Networks for School Improvement: Year One
# Table of Contents

About this report......................................................................................................................... 2
Our mission.................................................................................................................................. 3
Why we invest in continuous improvement.............................................................................. 3
How does this build on prior efforts in the U.S.?...................................................................... 5
How do Networks for School Improvement work?................................................................. 5
How do we define continuous improvement?........................................................................... 7
What are NSI grantees doing?.................................................................................................... 8
What are the emerging lessons we’re learning from and about our grantees?................. 8
What lessons do we hope to share with the field in the next five years?......................... 13
Our approach to evaluation....................................................................................................... 14
What’s in the future?.................................................................................................................. 16
Examples of continuous improvement in other fields.......................................................... 17
Related efforts in education...................................................................................................... 19
P-16 framework ...................................................................................................................... 21
In-depth NSI profiles................................................................................................................ 23
NSI overviews............................................................................................................................ 33
Since August 2018, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has made grants to 21 organizations working with middle and high schools across 13 states to improve outcomes for Black, Latino, and low-income students.

We’re interested in learning from these grantees how schools can use a methodical approach to improvement, widely used in fields such as medicine, to advance high school graduation and college success rates. We also want to learn what signs to look for that a student is on track to graduate from high school and enter and succeed in education after high school, in order to help each student get the support they need. Our work builds on that of other funders and organizations that have invested in early warning systems to predict whether students are on track to high school and college success and that have used strategies of continuous improvement to improve student performance. Our goals are to understand, spotlight, strengthen, and expand upon this work. This report shares what our grantees are doing to date and what we are learning from their efforts. It also discusses how we plan to evaluate these grants and next steps for the foundation.
OUR MISSION

At the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, we believe that every person deserves the chance to live a healthy and productive life. In developing countries, that means focusing on improving people’s health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, this means expanding life-changing opportunities, especially education. Education is a critical bridge to opportunity in this country. The chances of a child born into the bottom 20 percent of income levels climbing to the top 40 percent are three times greater when they pursue education after high school. That’s why our primary focus in education is ensuring that all students—especially Black, Latino, and low-income students—have an opportunity to earn a degree or certificate that prepares them for a successful career and life. We’ve invested nearly $7 billion toward that vision over the last two decades. During that time, our country has made important gains in raising student learning standards and pushing the high school graduation rate to an all-time high. But more needs to be done to address gaps in opportunity between Black, Latino, and low-income students and their peers.

WHY WE INVEST IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We’ve learned that the best answers don’t come from a one-size-fits-all approach but from empowering local school leaders and educators to identify solutions that best fit the needs of their community. By building their capacity to solve problems, and to learn and adapt good practice based on evidence and data, we can help those who know their students and settings best unlock innovations and solutions. When we connect school teams to each other, we believe schools can share what they’re learning in ways that will help more students learn too. That’s why at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation we’re investing in Networks for School Improvement that use continuous improvement.

Continuous improvement is a process for addressing a specific problem or issue by developing, testing, and refining promising solutions.

Our belief in continuous improvement is based on evidence from other fields as well as education. (See examples of continuous improvement in other fields on page 17.)
Continuous improvement enables schools to pursue careful, thoughtful, and iteratively-adapted solutions to problems in their local community because they know their students well and what might work in their circumstances. For schools that are frustrated with working hard but not getting the results they want, continuous improvement can help them use data and evidence to identify what needs to change, develop a thoughtful course of action, try it out to see if it’s an improvement, and learn from it, rather than jumping from fad to fad. By working together to share what they’re learning, schools can make more headway than if they go it alone.

There’s emerging evidence that schools and districts can use continuous improvement approaches to improve performance on a range of goals, from increased kindergarten readiness to increased college enrollment.
By working together to share what they’re learning, schools can make more headway than if they go it alone.

But despite their promise, we don’t yet have evidence that these methods are effective and valid for widespread use in schools. That’s part of what we hope to learn from our Networks for School Improvement grants.

**HOW DOES THIS BUILD ON PRIOR EFFORTS IN THE UNITED STATES?**

Networks for School Improvement build on the foundation’s prior investments to raise learning standards and increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who graduate from high school and enter and succeed in college. But while our prior investments largely focused on state and district policies and practices, Networks for School Improvement focus more on helping schools achieve these goals by building the capacity of principals and teachers to identify problems and address barriers to student success in their local communities.

We’ve recognized that education research needs to address more directly the questions and problems that matter most to these practitioners. Even the best research typically needs to be translated into tools and practices that teachers and principals can use. As Anthony S. Bryk, the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, notes, research often produces solutions that are “highly compartmentalized and discrete.” But the problems educators seek to solve are complex and interconnected (Bryk, 2017).

We’ve also come to recognize that because of tremendous variations in school size and demographics, per-student funding, state and local policies, and other factors, a policy or practice that works well in one context may produce different outcomes in another. This is true even when programs are implemented well (Bryk, 2017). Moreover, how well practices are implemented depends on the engagement of principals and teachers and their ability to adapt practices, tools, and interventions to their specific conditions.

Our investment complements efforts nationally to better connect researchers and practitioners, and to engage school leaders, teachers, parents, and students in helping devise solutions to the problems that impact them rather than relying on top-down solutions from those furthest from the classroom.

**HOW DO NETWORKS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WORK?**

We coined the phrase “Networks for School Improvement” to capture our hypothesis that school teams that build their capacity to use continuous improvement will improve student outcomes, particularly if they can learn from each other with the help of a supporting organization. Here’s how we believe Networks for School Improvement will work:

- A supporting organization—nonprofit, university, school district—connects middle and high schools to improve student outcomes by working together as part of a network.
- Working directly with school leaders, the supporting organization or “intermediary” helps schools identify barriers to school success using existing information, like whether 9th graders have passed key courses and are on track to graduate in four years.
- Once the network has identified a common problem to work on, schools put in place strategies to tackle the problem based on evidence and what they know about their students. Each school then refines its strategy using data to assess whether their students are succeeding.
• By closely following student outcomes and the indicators that best predict whether a student will graduate from high school and be successful in college, principals and teachers can know their efforts are having the impact that they hope.

• As part of a network, schools also can learn from each other about what’s working, with whom, and why. While no two schools and classrooms are the same, there’s a lot we can learn together about how to solve the problems that we’re facing because when schools learn, students learn.

Ultimately, the foundation’s goal is to prepare more students, especially Black, Latino, and low-income students, to graduate from high school, enter a postsecondary institution, and earn a credential with value in the labor market. But these are long-term goals that may take several years to begin showing up. Based on existing research, including by the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research and the Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University, the foundation has identified a set of shorter-term outcomes and indicators that predict whether students are “on track” to high school and college success. (See P-16 Framework on pages 21 and 22.)

Networks for School Improvement grantees select at least one of these outcomes and related indicators to measure their progress. Over the next five years, we expect the field to continue to refine this set of “on-track” indicators, building on the work of scholars at Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago, and hope to learn which strategies help schools make progress against these metrics. This will enable schools to get smarter about when to intervene to keep students on the pathway to college and careers and which evidence-based strategies best demonstrate change for which students in which settings.
forms of data and research. This includes knowing the specific needs and assets of the community and its students.

