



ANNUAL REPORT

SPRING 2016



THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATION TO OUR KIDS

DEAR FRIENDS & COLLEAGUES:

Thriving Together is now in its second year in the classroom. And already, we’re starting to see remarkable results, thanks to the spirit of collaboration and the focus on data-driven techniques being employed across our community.

There’s been a tremendous amount of work done to date, as we’ve begun the process of identifying the best practices taking place in our classrooms and duplicating them across the Thriving Together schools. Some of that work has involved collaborations that had never taken place before, bringing together expertise into the same room that has incredible potential to make a difference.

It’s truly this spirit of collaboration that makes Thriving Together so unique and impactful. This initiative is combining the expertise of the private sector, non-profit sector and educational community in new ways. Thanks to the dedication of all the organizations involved, we have a chance to create a better future for more than a quarter-million young people.

And we’re just getting started. Imagine what the future holds.

Thank you for your dedication, hard work and support. It has been truly inspiring. And it is truly making a difference.

Sincerely,

Dr. Chad Gestson
Co-Chair
Superintendent
Phoenix Union High School District

Pam Conboy
Co-Chair
Regional Vice President
Wells Fargo Arizona

“IN THE FIRST YEAR, WE’VE ALREADY SEEN A WILLINGNESS TO WORK TOGETHER ON THE PART OF ALL STAKEHOLDERS—EDUCATORS, THE COMMUNITY AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS. THAT HAS TRANSLATED INTO EARLY POSITIVE RESULTS.”

Don Smith,
Chairman of the Board,
Valley of the Sun United Way



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ABOUT THRIVING TOGETHER



Thriving Together is an initiative designed to better prepare a quarter-million young people who live within the greater Phoenix metropolitan area for success from birth to career. The unique initiative brings together resources from throughout the community to help students improve educational results as they reach key benchmarks in their development, placing and keeping them on a path to success.

Thriving Together uses data to identify the effectiveness of a practice. If there’s room to improve, Thriving Together draws on its resources to offer a path to success for students. It’s a long-term movement that will use the resources of the private and non-profit sectors to ensure children, youth and young adults succeed within the boundaries of the Phoenix Union High School District and its partner elementary schools—from the moment that child enters the world until entering a career.

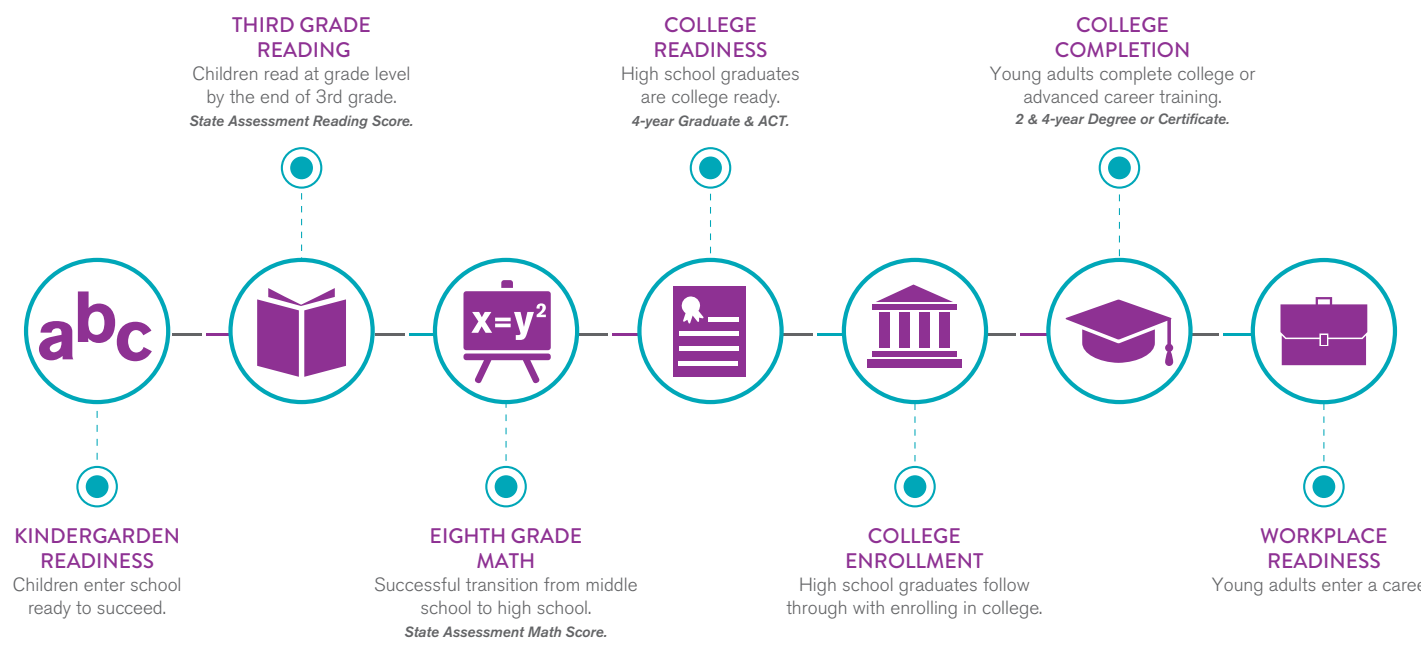
Thriving Together focuses on several key benchmarks during the educational process where students can get off track, sometimes with detrimental results for their future. All are key points in preparing young people for careers – and if students fall behind at one stage, it affects all the subsequent stages.

HOW THRIVING TOGETHER HAPPENED

The school districts in the Thriving Together area mirror our city and state in the future. In other words, how the district’s demographics look in 2015 is how Phoenix’s will look a decade from now – and how the state of Arizona will look in another generation. That’s why we have to act now. If we work together, we can make changes that will have a positive impact for future generations.

Thriving Together focuses on what’s called the Birth to Career Continuum – the entirety of a child’s educational experience up to the point where they enter the workforce.

