the implementation and results of each strand. We also made choices to focus on the degree to which the Partnership achieved and contributed to shorter-term and intermediate

outcomes versus a design that might have focused on a result or win in a place, policy or narrative, to then explore the degree to which the Partnership made a contribution.

Finally, it is critical to underscore the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic and the racial justice movement following the murder of George Floyd had on partners including those involved on the Evaluation Advisory Committee, interviewees (who were contacted prior and during the pandemic and racial justice movement), and the survey respondents who received the instrument amidst these devastating moments of national reckoning. These events have most certainly influenced both the dispositions and responses captured in our data collection, as well as our response rates and accessibility of partners for data collection.

Overall, we do feel that, despite limitations, these data do show a meaningful point in time assessment of the state of the partners and network against which future progress could be measured and ongoing efforts to learn and measure could build upon.

Appendix B: Strands at a Glance

The strands each have their own origin story, goals, products, and aspirations. The strands have on occasion worked in tandem and other times functioned more independently. Below we provide a summary of the strands.

Table 4 | Strands

Strand	Description
Shared Story	The first Shared Story convening, which was also the first convening for the Partnership, took place in 2017. Since then, the membership has grown to include 261 active members representing over 120 organizations as of July 2020. The strand has held annual in-person convenings and monthly video calls. The goals of the strand are to shift the national narrative in support of strengthening and remodeling public education and to harmonize how the education field communicates. The key mechanisms through which the strand accomplishes these goals are videos, which often illuminate how policies are connected to the lives of real people in real places, and shared messaging tools. The strand works with external firms for their expertise in public relations, narrative change, and social media. The Shared Story strand amplified and disseminated the Community Schools Playbook, a product of Shared Policy, with video media including a short animation. One member described this approach as “effective two- to three-minute videos conveying what you could spend hours talking to somebody about.” To extend its reach and impact, the strand launched a Sharing Stories website where the public can access tools, and created a Partnership Ambassador program to lift up member voices. Informed by lessons learned from Phase 1 (2017–2018), during which a “waterfall” of story distribution began, the Shared Story strand entered Phase 2 in January 2019 with three objectives: engaging communicators from the education field to build individual and collective capacity; aligning them around a shared narrative framework; and amplifying shared stories to broader audiences. As of August 2020, the strand has transitioned into Shared Story Phase 2.1, refined for fiscal year 2021 (April 2020–March 2021) with fine-tuned goals and objectives that are informed by one-on-one calls with the Shared Story strand members. Phase 2.1 focuses on providing messaging and stories for how racial equity fits together with teaching and learning; experimenting with new forms of media; conducting a baseline media analysis; producing practical resources on framing; and catalyzing connection and knowledge exchange.
Shared Policy	In a large-scale effort involving foundations, school districts, and nonprofits responding to multiple national-level contextual shifts, a strand produced the Policy Framework for Tomorrow’s Learning in 2017. The shared policy framework is largely the focus of this strand, and members seek to develop tools and support campaigns of network partners to advance its tenets about improving public education locally and nationally. In 2018, the strand led the development of the Community Schools Playbook, a toolkit designed to influence policy decisions and provide implementation guidance to Key Places and the broader field, along with a companion brief titled Financing Community Schools. The Playbook prompted network weaving with the Shared Story and Key Places strands, the latter of which is intended to be a learning laboratory for the Shared Policy strand. Shared Policy also collaborated with Shared Story to create a communications guide on the United States Supreme Court case <i>Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue</i> . In the wake of

Strand	Description
	<p>the COVID-19 pandemic, policy resources and advocacy tools that are regularly curated and disseminated by the Shared Policy strand have moved especially quickly to inform policy recommendations for COVID educational funding packages. Currently, the Shared Policy strand is working to produce a playbook about how to build a strong and diverse teaching force. Looking ahead, strand members anticipate that the results of the 2020 presidential election will inform shifts in the Partnership’s policy focus and strategy.</p>
Key Places	<p>California, Georgia, and New Hampshire comprise the Partnership’s three distinct Key Places, intended to be exemplars of vision and values in policy, system capacities, and practices in communities and school districts where Partnership funders have placed priority.</p> <p>California’s status as a Key Place has offered many nuanced discoveries for the Partnership’s work, especially in areas of funding policy and narrative building.</p> <p>The Partnership’s work in Georgia sought to leverage existing opportunities in the state regarding education policy and narrative building around the benefits of an equitable education system.</p> <p>The Partnership’s allies in New Hampshire have illustrated the thorough political shifts necessary to protect and expand public education in an unfavorable climate. Efforts to engage and center community in the fight for public education has taken a variety of forms.</p>

Strand	Description
Shared Systems	The Shared Systems strand is the result of partners collaborating to advance the Partnership's ability to use systems thinking concepts and to design system-wide practices needed to remodel public education.

Appendix C: References

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