• A clear and specific aim—a measurable goal that the network commits to accomplishing by a certain date. In the case of a Network for School Improvement, the aim must be centered on achieving equitable outcomes for Black, Latino, and/or low-income students on at least one on-track outcome and related indicators.

• An equity-centered theory for how to improve practice to achieve that aim.

• A methodical cycle for testing interventions and collecting and analyzing data to see if the changes are an improvement.

• Collaborative and diverse teams that include people with the time, expertise, experience, and will to tackle the problem.

• Use of locally relevant and valued data from multiple sources, applicable research, and measurement as the keys to improvement.

Through our work with grantees, we hope to continue codifying the essential elements of any continuous improvement strategy and to validate models for more widespread use.
WHAT ARE NSI GRANTEES DOING?

To date, the foundation has made grants totaling more than $93 million to 21 Networks for School Improvement, most following a Request for Proposals in February 2018. The foundation made Type 1 awards, ranging from $7.5 million to $16 million, to grantees that demonstrated prior expertise with a networked improvement model; and Type 2 awards, ranging from $500,000 to $700,000, to networks that showed strong potential for growth. (You can find thumbnail descriptions of each grantee’s work on pages 33-37 and more detailed descriptions of illustrative grantees on pages 23-32.)

These networks are working with schools in more than a dozen states spread across the United States, including: California, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington. In total, they are working with 298 schools enrolling approximately 250,000 students, 29% of whom are Black, 43% Latino, and 70% low-income.

The intermediaries supporting these networks include a district (Baltimore City Public Schools), a charter management organization (KIPP), several university-affiliated partners (the Bank Street College of Education, High Tech High Graduate School of Education, the University of Chicago Network for College Success, and the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning), a regional service center (the Northwest Regional Education Service District), and a wide range of national, regional, and local nonprofits (such as Achieve Atlanta and the Communities Foundation of Texas).

Seven networks are working with schools and charter management organizations within a single district; seven are working with multiple districts within a state; and seven currently are or plan to work with schools across multiple states.

WHAT ARE THE EMERGING LESSONS WE’RE LEARNING FROM AND ABOUT OUR GRANTEES?

At this point in our investments, we are still trying to learn how networks are organizing themselves for improvement; how they are building the capacity of school teams; the opportunities and challenges those teams face as they develop familiarity with continuous improvement processes; and how networks begin to select, refine, and address their aims. Below are the most prominent themes that have emerged to date.

Networks for School Improvement are taking different approaches to when and how they meet, including how to support schools between sessions and how to structure opportunities for teams to learn from each other.

These approaches may change as schools get further into the work. Current supports include on-site and virtual one-on-one meetings, small group and cohort-based coaching, as well as whole-group, role-based, and cohort-based in-person meetings.

One intermediary, for example, anchors each learning session around four key elements: peer-to-peer sharing of progress since the last convening; expert meetings to advance learning about the interventions that schools are interested in exploring; training on continuous improvement; and team coaching time, when each school team receives support from an advisor to advance their change idea. This has enabled school teams to leave learning sessions with decisions about current change ideas, as well as new adaptations or change ideas to test.
This same intermediary has made coaching and in-school support a core part of its efforts, including developing coaching guides and frameworks to help codify the work it is supporting in schools. Another intermediary has bi-weekly school site visits, followed by debriefs and the sharing of observations across staff. Math teachers in this network have been assigned a quality improvement coach to help them implement improvement methods in their classrooms. Another network brings principals and coaches together on a monthly basis, following teacher convenings, to focus on the leadership skills needed to support classroom implementation. These include how to establish student learning goals, define and communicate instructional expectations, create a professional learning plan, develop and implement systems to monitor student data and instructional priorities, and build a schoolwide math culture.

Identifying the root causes of the problems and systems that produce inequitable outcomes, based on data, has been challenging for schools and intermediaries. This type of approach feels new to school teams, which will likely have to revisit and refine their analyses over time.

One intermediary, for example, vetted all school-suggested root-cause analyses and eliminated any that were inaccurate or biased before merging them into one central network analysis. The intermediary also had participants read and discuss evidence-based articles before generating change ideas. It is vetting those ideas for quality before asking participants to select one to test. Another intermediary gathered schools together to have a “data debrief” meeting, during which teachers and leaders analyzed data to begin the discussion of root causes. While the data helped teams paint a clearer picture of the issues they were facing with their problem of practice, schools struggled after the meeting to flesh out their root-cause analysis as a team. The intermediary structured follow-up webinars to clarify the process and spent time on root-cause analysis at a convening. Following this additional support, teams are gaining clarity on the need to link proposed changes to root causes that were identified in the data. Another
Intermediaries are also using data dashboards ... to help schools unpack the data they are seeing and better understand the “why” behind more distant student outcomes, such as postsecondary enrollment rates.

Schools can find the amount of available data overwhelming. This can result in not knowing how to draw meaning from the data or have it inform their strategies. One intermediary is trying to address this challenge by developing better data visuals, narrowing the set of data provided to school teams, and combining student administrative data with student survey data and research to help identify what’s important. For example, the intermediary might place information about the rate at which students fill out college financial-aid forms alongside student survey data about students’ knowledge of financial aid and the adult support they are receiving. Another intermediary has developed a “storyboard template” to help guide schools on how to report on change ideas and outcome data and receive feedback from other network schools. To support schools in the creation of these storyboards, the intermediary has developed guidance and video tutorials for schools in advance of network convenings. Intermediaries are also using data dashboards, discussion protocols, and “data days” to help schools unpack the data they are seeing and better understand the “why” behind more distant student outcomes, such as postsecondary enrollment rates.

Many networks and schools are starting to incorporate student and stakeholder voice into their continuous improvement processes.

While many schools are used to looking at student assessment data, different types of data are needed to reveal whether their small tests of change are resulting in near-term improvements. Intermediaries report that schools are looking at sources of data they have not previously looked at. This includes student administrative data that can track changes in attendance, course taking, college applications, or other information over time; student surveys; and focus groups and listening sessions with students and families. Schools need help to understand the differences in data needed to define and target a challenge, versus data used to reveal whether the actions they are taking are having the intended results. Identifying and learning how to use practical data measures is an area for growth.

Many intermediaries note that the challenge is not an absence of data, but helping schools deal with the amount of data available to systematically and strategically encourage improvement.
Starting with a clear set of practices for people to iterate on has enabled teams to get going more quickly, while still allowing people agency to adapt practices to their own situation.

Intermediaries are using different approaches to help schools develop and select change ideas, as they try to honor local circumstances without overwhelming schools.

For example, one intermediary is using site-based coaching to help teams build consensus around their change ideas. While it does not provide a playlist of “best practices,” it has provided each school team with a math coach and some best practices around math discourse, and brought in a national expert to support teams’ ideas for changing teaching and learning in the classroom. Another intermediary provided all schools in its network with a “driver diagram and change package” that provided teams with research about the primary and secondary factors driving attendance, behavioral and social-emotional development, and course performance related to key on-track outcomes and indicators. The intermediary did not identify specific changes that schools could make to influence these drivers; but it gave them a framework to focus their work, which helped create common ground among schools in the network. Another intermediary provided schools in its network with a change package of high-leverage practices that have led to improvement based on research or its own past experiences. Starting with a clear set of practices for people to iterate on has enabled teams to get going more quickly, while still allowing people agency to adapt practices to their own situation. A common set of practices also has enabled teams to start functioning as a network early on because people are all testing and adapting similar ideas and can more easily learn from each other. The key, intermediaries report, is to find the right balance of network tools and structures so that schools always have voice and choice in their efforts but are not overwhelmed by the complexities of the work in ways that add unnecessary work for school teams.