BIRTH TO CAREER CONTINUUM



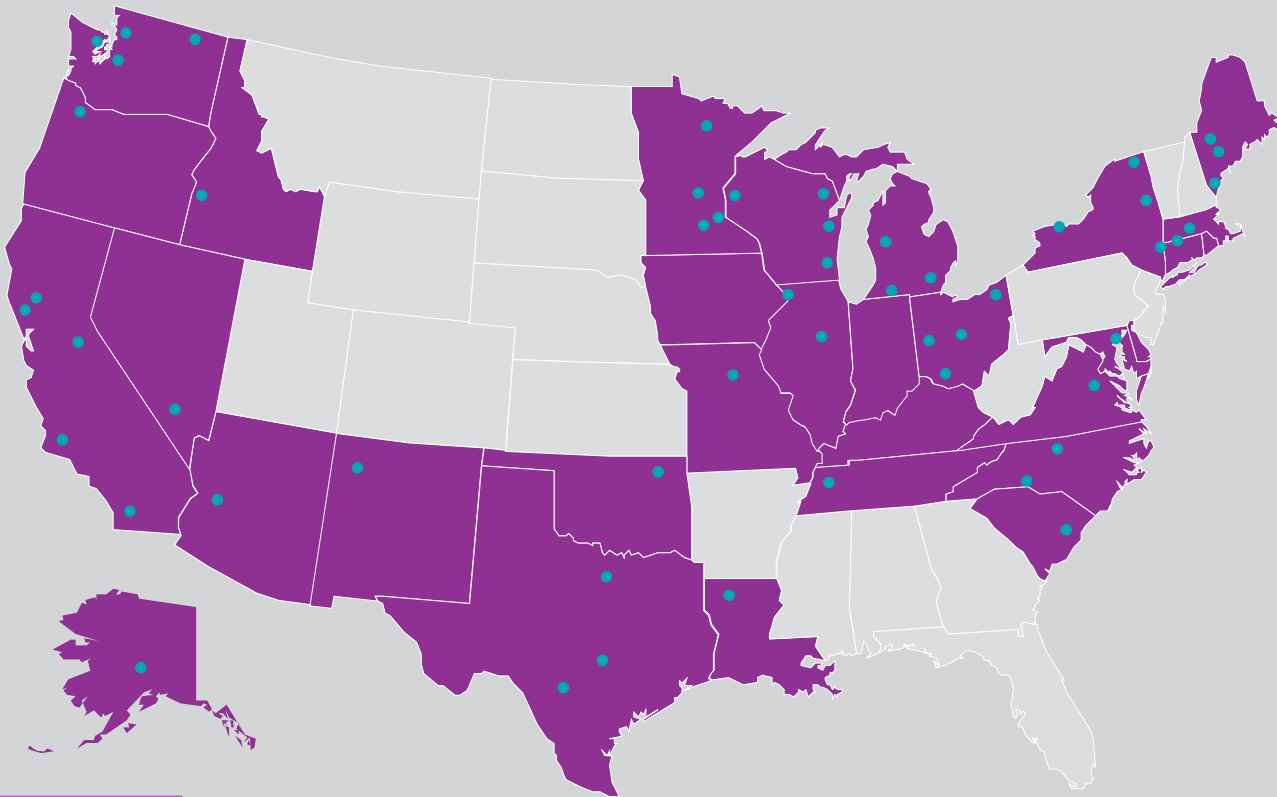
RESILIENCY, PERSISTENCY, SKILL-BUILDING

All children, youth & young adults reach their full potential in school, career & life.

Because of this, leaders in education in Arizona looked to national models to see how we can improve educational results. The Thriving Together framework is based on programs being conducted in more than 65 communities nationwide that are using data and best practices to improve the chances of success for children.

A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The Strive Together Cradle to Career Network is a national network of 65 community partnerships in 32 states and Washington D.C. working to improve education success for every child by bringing together cross-sector partners around a common vision. Together, the Network impacts over 8.2 million students nationwide.



IN **65**
COMMUNITIES
ACROSS THE
COUNTRY, THE
STRIVE TOGETHER
NETWORK IS
IMPACTING
MILLIONS OF
STUDENTS.

Members of the Strive Together Cradle to Career Network share a common commitment to:

- Improving and reporting on a set of academic outcomes:**
Kindergarten readiness, early grade reading, middle grade math, high school graduation, Post-secondary enrollment and post-secondary degree completion.
- Building cross-sector partnerships with early childhood, K-12, higher education, community-based organizations, business, government and philanthropy**
- Developing and sustaining cradle to career civic infrastructure by implementing a data-driven, quality approach to collective impact**

THE PARTNERSHIP

Thriving Together only works because of its unique and innovative approach to partnership. It is bringing together for the first time experts from the educational community, public sector, private sector, non-profit community and other stakeholders to work hand-in-hand in improving educational results for our children.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Dr. Chad Gestson, Co-Chair Phoenix Union High School District	Eileen Klein Arizona Board of Regents	Joe Rubio Valley Interfaith Council	Patricia Tate Osborn School District
Mark Schiavoni, Co-Chair APS	Gary Trujillo Be A Leader Foundation	Jose Diaz Murphy Elementary School District	Paul J. Luna Helios Education Foundation
Antonio Sanchez Wilson School District	Glenn Hamer Arizona Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Mac Esau Maryvale Preparatory Academy	Pearl Chang Esau Expect More Arizona
Dr. Bill Johnson Laveen Elementary School District	Gonzalo de la Melena, Jr. Arizona Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Dr. Maria Harper-Marinick Maricopa County Community College District	Rick Naimark City of Phoenix
Brian Holman Empower College Prep	Jackie Norton Rodel Foundation	Dr. Mario Ventura Isaac School District	Sam Leyvas First Things First
Brian Spicker Valley of the Sun United Way	Dr. Jacob A. Chavez Cartwright School District	Mark A. Yslas Alhambra School District	Sandy Gibson Blue Cross Blue Shield
Chris Camacho Greater Phoenix Economic Council	Dr. Jaime Rivera Riverside School District	Merl Waschler Valley of the Sun United Way	Todd Sanders Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
Curtis Reed JPMorgan Chase	Dr. James Rund Arizona State University	Michelle Gayles Phoenix Union High School District	Tom Franz Greater Phoenix Leadership
Don Smith CopperPoint Mutual	Dr. Jeanne Koba Roosevelt School District	Dr. Myriam Roa Phoenix Elementary School District	Tracy Bame Freeport McMoRan Inc.
Dr. Donna Lewis Creighton School District	Dr. Jeff Smith Balsz Elementary School District	Pam Conboy Wells Fargo	Vince Yanez Arizona Community Foundation