Alignment between intermediaries’ work with schools and school and district priorities is critical. To help build alignment, intermediaries are involving districts in network activities, including identifying specific roles for key district stakeholders or establishing separate, routine check-ins with key district personnel.

For example, one intermediary invited district math coaches to take on a leadership role within the network to ensure alignment between the network’s work and the existing work of school teams. This has resulted in better early buy-in from school teams. Another intermediary has built support for the aim of its network by sharing data with a broad array of mid-level managers within the district, as well as with district partners. This has helped stakeholders at all levels of the system recognize the importance of the challenge and the need to address it. Still another intermediary is helping districts to develop a clear target, along with a well-articulated plan to reach the target and to consider formative or leading indicators along the way. In addition to these activities, intermediaries are: inviting district staff to network events; working to align the network’s problem of practice with the district’s vision; identifying a liaison or point person within the district to meet with regularly; engaging outside experts to research and frame opportunities for district improvement; and working to align messaging between the intermediary and the district about the purpose of the network.
Intermediaries have noted greater uptake and use of continuous improvement tools and methods in schools where the principal or another senior team member (such as an assistant principal) has strong buy-in and foundational knowledge of continuous improvement and regularly engages in the work. Several intermediaries reported that where administrative support has been absent or problematic, or school teams receive conflicting messages about what’s important, it has been harder to gain traction for continuous improvement work.

Schools that seem to be having success have principals who are highly engaged in the improvement work and who facilitate a collaborative culture with teams and their overall school staff. Where school leaders are aware of and engaged in the work and are able to create time and encouragement for staff, teams have been more engaged. Leaders in these schools are not just present, but actively helping to make time for teams to meet during the school day. Deeply engaging principals during network meetings may help. Intermediaries report that this helps principals gain a deeper understanding of what their teachers are doing in the network and what they can be doing as building leaders to support their teachers to implement network takeaways. In addition to strong school leaders, intermediaries report that strong school teams are generally more data-focused and employ specific routines and protocols in regularly scheduled meetings. This may include the presence of teacher leaders who are able to spearhead this work. One intermediary has found that the schools having the most success have high-functioning teams that work well together and whose members each feel they have a role to play in the work.
WHAT LESSONS DO WE HOPE TO SHARE WITH THE FIELD IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?

Through our investments in Networks for School Improvement we hope to improve outcomes for Black, Latino, and low-income students and to advance our own and the field’s learning about continuous improvement in education.

First, we hope to learn whether schools can use data-driven continuous improvement to drive change that improves student outcomes. Do continuous improvement methods work well in all schools or better in some schools than others? What are the conditions that matter at the school level to drive, or moderate, impact? We’re particularly interested in whether schools can use a continuous improvement approach to improve high school graduation and college access and success rates. To ensure we learn about the impact of using a continuous improvement model across the full array of “on-track” outcomes and indicators, we will seek a balanced mix of grantees pursuing middle, high school, and postsecondary enrollment outcomes and indicators through successive RFPs.

Second, we want to understand how schools draw upon evidence-based solutions and adapt them to maximize their impact in a local context. Our assumption is that schools will need to modify and adjust research and evidence-based strategies to fit their local needs. What types of adaptations do schools typically make? Can schools progress faster if they learn about and share adjustments across sites? What support do schools need to translate research findings into practices that work in their school?

Third, we want to study how intermediaries, including school districts, are working with schools to implement a continuous improvement strategy. How are networks selecting schools? What activities do these networks engage in to meet their aims, and how do they measure progress? What challenges do they
encounter? What are the commonalities and differences in how intermediaries set targets, and do those that meet their targets set targets similar to those who do not? How do outcomes vary by characteristics, such as geography and network and district size?

Fourth, we want to learn about the characteristics of effective networks and intermediaries and how they support school-led efforts. For example, does the type of intermediary (e.g., nonprofit, district, charter management organization, or university-affiliated group) influence a network’s success and impact? We’ve prioritized funding a diverse set of intermediaries for this reason. We also want to understand whether working with schools in a single district, across multiple districts within a state, or across state lines may influence a network’s success and student outcomes. What are the main areas of variation among intermediaries, and how do these variations contribute to network and student success?

Fifth, we want to understand the current capacity of the field—including intermediaries and schools—to engage in continuous improvement. It is critical to understand field capacity so that, if this work is successful, we can help other schools take up this strategy. We’ll need to know what types of supports work best for which schools, whether any regions lack potential support infrastructure, and what more might be needed to support schools working in very different contexts. For example, how much variation exists at the outset in the strength of school leadership teams and their capacity to do continuous improvement? What actions and conditions enable intermediaries to grow and support larger networks of schools to engage in this work over time?

Finally, we want to learn what conditions in the larger district and state environment (leadership, data infrastructure, accountability or incentives for data use, resource flexibility) should be in place for schools to engage in continuous improvement. What conditions are most likely to enable networks to be successful and sustainable?

OUR APPROACH TO EVALUATION

We hope to learn as much as we can from our Networks for School Improvement investments. So, we’re committed to: (1) a formative evaluation strategy, led by the Columbia’s Center for Public Research and Leadership, to provide ongoing information to the foundation and our grantees; (2) grant and portfolio management designed to help us learn quickly from the field and our investments; and (3) a set of summative evaluation activities to examine longer-term outcomes. Both the formative evaluation and our own grants management focus on six key factors:

1. **School Systems Health:** Through surveys of teachers and school leaders, such as those pioneered by the Chicago Consortium on School Research, we look to measure the presence and quality of school system conditions associated with growth in student learning (Bryk et al., 2010). These include: leadership distributed across principals and teachers; a student-centered learning climate; high-performing faculty; coherent instructional systems; ties to families and communities; and data use for continuous improvement.

2. **Network Health:** Additional surveys of teachers, school leaders, and district administrators who are participating in the networks will gauge whether each network is positively contributing to its members’ ability to support students beyond what they would have experienced without a network. This will help us understand the drivers of performance in the network itself.

3. **K-12 Student Outcomes and Indicators:** Each Network for School Improvement will engage in continuous improvement routines to test out interventions, with the goal of improving outcomes against specific, evidence-based, on-track indicators that are relevant for its circumstances. For NSI grantees, we are specifically focused on grades 6-13 indicators, although the foundation has selected a larger set of P-16 indicators across our U.S. strategy. Intermediaries will generate longitudinal data for students in their network that track changes in these indicators.
4. **Performance-Oriented Grant Milestones:**
Respondents to our RFI in October 2017 emphasized that this work will take root and deliver results only when it empowers school teams and leaders who fully own the work. Particularly with our larger, multi-year grants, we have worked with grantees to build in key grant milestones that hold them accountable for making progress in order to receive continued funding.

5. **Common Grantee Check-in Protocols:**
We’re designing and piloting a set of routines, tools, and processes to help us learn quickly from an ongoing cycle of check-ins with grantees. This will help the Foundation build our understanding of successful intermediaries, better facilitate grantee support, and lift up practices worth further study. The cycle will include check-ins at least three times a year, culminating in a yearly progress narrative.

6. **Contextual Data Reviews:**
We will use publicly available, longitudinal data to provide additional context for changes in school and student performance over time. This includes broader academic, attendance, discipline, student mobility, and enrollment patterns that provide additional context for the continuous improvement work underway within networks.

The formative evaluation is meant to provide information the foundation can use to improve the Networks for School Improvement strategy and to inform the field about the characteristics and conditions that promote effective networks. The two-year study will broadly analyze the outcomes of the foundation’s initial cohort of 21 grantees and deeply examine a subsample of eight of those grantees to better understand how networks are implementing their strategies, which elements are contributing to positive outcomes, and where there are challenges. The hope is that lessons learned from this study will help the foundation clarify the core elements of a model or models for Networks for School Improvement that can be tested further in future cohorts. The report will present aggregate findings from this analysis, rather than focusing on any individual network. In addition to the information described above, the more in-depth study of eight NSI grantees will include document reviews, interviews, and on-site observations.

Within three years, we expect to have robust data across the Networks for School Improvement regarding on-track indicators of student progress. But we recognize it may take up to seven years for networks to begin making progress on these outcomes. We are being deliberate in the design, partner selection, and implementation of the NSI summative evaluation activities to ensure that they produce actionable, relevant information for the foundation and our grantees. We are currently holding a series of design workshops with more than 20 researchers and experts in evaluation design, equity in education, networks, and specific topics that NSI grantees are working on, such as on-track indicators, with the goal of having a more detailed set of evaluation plans by this fall.
WHAT’S IN THE FUTURE?

Later this summer, we expect to make more than a dozen additional big and small NSI grants. At the end of August, we will have the first report from the Columbia’s Center for Public Research and Leadership chronicling lessons from the first year of implementation. It will include analyses of eight of the NSI grantees. We will use insights from that intermediate formative evaluation to shape our investment strategy, learning questions, and analysis as we move forward.

This fall, we’ll announce our first set of awards to summative-evaluation design partners. At that time, we will detail our overall approach to gathering answers to learning questions that we and the field need to know in order to understand whether the NSI strategy can work beyond the grants we have underway.

We’re conscious that many organizations are working to help schools get better at getting better by using continuous improvement approaches and methods. We’re eager to learn from the field about related efforts. We’d also like to hear what you hope to learn from the foundation’s investments, and how we can best share emerging lessons with the field. To provide feedback on this report or related topics, please contact us at: Michele.Meredith@gatesfoundation.org
In 2006, the **Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)** launched the 5 Million Lives Campaign to significantly reduce incidents of medical harm and mortality in the United States. IHI quantified this aim and set a numerical goal: It asked hospitals participating in the campaign to prevent 5 million incidents of medical harm over a period of two years.

To reach that goal, IHI asked hospitals and other health care providers to make 12 interventions to reduce infection, surgical complications, medication errors, and other forms of unreliable medical care. The campaign offered support to hospitals to use continuous improvement practices as they introduced and sustained these interventions.

By its formal close in December 2008, the campaign had enrolled 4,050 hospitals, with more than 2,500 facilities pursuing each of the 12 strategies. Above all, there was striking progress in improving patient outcomes: For example, 65 hospitals reported going a year or more without ventilator-associated pneumonia, and 35 reported going a year or more without a bloodstream infection associated with a central-line IV in at least one of their intensive care units. IHI is currently working to measure progress against its primary aim: massive reductions in patient injuries.

**Built for Zero** works with a group of communities around the United States to end veteran and chronic homelessness. Coordinated by Community Solutions, the national effort supports participants to use real-time data on homelessness to optimize local housing resources, track progress against monthly goals, and accelerate the spread of proven strategies. The initiative has helped find homes for 105,580 homeless Americans in four years, including nine communities that have measurably and sustainably ended veteran homelessness and three that have measurably and sustainably ended chronic homelessness. Community Solutions connects participating communities to each other through an online platform for innovation, knowledge sharing, and group problem solving.

**The Center for State Child Welfare Data** at the University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall works with child welfare agencies to use continuous improvement structures and practices. Their model begins by assessing an agency’s baseline performance on key outcomes related to child safety, permanence, and well-being. The center then helps agencies set performance targets, select interventions for reaching them, and gather data to see if the interventions have resulted in a return on investment. For example, the center worked with the state of Tennessee to switch from paying private foster care providers based on the number of days children were in care to providing financial incentives if providers reduced children’s length of stay in the system. After the first five years, Tennessee’s foster care population used 235,000 fewer care days than expected, representing a $20 million cost savings. The state continues to adapt the model of using fiscal incentives for performance improvement.
The foundation’s investment in Networks for School Improvement reflects a larger effort to use continuous improvement methods and data and evidence-based practices to improve outcomes in education both here and abroad. Here are some examples.
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching supports networked improvement communities, comprising of practitioners and scholars from diverse fields, who are using continuous improvement methods to get better at getting better. The nonprofit organization holds an annual summit on improvement science, produces research and publications on continuous improvement methodologies, and highlights the efforts of those doing this work so that others can learn.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education is taking a disciplined approach to school improvement by training and supporting a cadre of school improvement facilitators to work with districts and schools. These facilitators work with teachers, administrators, and district-level leaders to use a four-stage continuous improvement process to identify challenges and strengths and test out and refine new approaches. The department began rolling out its refined school improvement strategy statewide in 2018, after piloting it with three districts.

The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) in the U.K. is an independent, grantmaking charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. It rigorously evaluates the impact of high-potential projects to identify what works and provides accessible, actionable summaries of research and guidance to teachers and school leaders. It also supports schools to use evidence and evidence-based practices, with a particular focus on the most disadvantaged pupils. Since 2016, EEF’s Research Schools Network has provided support to schools to access, understand, critique, and apply evidence, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching and learning. Schools in the network help other schools in their region to find and use systematic external evidence and to be critical of the use of evidence in school improvement activities.

The National Improvement Hub in Scotland provides information and support that enables practitioners to improve their practice and student learning. It provides access to self-evaluation and improvement frameworks; research, teaching, and assessment resources; exemplars of practice; and support for online collaboration and networks.

Carnegie Math Pathways, launched by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and now operated by WestEd, is a network of more than 70 colleges and universities that are using improvement science to improve students’ mathematics learning so they achieve their college and career goals. Students who begin college in remedial courses are much less likely to earn a degree. Now, some institutions are piloting a new model that enrolls students in a traditional college-level math course alongside a developmental course that offers additional supports. In 2018, six institutions in the network piloted this “corequisite course” model. In the first year, 65 percent of enrolled students achieved college-level math or statistics credit in a single term. Historically, only 5 percent of students enrolled in remedial courses earn math credit within a year.
P-16 FRAMEWORK  STEERING A SUCCESSFUL PATHWAY TO COLLEGE AND CAREERS

How do schools know whether they are on track to helping students graduate from high school, enroll in a postsecondary institution, and earn a credential with value in the labor market? From existing research, the foundation has selected a set of shorter-term outcomes and indicators for the NSI initiative that predict whether students will reach these longer-term goals. NSI grantees commit to improving the percentage of Black, Latino, and low-income students who make progress against at least one of these outcomes and the related set of indicators. This focuses their efforts and provides a specific and measurable goal for collective action.