ANCHOR ENTITY Valley of the Sun United Way

ADDITIONAL PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Academia Del Pueblo ACYR Aguila Youth Leadership Institute Arizona Charter School Association Arizona Commission for Post-Secondary Education Arizona State Bar Association Arizona State University Provost Office Arizona Summit Law School Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona NorthBridge College Success Program Cesar Chavez Foundation Chicanos por La Causa Children's Action Alliance City of Phoenix Youth and Education Office	College Depot College Success Arizona Degree Phoenix Elevate Phoenix Friendly House GateWay Community College Girl Scouts Arizona Cactus Pine Council Governor's Office of Faith and Community Partnerships Jobs for Arizona's Graduates Legacy Foundation Maricopa County Attorney's Office Neighborhood Ministries Office of Maricopa County	Superintendent of Schools Ortega Law Firm Phoenix College Phoenix Day Phoenix Public Library Qualia Agency Read On Arizona Stand for Children South Mountain Community College Collaborative Action Teams Taking Action Teach for America Unlimited Potential Valley of the Sun YMCA
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THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE ACTION

What’s the secret behind the success of Thriving Together? It’s the use of collaborative action cultivated by everyone involved at the table — business leaders, educators, administrators and the Thriving Together team. Working together, we create plans for measurable results that make a difference for our children.

To do this, Thriving Together creates **COLLABORATIVE ACTION TEAMS** for each benchmark (such as 8th Grade Reading or 3rd Grade Math), made up of experts and stakeholders who will use data to find ways to improve results in the classroom.

The teams identify which programs and practices are working and which ones could be more effective — and then find ways to make them scalable, so that they can be implemented in other classrooms within the partnership. The process works because of the willingness demonstrated by superintendents and principals to work to uncover what their data is saying.

The effort also relies on **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT COACHES**, including volunteers from the private sector who provide their expertise to keep things on track and to make sure thoughts and ideas continue to be converted into action. Business leaders bring a particular ability to the process — a tried-and-true talent for helping turn talk into action, and real-world expertise that is a tremendous resource for schools.

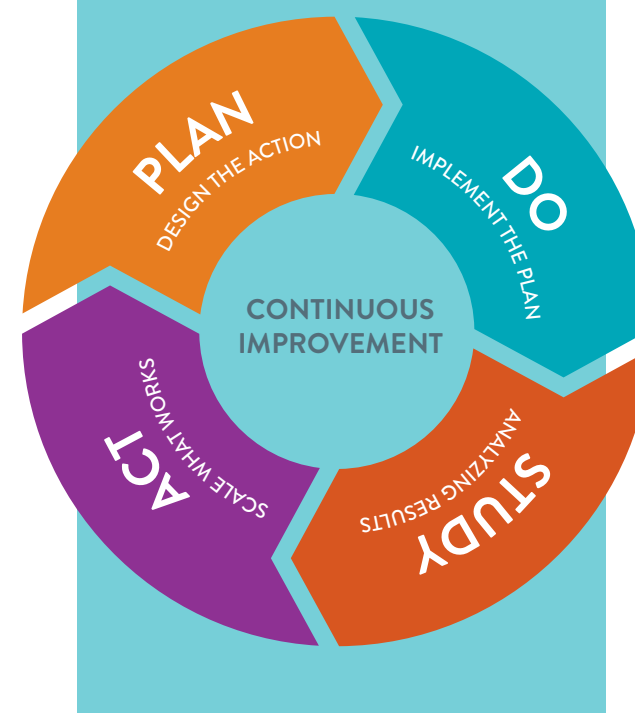
The teams focus on the question, What can be done better or more effectively? They look closely at the collection of data and its quality. They make sure the data has a clear focus. From there, they identify, and then connect, practices to the data. Much of the work is centered on meetings with teachers — followed up by action. Getting people in the same room is a key part of finding out what’s needed.

“I’VE BEEN SURPRISED AT HOW FAMILIAR THE DISTRICT’S CURRENT CHALLENGES ARE TO WHAT I AM USED TO SEEING IN THE COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS SECTORS.”

Subba Nishtala,
APS Employee and
Continuous Improvement Coach

“I KNEW GOING IN THAT OUR TEACHERS WERE GREAT AT THEIR JOBS, BUT I’VE BEEN INCREDIBLY AND PLEASANTLY SURPRISED AT JUST HOW GOOD THEY TRULY ARE!”

Marco Jaramillo,
APS Employee and
Continuous Improvement Coach



THE ROLE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

If Collaborative Action is the engine, Continuous Improvement is the gasoline that makes Thriving Together move forward. Continuous Improvement represents a distinct methodology — tools and tactics, if you will — to systemically and continuously improve outcomes over time.

There are four key steps to Continuous Improvement, and they create a perpetual cycle that drives our work. First, we plan for how we are going to approach an issue. Then, we start working on finding solutions and implementing them across the educational spectrum. Then, we make sure those solutions are working. And finally, when we’ve found a winning formula, we act to replicate it in more classrooms and schools.

That’s why our Continuous Improvement Coaches are so valuable — they make sure our efforts stay disciplined and accountable, and they search for ways to make successful practices achievable on a broader scale.



FOR EXAMPLE...



Several local schools are working with business community members who are serving as Continuous Improvement Coaches to help with 3rd Grade Reading. The coaches are meeting with teachers to make sure action plans are aligned with actual goals. And they're working within schools and districts on a broader level to identify ways to improve the systems that serve students – and make their overall educational experience more effective.

To form the Collaborative Action Team to focus on 3rd Grade Reading, Thriving Together leaders first needed to identify some schools where there was an opportunity to lift up successful practices.

A priority was to find schools that were in the mid-to-higher range compared to statewide 3rd Grade Reading scores. For example, at Heatherbrae Elementary School and Papago Elementary School, Thriving Together identified what we call “Bright Spots”, where students are exceeding statewide averages on their test scores.

The team identifies what's working in these schools that are successful, and takes action to scale and implement those practices that are working in other schools, with the purpose of promoting student success.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Each Collaborative Action Team is focused on a different point in the educational continuum, and each approaches its job in a different way to ensure the best chance for success. Thriving Together currently has five active Collaborative Action Teams with two more pending. The following pages describe how they are approaching their work, what data sets they're using and how they will scale the best practices they identify into more and more schools in our community.

MEASURING RESULTS

Thriving Together is a long-term initiative that's constantly evolving. The long-term goal is to ensure our children are as competitive as possible. But the initiative is only in its second year, so it's difficult to measure some of the short-term impact it is having on students.

Therefore, the data you'll see presented in this document is designed to be a snapshot in time, to show where we are starting and what metrics we are focusing on to demonstrate success.



THIRD GRADE READING

THE FOCUS

STATUS

COLLABORATIVE ACTION TEAM WELL UNDERWAY

IMPORTANCE

A student who is struggling to read in 3rd grade often does not overcome struggles in later grades and is more likely to drop out of school.

ACTION ITEMS

Collaborative action teams are taking on two approaches: Either they are identifying promising practices and testing them in other schools to see if they can be duplicated, or they are identifying practices that aren't yielding the intended results and working to fix them.

Teams are working in a half dozen schools and are focused on both whole-group instruction and reading interventions. The team is taking a close look at whether the schools have a promising practice that can be scaled and what can be done better. If improvement is needed, the team develops a process map and launches the school into a rapid cycle project designed to address the need. Continuous Improvement Coaches (including those from APS) are playing a key role in the team meetings to help facilitate conversations.

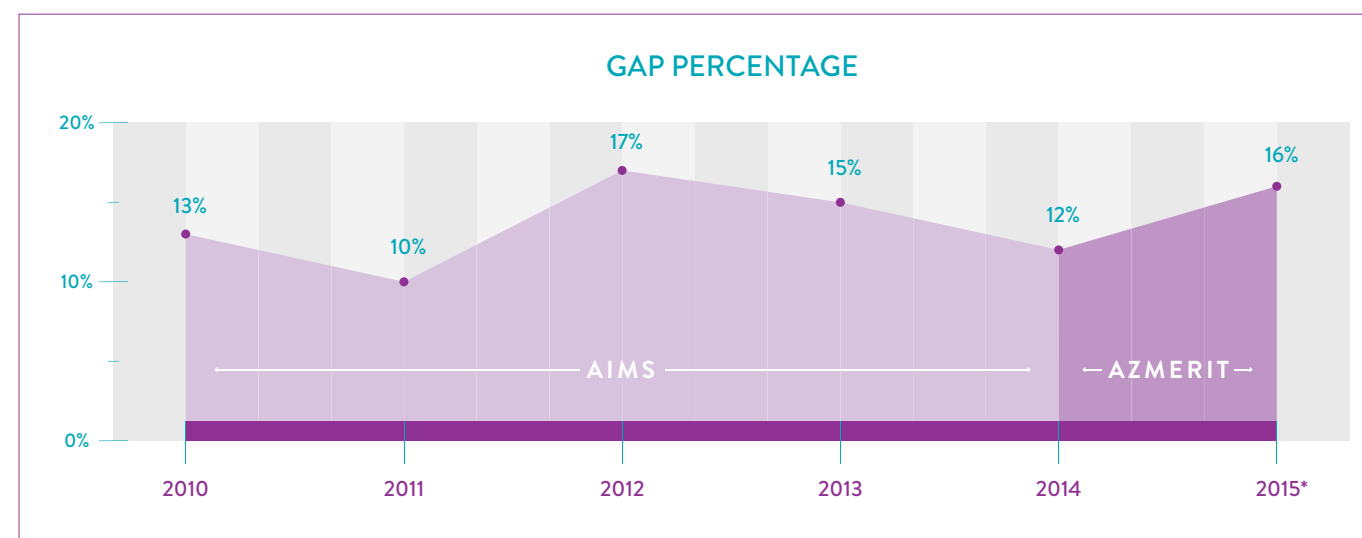
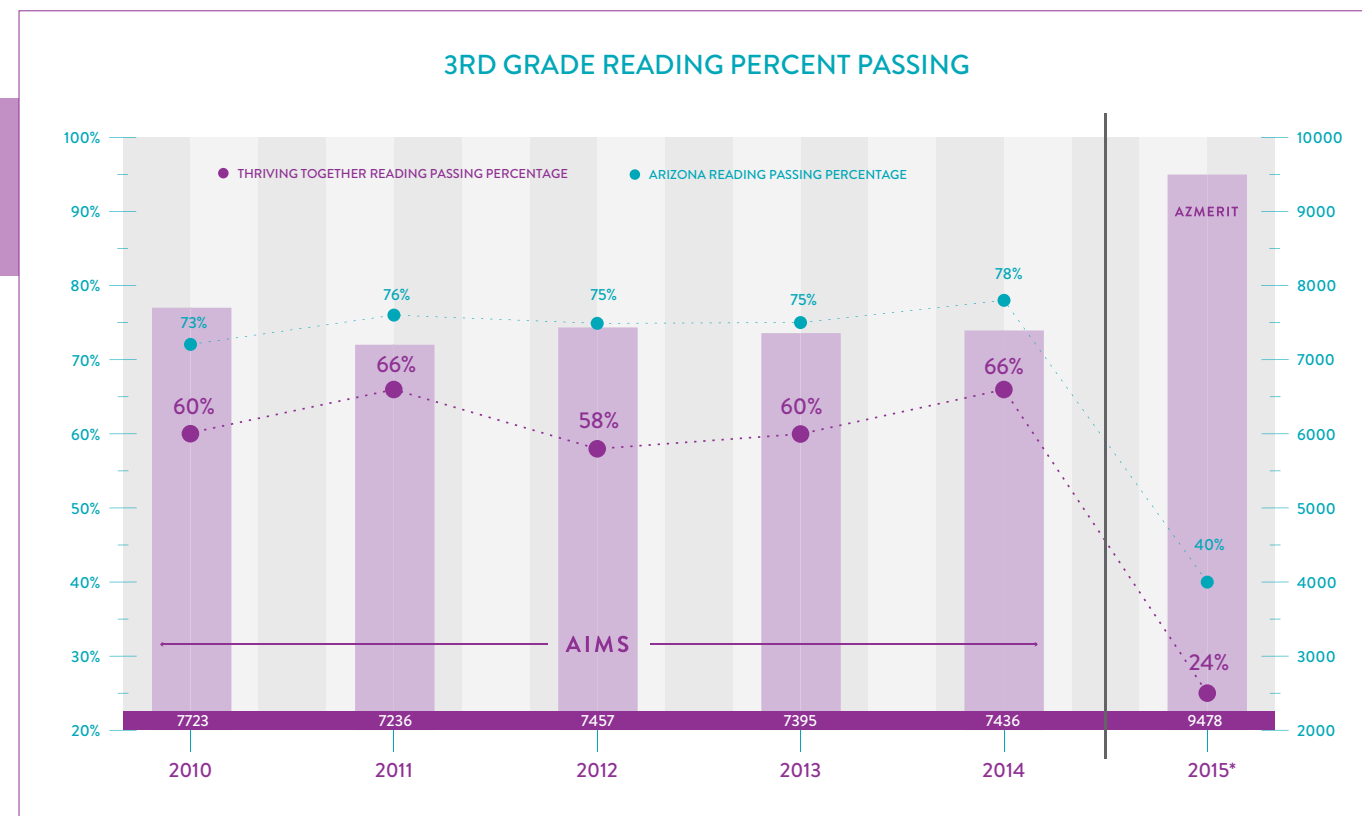
THE "ACHIEVEMENT GAP"