As the foundation learns more, we’ll update these outcomes. For example, since our 2018 Request for Proposals we’ve modified the indicator related to college planning during the senior year of high school based on research that students are more likely to enroll and persist in college when they attend an institution that is well matched to their ability. Below is a list of key outcomes and indicators.

### 8TH GRADE ON TRACK:
Student is academically and behaviorally on track in middle school to graduate from high school and be academically prepared for college.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Sample Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8th grade GPA</td>
<td>8th grade GPA, 8th grade attendance, 8th grade course failures, 8th grade suspensions, 8th grade math proficiency, 8th grade English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders with a GPA of 3.0 or better</td>
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<td>8th grade attendance</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders with 96% or better attendance</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders with no Ds or Fs in ELA or math</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th grade course failures</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders with no Ds or Fs in ELA or math</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders never suspended (in and out of school)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th grade suspensions</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders never suspended (in and out of school)</td>
<td>• % of 8th graders with a GPA of 3.0 or better in math who also meet the proficiency benchmark on a standards/curricula-aligned assessment</td>
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<td>8th grade math proficiency</td>
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<td>• % of 8th graders with a GPA of 3.0 or better in ELA who also meet the proficiency benchmark on a standards/curricula-aligned assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>8th grade English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency</td>
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### 9TH GRADE ON TRACK:
Student is academically and behaviorally on track during their freshman year to graduate from high school, enroll in postsecondary education, and/or succeed in their first year of college.

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<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th grade course credits</td>
<td>9th grade course credits, 9th grade course failures, 9th grade attendance, 9th grade GPA, 9th grade suspensions, Secured postsecondary plan</td>
<td>• % of 9th graders who accumulate sufficient course credits to be promoted to grade 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th grade course failures</td>
<td>• % of 9th graders who accumulate sufficient course credits to be promoted to grade 10</td>
<td>• % of 9th graders who failed no more than one semester in a core subject (English, math, social science, or science)</td>
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<td>• % of 9th graders never suspended (in and out of school)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secured postsecondary plan</td>
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COLLEGE READY ON TRACK:
Student has the academic credentials to be accepted to a college with a high institutional graduation rate.

- High school math proficiency
- High school ELA proficiency
- High school advanced course taking
- High school GPA
- On-time high school graduation

WELL-MATCHED POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT:
Student immediately enrolls in a credentialing postsecondary program likely to lead to their attainment of a credential with labor market value from a technical, two-year, or four-year institution.

- Secured postsecondary plan
- Senior summer on track

POSTSECONDARY MOMENTUM:
Student meets one or more criteria suggesting an increased likelihood of graduating within six years.

- Credit momentum
- Gateway course momentum
- Program momentum

The foundation requires NSI grantees to measure their progress against at least one of these outcomes and related set of indicators. But we recognize that local contexts differ. So, grantees can develop their own approach to measuring these outcomes if they can show their approach is aligned and is already used by schools in their network. All schools in a network must use the same measurement of these outcomes, whether it's the foundation's preferred method or a different method. We will revisit the guidance annually and solicit feedback from grantees and program officers to ensure that they are able to adequately gauge success (as measured by student-level outcomes) across the portfolio. As our portfolio expands to include more intermediaries that target barriers in the transition from high school to college, we anticipate incorporating additional predictive indicators, as guided by the evolving P-16 framework and underlying research base, to track postsecondary success. You can find more information on the foundation’s P-16 framework here: https://uspp16.org/scope
Baltimore City Public Schools is leading a network of schools in its own district to improve literacy outcomes for students by examining the processes and systems for implementing content-rich English Language Arts (ELA) curricula.

By the end of the 2020-21 school year, schools in the network aim to double the percentage of 8th graders meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA (from 11 percent to 22 percent), with a particular focus on Latino and Black students, English Language Learners, and special education populations. Schools also aim to increase the number of students moving up at least one level in academic performance. For high schools, the aim is to triple the percentage of 10th graders meeting or exceeding expectations in ELA (from 3.5 percent to 10.5 percent).

“Literacy is the gatekeeper to the many other content areas,” says Janise Lane, executive director of teaching and learning for the City Schools, which is the only district serving as an intermediary for a school improvement network. “We need to make sure that our students have opportunities beyond reading and writing, through listening and speaking, to build their own advocacy and ownership for the work they’re doing across the content areas.”

Even before the NSI grant, the school system had made literacy one of three districtwide priorities in its Blueprint for Success, based on an analysis of district data and a curriculum audit that found many students had gaps in their knowledge that were contributing to stagnant literacy scores at several grade levels. Research has found that students with more background knowledge read at more advanced levels. As students increase their background knowledge by reading multiple texts on the same topic within the same unit, they become better
prepared to access more complex texts and subjects over time.

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, all City Schools’ elementary and middle schools are implementing Wit & Wisdom, a content-rich curriculum with a strong focus on writing and culturally relevant texts. At the high school level, the district currently is reviewing high-quality, standards-aligned curriculum; at present, schools use one developed by the district that was modified following the curriculum audit.

As part of the Blueprint initiative, 20 schools from across the district applied to become Literacy Intensive Learning Sites. These schools receive additional professional development, a literacy coach, and additional resources, and become part of a network to work on curriculum implementation. The goal is for these schools to be lead learners for the district.

This past year, the 14 secondary schools within the literacy network worked with the district in partnership with the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an expert in improvement science, to use a continuous improvement approach to better understand and, ultimately, improve literacy outcomes for students. For example, schools have been looking at how teachers plan and internalize lessons, which will drive improvements to their process.

City Schools plans to transition to using improvement science districtwide over time, including to improve central office functions. Schools within the network meet together four times a year to learn about improvement science and literacy instruction and to analyze their data. Each school typically brings its principal, literacy coach, and a teacher, who then work with the school’s instructional leadership team to support work back at the school site.

Between meetings, schools engage in six-week action periods, during which they work on a change idea and test it in classrooms, with both virtual and on-site support from Carnegie staff. The district has created an online system for schools to share their change strategies and leverage each other’s work. Additionally, a trained, onsite literacy coach offers teachers intensive content and curriculum support, focused on building teachers’ knowledge base. In addition to leaders from the central office, the larger network meetings also include other district partners, such as the New Teacher Center and Great Minds, the publisher of Wit & Wisdom, who support the work.

Schools also have had opportunities to visit high-performing schools in Dayton, Ohio, and New Orleans that are implementing the Wit & Wisdom curriculum. The full cohort of principals meets regularly to share learning and discuss progress. District-level principal supervisors also are conducting school visits to each school to provide feedback.

“For me,” says Lane, “providing a content-rich curriculum is non-negotiable in the equity conversation” because it ensures all students have access to rigorous content. By using the tools of improvement science, the district hopes to ensure equity in the skillful use of standards-aligned curricula across a diverse set of schools.
In North Texas a network of four school districts and three supporting organizations is working to ensure more 8th graders deeply understand the math necessary to succeed in college and careers.