Despite the change in standardized testing, one area we can track is the gap between the performance of students in Thriving Together schools versus the statewide average. This is shown in the graphic above. Thriving Together's long-term goal is to eliminate this gap entirely and ensure our students perform at the same level as their counterparts statewide.

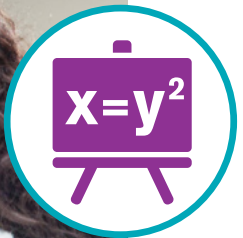


MEASURING SUCCESS

This past academic year, an important change took place that has affected how Thriving Together tracks its progress in third grade reading. The state of Arizona switched from the AIMS test to the AzMERIT test, which has a completely different grading system. Therefore, it's difficult for us to make an apples-to-apples comparison from last year to this year.



Additional data is available at ThrivingTogetherAZ.org.



EIGHTH GRADE MATH

THE FOCUS

STATUS

COLLABORATIVE ACTION TEAM WELL UNDERWAY

IMPORTANCE

If a child does not fare well in 8th grade math, it becomes increasingly likely the student will not graduate from high school.

ACTION ITEMS

The Collaborative Action Team is currently focused 2-3 schools where they have seen student eighth-grade math scores in state standardized tests excel. They're looking for which practices being done in school can be scaled to other schools in the Thriving Together community.

An example of one key practice that has been identified is that the school – the school encourages vigorous discussion of math problems before showing how to solve them, including full-room white boards where students and teachers can review problems visually to find the right solutions. The Collaborative Action Team has identified eight “principle actions” of math that are part of these promising practices, and are trying to implement them in more schools.

And, as is the case with 3rd grade reading, the team is also looking at both classroom-wide and individual instruction to identify practices that are moving the needle – and scaling those practices on a broader basis.

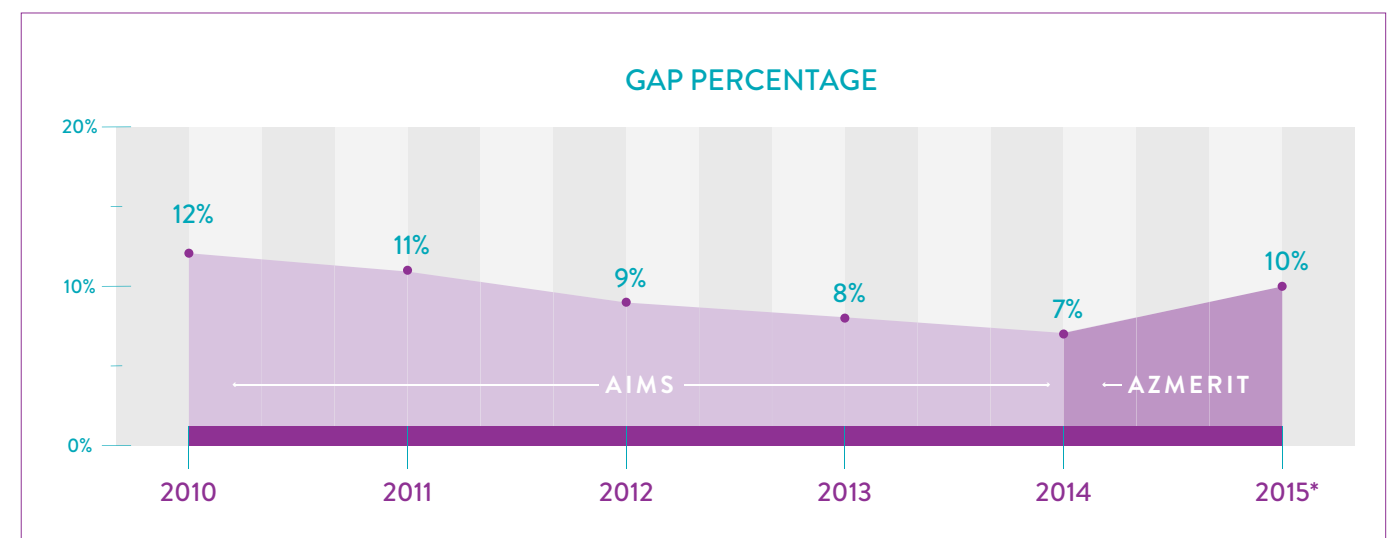
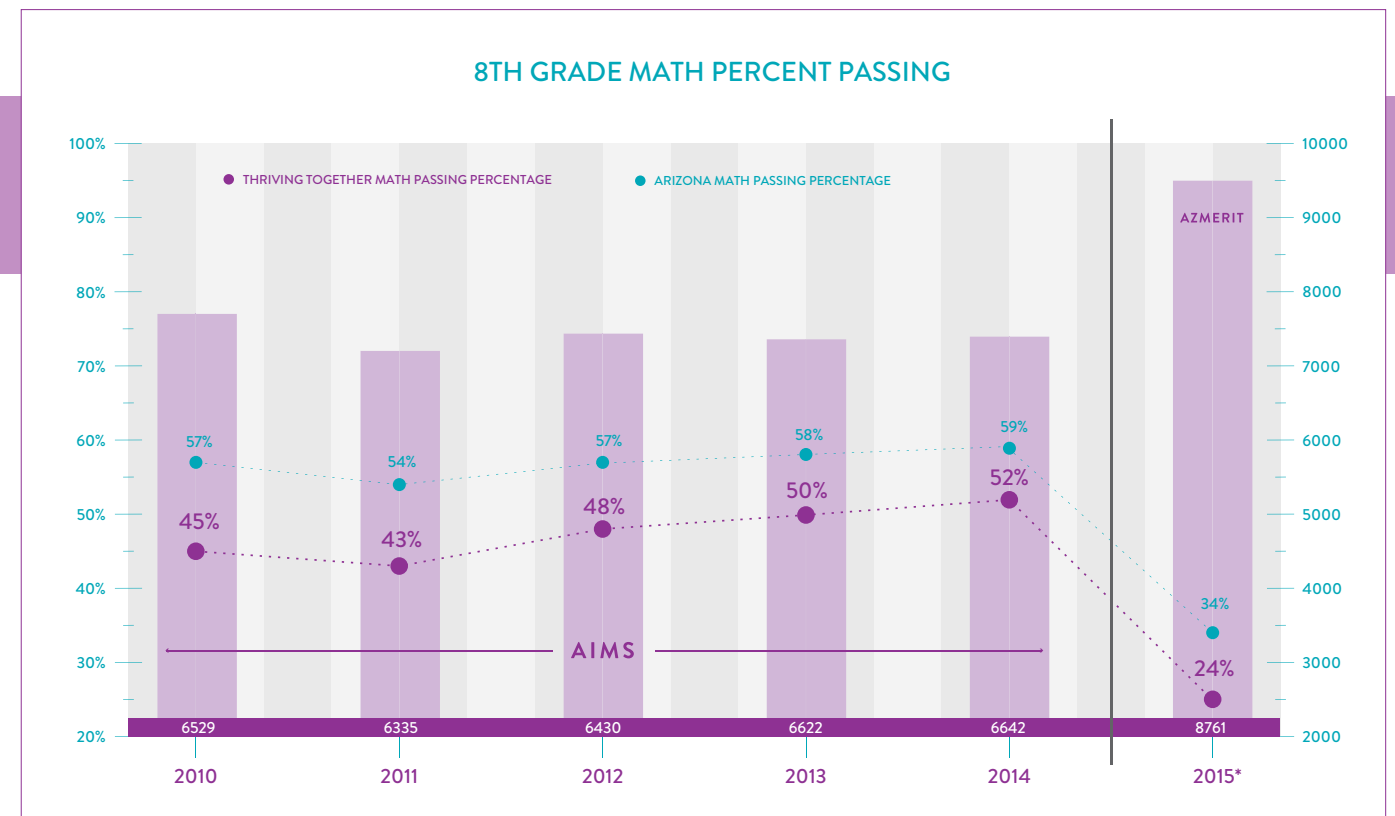
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MEASURING SUCCESS

As with third grade reading, last year the state of Arizona switched from the AIMS test to the AzMERIT test, which has a different grading system. Therefore, Thriving Together is essentially starting this year with a new set of data on student performance.



Additional data is available at ThrivingTogetherAZ.org.



COLLEGE READINESS

THE FOCUS

STATUS

COLLABORATIVE ACTION TEAM WELL UNDERWAY



IMPORTANCE

Providing a pathway to a college education is the best way to ensure future success in the workforce for our children.

ACTION ITEMS

This Collaborative Action Team was initially focused on high school graduation. But while we are seeing high school graduation rates in the Phoenix Union High School District actually increase, one measure of readiness for college – ACT scores – have flattened. The team is now focused on making sure graduates don't just get their diplomas – they get prepared for college.