The collaborative is developing a regional network of schools focused on increasing the math proficiency of Black, Latino, and low-income 8th graders. By increasing the number of educators who are aware of and using effective math teaching practices, the ultimate goal is to increase the percentage of 8th grade students who are proficient or above on state math assessments and to decrease the percentage in the lowest performance category.

“Eighth-grade math is highly predictive of high school graduation and postsecondary success,” explains Kristin Kuhne, senior director of insights and analytics at the Communities Foundation of Texas, one of the three supporting organizations. “Right now, fewer than half of the Black, Latino, and low-income students in North Texas in the districts we looked at are meeting what’s considered the college and career-ready standard in 8th grade math, so we saw a great need.”

The Texas Network for School Improvement Collaborative initially includes 10 schools across the four districts. The Communities Foundation of Texas, Learning Forward, a national nonprofit that supports teachers’ professional learning, and the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas-Austin, which has deep expertise in mathematics education, are the three organizations supporting the hub.

The three organizations are working with schools in the network to build their capacity to use continuous improvement to try out small and large-scale changes in their mathematics instruction. School teams from each site—typically 8th grade teachers and an instructional coach—came together twice during the first year of the project.

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KRISTIN KUHNE
Senior Director of Insights and Analytics at the Communities Foundation of Texas
project to learn about continuous improvement and about effective mathematical teaching practices identified by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Between network meetings, coaches assigned to each district work with the 8th grade teachers during their regularly scheduled team time. They support teachers to analyze their data, develop change ideas, try them out, and ensure they understand the impact of the changes on Black, Latino, and low-income students, often by asking students directly whether the changes made a difference in their understanding of key math concepts. Network coaches worked virtually with schools during year one, but plan to have face-to-face interactions during year two.

Learning Forward supports teachers on continuous improvement, while the Dana Center is able to model lessons and provide direction and guidance around research-based teaching practices. The Dana Center also has offered districts webinars about effective mathematical teaching practices. For example, a number of sites are focused on asking good questions in math classrooms that promote discourse and help assess whether students truly understand math topics.

“Teachers are empowered in their own classrooms to try things and see if they worked, and discuss and collaborate together about how they can do things differently,” says Kuhne. “I think that’s where we’re going to see the most positive impact. We understand that it’s about moving adult behavior before we would see some of the student results.”

By working across four districts, the network is able to see how changes play out in different settings and what it takes to get traction in diverse sites.
For the past five years, New Visions for Public Schools—which supports a network of secondary schools in New York City—has focused on putting in place the data and administrative systems to ensure students graduate on time from high school. Now that more than 80 percent of its students are successfully doing so, the next target is ensuring they’re prepared to enter and succeed in college.

New Visions is a nonprofit that works intensively with a core group of affiliated schools, while designing strategies to improve achievement for all New York City students. NVPS works with a core network of 70 district and 10 charter schools serving over 60,000. Beyond the core network, NVPS provides support to a large number of additional district schools. The total number of schools it works with in NYC (inclusive of core network) is over 440 serving approximately 230,000 students. Now in its 30th year, the nonprofit historically has focused on strategies that improve graduation rates, which were about 50 percent in New York City when the organization began and lower for students of color and those from low-income families.

About five years ago, the organization started developing systems to help schools plan for student graduation and manage key activities that can get in the way of on-time graduation: for example, whether students are taking the courses and passing the Regents Exams they need to be on track to high school graduation. To support this work, New Visions created and has continuously iterated on a suite of tools that make critical information from the New York City Department of Education’s information system easily accessible to school staff for planning purposes. The most recent version of these tools, the New Visions Data Portal, is a custom-built web application used by nearly 400 schools in New York City to manage critical decisions. New Visions has simultaneously developed protocols that it uses to work with schools to build reliable organizational routines for using the data to systematically identify and resolve barriers that stand in

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NIKKI GIUNTA
Chief of Staff and Project Manager of New Visions’ Network for School Improvement
the way of students’ graduation plans.

“We started out getting an understanding from schools about the most time-consuming but high-stakes information they needed around student-level planning,” says Mark Dunetz, president of New Visions for Public Schools. “Then we figured out how we could organize that information at a network level and free up schools’ time to focus on supporting students to achieve those plans.”

New Visions coaches conduct “strategic data check-ins” with schools in its network to examine the trajectory of each student and resolve barriers to earning a diploma, such as scheduling the necessary courses. While that entrée into continual improvement has proven highly successful at raising graduation rates, a close look at the data revealed the importance of getting students off to a strong start freshman year if students are to graduate ready for college.

That’s led to the network’s current focus, ensuring students end freshman year with a B or higher grade point average (GPA) and reach the benchmarks on the Regents math exam during senior year that exempt them from taking remedial courses at the City University of New York. The latter is critical because more than two-thirds of New Visions graduates who attend college enroll at CUNY. This year, there were 18 district and charter high schools in New Vision’s Network for School Improvement. In the 2019-20 school year, 32 schools will participate. As schools build their capacity to apply continuous improvement methods to complex challenges, each school will focus its efforts initially on the group of 9th graders who are at risk of falling short of the GPA target or college readiness on the Algebra 1 Regents exam, but are within reach of both indicators of success.

“This work shines a light on a group of students that weren’t necessarily our focus,” says Nikki Giunta, chief of staff and project manager of New Visions’ Network for School Improvement, “the students in the middle who are doing well enough in their classes and on the Regents Exams and on track to graduate but are not set up for success in what comes next—students who aren’t failing classes but don’t understand that not failing is different than succeeding.”

Each school in the Network for School Improvement has a postsecondary success team that typically includes the principal and relevant teachers or other staff members. These teams meet at least twice a month with a New Visions coach who provides individualized support to guide their data check-ins and improvement efforts. New Visions also convenes its principals three times a year and dedicates a portion of those meetings to the NSI work. And it brings NSI principals and their postsecondary success teams together an additional four times a year. By creating an infrastructure across its schools that enables them to better understand and analyze how standard processes—such as course scheduling—influence student outcomes, New Visions has enabled school teams to engage in joint problem solving focused on individual student needs. “Absent common infrastructure, absent common approaches, or at least approaches that share enough DNA for schools to talk with each other or compare the results of what they’re doing,” says Dunetz, “it’s impossible for us to learn as a network. Creating this common infrastructure and supporting schools in organizing around shared approaches is central to our work.”
High Tech High Graduate School of Education is working with a network of Southern California high schools to increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who apply to, enroll in, and ultimately attend a four-year college.

Since 2015-16, the graduate school has been working with a small group of schools to use improvement science to boost college, career, and civic readiness, with support from the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation. Its current College Access and Enrollment Network includes five High Tech High schools, two independent charter schools, and 11 comprehensive high schools from seven districts in northern San Diego and southern Los Angeles. The network plans to focus on four critical drivers of whether students attend college: financial access, the college application process, fostering students’ sense that they belong in college, and reducing “summer melt,” or students’ failure to enroll in college after they have been admitted.