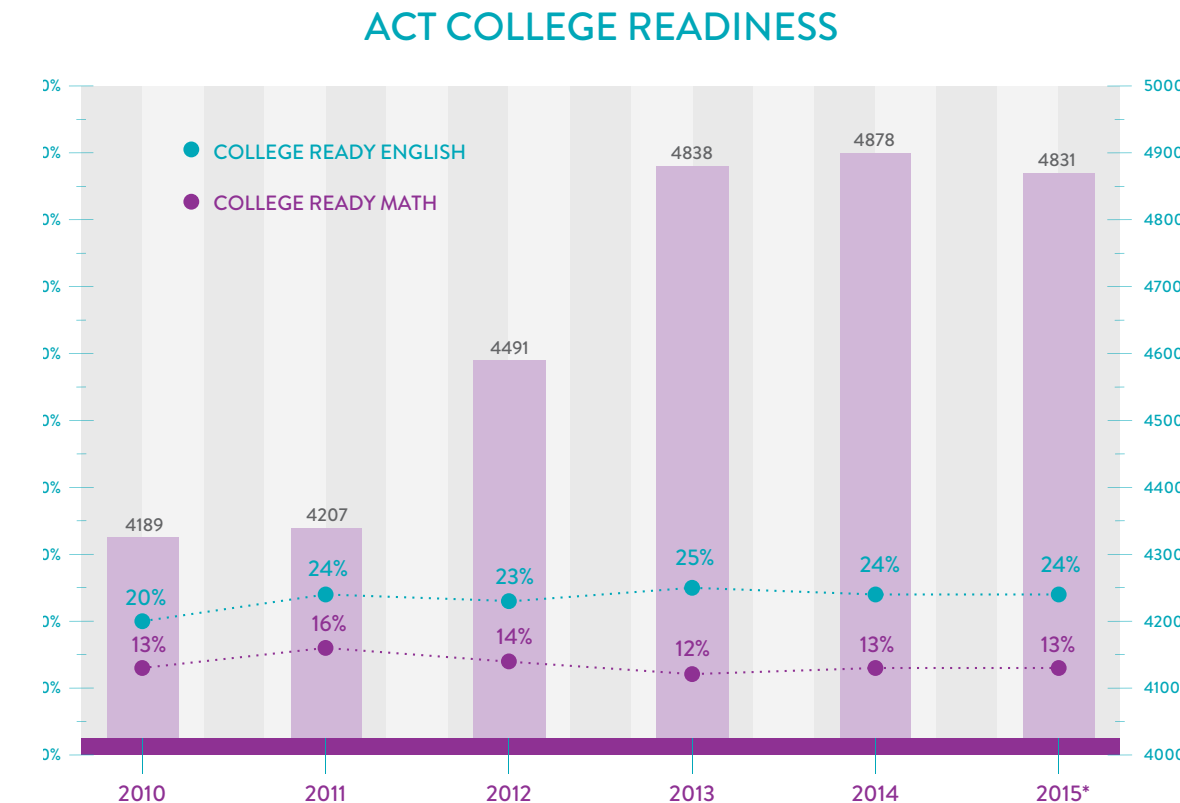
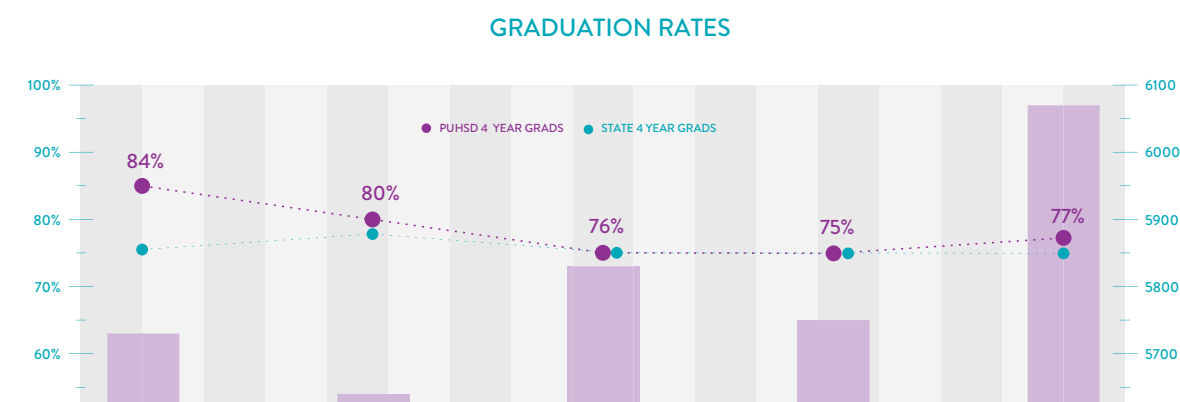
“Thriving Together is demonstrating how we can help guide our schools through the next 25 years to ensure that all students are prepared for college and the workplace. Thriving Together has big goals and the strategy to meet them. Arizona’s future depends on our ability to make this work.”

- Steve Seleznow, *President and CEO, Arizona Community Foundation*



MEASURING SUCCESS

Graduation rates for Phoenix Union High School District are now actually above state averages. But ACT scores — which measure college readiness — are flat. That’s why the Collaborative Action Team has changed its focus to making sure these graduates are ready for higher education.



Additional data is available at ThrivingTogetherAZ.org.



COLLEGE COMPLETION

THE FOCUS

STATUS

COLLABORATIVE ACTION TEAM WELL UNDERWAY

IMPORTANCE

Below average attainment of higher education within a rapidly growing population can negatively impact the future of young people, and also Arizona's economy.

ACTION ITEMS

When some students graduate from high school and go to college, they aren't prepared for college-level classes and overall college demands. The team is focusing on graduation rates at Gateway Community College, South Mountain Community College and Phoenix Community College. One in 10 minority males are completing college at these schools. The team wants to help focus on persistence and is mapping programs on campus to see what common themes are emerging, including a survey as to what helps students stay in school and which programs are working.