Each school in the network has created a postsecondary access team that includes a district lead, school principal, teachers, and counselors. In the 2018-19 school year, these teams focused on increasing students’ completion of financial aid applications for college, including the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and CalGrants. Over time, the network also will focus on whether students make a good postsecondary match and actually start college the fall after their senior year.

“We really wanted people to start operating as a network from the beginning,” explains Stacey Caillier, who directs the Center for Research on Equity and Innovation in the graduate school, by focusing on a common aim and a few interventions that they could test out, modify, and adapt.

When the teams first met in December 2018, High Tech High Graduate School provided each team with its school’s

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STACEY CAILLIER
Director of Center for Research on Equity and Innovation
FAFSA data from the prior year. Based on that data, they helped each school set a specific improvement target and iterate on a common set of interventions. The graduate school convened the teams twice more in March and May of 2019.

Between meetings, the graduate school provides teams with intensive support on their action plans. High Tech High faculty visit each school at least once for two-hour sessions to consolidate what they’ve learned and help them plan next steps. They also lead individualized coaching sessions and biweekly coaching check-ins with each school team. And they provide teams with an extensive set of protocols to help facilitate their work. The protocols range from how to construct a “fishbone diagram” to surface all of the causes that may be contributing to a problem, to how to use an “interrelationship diagraph” to identify which causes are the most important to address. Each school is paired with a “buddy” school, based at least in part on geography. These schools engage in coaching check-ins together with their respective coaches and can visit each other’s sites.

“We’re learning where we most need to target our work is helping teams develop routines for meeting and sustaining the work during the action periods,” says Caillier, “because a lot of that happens ad hoc.” Activities can range from helping teams engage in plan-do-study-act cycles of improvement, to conducting empathy interviews with students and their parents, to owning and leading their data work.

One advantage of being a graduate school of education housed on K-12 school campuses is High Tech High’s ability to integrate improvement science across its work. The backbone of the graduate school’s master’s degree is a capstone project that uses improvement science. About 150 educators who are new to the profession and pursuing their California clear teaching credential are in a program where they work in groups on an improvement science project with the support of a coach. “Doing this work as a very different kind of graduate school has been really useful to us,” says Caillier. “It’s provided us with lots of opportunities to learn about improvement science and how to facilitate it well, and how to onboard people into that process.”
In 2014, a study of college-going patterns among Atlanta Public Schools (APS) students predicted that only 14 percent of 9th graders would earn any type of postsecondary degree or credential within six years of high school graduation. That led to the birth of Achieve Atlanta to dramatically increase the percentage of APS students who enroll in and graduate from college. Now through the NSI grant, Achieve Atlanta and the district aim to ensure more students enroll in a postsecondary institution that is the best match and fit for them, in order to boost the number of APS graduates who actually earn a college degree. The organization’s vision is that Atlanta is a city where race and income no longer predict postsecondary success and upward mobility.

“One of the things that’s different about Achieve Atlanta’s approach to the NSI grant is we’re trying to incorporate the match-and-fit work into the existing structure and partnerships that we already have in place,” says Korynn Schooley, the organization’s vice president for college access.

Achieve Atlanta works with APS and a set of external nonprofits that have strong, evidence-based college advising programs. Together, they establish targets at the district and school level for milestones students should meet to successfully enroll in college. Achieve Atlanta and its partners then provide resources and assistance to all the district’s high schools to help them meet their targets. The nonprofit also provides needs-based scholarships to APS graduates to defray college costs and continues coaching and advising those who attend college in state. Those strategies have supported some dramatic gains in the past three years: In 2015-16, 46 percent of APS seniors applied to at least three colleges; by 2017-18, 67 percent did so. In 2015-16, only 51 percent of seniors completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); by 2017-18, 71 percent did so.

“Gaining a college degree is still one of the surest ways to improve social mobility. By helping ensure each Atlanta student finds the college best suited to them, we can greatly increase their chances of completing college and earning a sustainable income.”

KORYNN SCHOOLEY
Vice President for College Access,
Achieve Atlanta
But as Achieve Atlanta began tracking whether APS graduates who begin college succeed there, it realized it had to do more. "We started thinking, what else can we do on the high school side to help our students not only get to college, but actually persist and complete college?" says Schooley. "We decided we wanted to take a look at this idea of match and fit.” Match is whether students enroll in colleges that are a strong academic match for them. Fit examines whether the schools are a good fit financially and culturally. Research has shown that students who enroll in colleges that are a strong match and fit are more likely to persist and graduate.

To pursue its aim, Achieve Atlanta is working with the district’s data team to develop a tool that schools can use to support students in developing a list of colleges that are a good match and fit for them, a step that Achieve Atlanta realized schools were not attending to systematically as part of the college application process. College Access Teams at each school—counselors and the external partners who support college advising—will work with Achieve Atlanta to test how best to use the tool in their building and make adjustments based on their staff and the needs of their students.

Achieve Atlanta will pull the teams together several times a year to work with them on their college-access efforts, using protocols that help teams understand their data and why students aren’t enrolling in colleges that are a good match and fit, and designing and testing improvement strategies. A grant-funded college success project manager, housed at the district, also will visit teams on site to help with the process. Nine Network Ambassadors—a representative group of high school counselors from the district and college advisors from its nonprofit partners—will help Achieve Atlanta understand and champion how its efforts are rolling out on the ground. “College completion is a matter of equity,” says Schooley. “Atlanta has one of the lowest social mobility rates in the entire country. Gaining a college degree is still one of the surest ways to improve social mobility. By helping ensure each Atlanta student finds the college best suited to them, we can greatly increase their chances of completing college and earning a sustainable income.”
Achieve Atlanta collaborates with Atlanta Public Schools (APS) to improve postsecondary access and success for students across all high schools. Achieve Atlanta’s grant focuses on understanding the role of postsecondary match and fit as a predictive indicator for student success; developing a tool to support the successful matching of APS students to good-fit colleges; and using continuous improvement to build capacity in schools in order to better support APS students in selecting, applying to, and enrolling in good-fit postsecondary institutions.

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) serves over 80,000 students, the majority of whom are students of color and low income. City Schools’ NSI work focuses on improving 8th and 9th Grade on-track outcomes, with a focus on literacy. The district aims to improve literacy outcomes through its implementation of high-quality, standards-aligned ELA curricula. Twenty Literacy Intensive Learning Sites improve teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge with onsite, expert literacy coaches and use continuous improvement strategies to improve literacy in middle and high school students.

Bank Street College of Education works with 10 middle schools in Yonkers Public Schools to increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who successfully complete 8th grade math. Bank Street supports school-based math teams to create interventions to address inequitable student math outcomes, analyze data to track student improvement, facilitate inter-school collaboration, and conduct district-level planning meetings and school-level leadership training. Bank Street also seeks to improve the data collection and analysis capacity of the math teams and develop high-quality networking experiences for them.
California Education Partners (Ed Partners) was founded in 2011 to seed and grow improvement collaborations among California’s small and mid-sized school systems. It supports districts and their schools to innovate, build, and sustain internal capacity as learning organizations in order to close gaps and lead high-performing, equitable outcomes for all students. Ed Partners focuses on launching and managing a network of up to 50 secondary schools across 18 California districts aimed at improving outcomes for Black, Latino, and low-income students. This initiative also aims to build the capacity of Ed Partners, specifically to deepen its design, delivery, measurement, learning, and evaluation capacity.

The Center for Leadership and Educational Equity (CLEE) serves as the intermediary for a 10-high-school network in Rhode Island focused on increasing the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who complete a 9th grade college-prep math course. CLEE supports teams of students, teachers, and school and district leaders to identify equity gaps in 9th grade course completion, investigate root causes, and test interventions to address those causes. CLEE also supports teams to create a receptive culture for change in their schools.

City Year and Everyone Graduates Center at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Education partner with school and district leaders serving predominantly Black, Latino, and low-income students in high-need schools to determine structures, practices, and student support systems that enable all students to complete 8th grade on track for high school graduation. They connect and convene leadership teams from Milwaukee middle schools to develop their capacity for continuous
improvement utilizing early warning indicators and leverage innovative human capital, including AmeriCorps members, to help schools close opportunity gaps and advance school performance.

The Texas Network for School Improvement (TXNSI Collaborative) between the Dana Center, Learning Forward and Educate Texas, a private-public initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas. The goals for the TXNSI Collaborative are to develop a regional network of schools that adopt continuous improvement processes to enhance capacity, accelerate change, and ultimately increase educational opportunities and outcomes for Black, Latino, and low-income students. The Collaborative develops and supports 10 schools in North Texas to focus on increasing the math proficiency of 8th grade students. Educate Texas identifies and coordinates the network of schools and provides data analysis, while Learning Forward brings its expertise in continuous improvement, and the Dana Center provides subject matter expertise and technical assistance around mathematics education and student improvement.

Founded in 2010, the Community Center for Education Results (CCER) supports the Gates Foundation-funded Road Map Project, a regional effort to support student achievement from early learning to college in South King County and South Seattle. CCER, in collaboration with the Puget Sound College and Career Network, is expanding the College & Career Leadership Institute. The institute works with South Seattle and King County high schools to help more low-income students enroll in a postsecondary institute in the year after high school graduation. This investment will support progress toward the Road Map Project’s long-term goal for local youth: to eliminate opportunity gaps by race and income, and for 70 percent of the region’s students to be earning a college degree or career credential by 2030.

For 20 years, the Institute for Learning (IFL) has worked with school systems nationwide to improve outcomes for underserved students. In partnership with Dallas Independent School District and the University of Pittsburgh’s Center for Urban Education and the Learning Research and Development Center, IFL supports teams from 14 secondary schools to use continuous improvement to increase the number of Black, Latino, English learner, and low-income students who are proficient in English Language Arts and on track at the end of 9th grade for high school graduation.

KIPP is a national network of public charter schools, and their students have achieved tremendous results. KIPP seeks to improve and refine the approach college counselors use at their high schools to help young people matriculate to and graduate from college. In particular, KIPP accelerates the development of practices, tools, and approaches that predict and increase college success for their students, and works on solutions to keep high-achieving students from “under-matching” to colleges
that are less rigorous than they are qualified to attend. KIPP is leveraging its existing regional infrastructure to convene and support its network of college counselors at its 31 KIPP high schools across 16 states.

The **LA Promise Fund** serves thousands of students across LA County at district partner schools, at charter schools, and through its innovative programs. With this grant, LA Promise Fund leads a network of 10 high schools from South Los Angeles to ensure that more Black and Latino students graduate eligible for college. The Los Angeles network works with school-based teams to increase the number of students taking and passing the college prep coursework mandated by the State of California. The network uses continuous improvement protocols to identify challenges, root causes, and associated solutions across the cohort of schools to achieve collective impact for South Los Angeles.

**Network for College Success** supports a network of 17 Chicago high schools to increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who are on track for high school graduation and earning a 3.0 GPA or better at the end of 9th grade with a goal of postsecondary readiness. They do this by building partner schools’ capacity to engage in cycles of continuous improvement—testing which student, teacher, and school interventions create the school conditions that build upon the abilities, intelligence, and creativity of Chicago’s youth.

**New Visions for Public Schools** (NVPS) works with networks of public schools in New York City that in total include more than 70 district and 10 charter schools serving over 40,000. Beyond the core network, NVPS provides support to a large number of additional district schools. The total number of schools NVPS works with in NYC (inclusive of core network) is over 440 serving approximately 230,000 students. Through this grant high schools over five years to collectively design, implement, and test strategies to increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who graduate from high school prepared to succeed in college. NVPS builds school team capacity to use data and continuous improvement to help more students maintain competitive GPAs, succeed in advanced coursework, and achieve college-ready scores on state Regents exams.

The **Northwest Regional Education Service District** (NWRESD) is the largest of Oregon’s 19 education service districts, serving 125,000 students across 20 school
districts. As a broker of resources and services, NWRESD partners with districts, families, higher education, and community-based organizations to enhance educational opportunities for students. The NWRESD 9th Grade Success Network seeks to support 31 regional high schools through a continuous improvement process focused on deeper learning and culturally sustaining pedagogies, with the common goal of increasing the number of students who are on track by the end of 9th grade to graduate high school.

Since 1993, **Partners in School Innovation** has improved the student achievement of low-performing schools that serve predominantly low-income students of color. With this grant, Partners runs a network of nine schools in Philadelphia to bring together middle school math teachers, instructional coaches, and principals to help students who begin the year below grade level to rapidly catch up to their higher-performing peers. In addition, Partners is strengthening its capacity to connect schools in virtual communities and its ability to capture and use classroom-level data in the continuous improvement process.

**Seeding Success** is a Memphis-based partnership in the StriveTogether national network of cradle-to-career collective impact organizations. Through this grant, Seeding Success leverages its strong partnership with Shelby County Schools to support a network of 15 feeder-pattern middle and high schools over a 24-month period. The goal: to begin tracking 8th grade and 9th grade on-track outcomes, identify root causes for students who fall off track, and test aligned interventions through rapid improvement cycles to help more students stay on track toward college and career readiness.

The **Southern Regional Education Board** (SREB), a long-standing partner, leads a network of 10 secondary schools that will focus on increasing the proficiency rates of Black, Latino, and low-income students on 8th grade math and 9th grade Algebra 1 in Birmingham, Alabama (Jefferson County). Beyond the scope of Jefferson County and rural networks, SREB aims to build improvement science and cycles into its existing national High Schools That Work and Making Middle Grades Work networks.

Cincinnati Public Schools, Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center—an international leader in quality improvement and learning networks—and **StrivePartnership** aim to support teams from 10 schools to use continuous quality improvement (CQI) to increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students who are proficient in math and on track at the end of 8th grade for high school graduation. The planning grant supports the development of a readiness evaluation and selection of network schools, building capacity to investigate root causes, and testing interventions and mobilizing teams for operational success.

Since 2009, **Teach Plus** has empowered teacher leaders to shift instructional practice and affect educational policy to improve student outcomes. With this grant, Teach Plus runs a network of 10 middle schools in Chicago and Los Angeles, working to increase the number of Black, Latino, and low-income students achieving proficiency in 8th grade math. As part of this grant, Teach Plus partners closely with the Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy, using its evidence-based Change Management Framework to develop continuous improvement skills among the 10 schools’ teacher leaders and principals.
Networks for School Improvement: When schools learn, students learn.