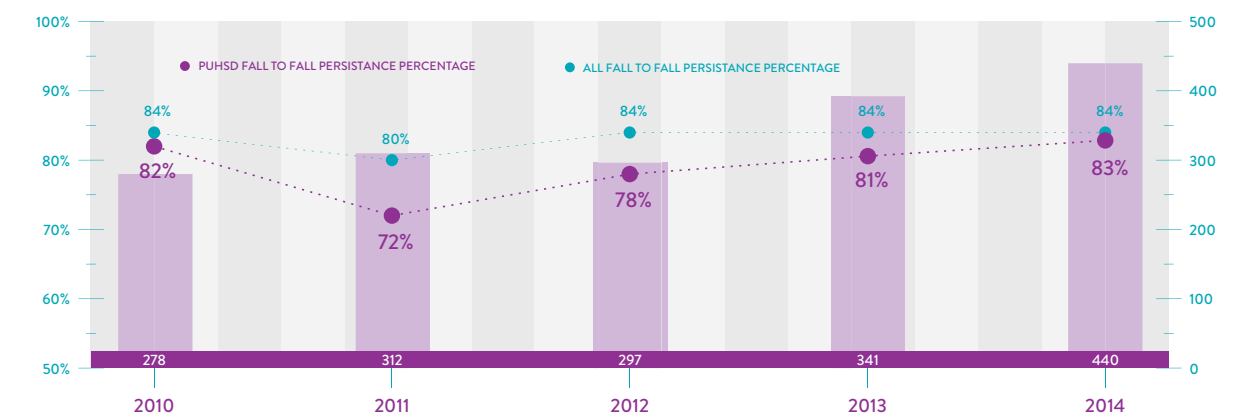
“Thriving Together is an innovative approach to closing the opportunity and achievement gaps and help put students on a path to success. With the help and participation of the community, it not only will move the needle, it will move it in big ways.”

— Paul J. Luna, *President and CEO, Helios Education Foundation*

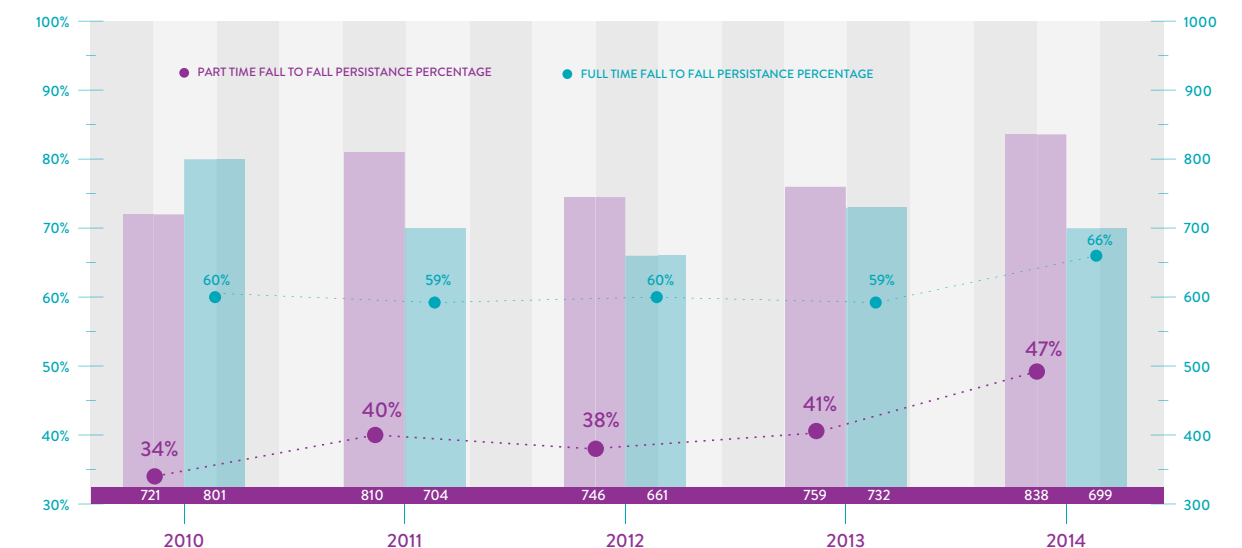
MEASURING SUCCESS

We can track how well these programs are working by examining the resiliency of students in college — how likely they are to continue their education year-to-year until graduation.

ASU FALL TO FALL PERSISTENCE



MCCCD FALL TO FALL PERSISTENCE



FINISHING THE JOB

The overall goal is to not only get students to college, but to ensure they graduate so they are as prepared as possible — across all ethnic groups and genders.

Additional data is available at ThrivingTogetherAZ.org.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

STATUS

LAUNCHED JANUARY 2016



IMPORTANCE

Once our schools prepare students to graduate from high school and go to college, we have to make sure it's easier for students to follow through and find the resources they need to enroll in college.

ACTION ITEMS

The Collaborative Action Team is working to provide Phoenix Union High School students with assistance and guidance in applying for college, with the goal of developing strategies and pathways for these students to ensure they reach the college of their choice.

WORKFORCE READINESS

STATUS

SCHEDULED TO LAUNCH SPRING 2016



IMPORTANCE

Ensuring college graduates are ready to work in the workforce is key to getting them off to a successful start in their careers..

ACTION ITEMS

This is currently a workgroup that will determine what the Collaborative Action Team should look like. It will focus on preparing graduates for the workplace. The team will initially focus on data provided by the Arizona Department of Education's report on Technical Certification Attainment Data. This will give the team a sense of how many students are successfully transitioning from college to career, and what can be done to make this transition smoother.



MOVING THE NEEDLE

Thriving Together's work is in its early stages. But in many ways, it's already beginning to move the needle in a number of ways.

The collaborative focus of the initiative has been contagious, and has increased the commitment of those involved to work together for positive results. Now that we're seeing the work being done with our own eyes, the excitement level about the possibilities Thriving Together can create is growing.

And, the overall story of what's happening in the schools within the Thriving Together boundaries is a good one.

Independent of our efforts, our schools are getting better and seeing success at preparing children for the future. Test scores have increased. Graduation rates are up. More students are heading to college. Our work will help continue these trends.

And importantly, a key goal of Thriving Together is to address the "equity" between different ethnic groups, and ensure that students of all ethnicities are succeeding. When we see gaps between Caucasian students and, say, Hispanic students, Thriving Together works to bridge those gaps. The goal is to make sure ALL students have the best chance at a strong future.

WHAT'S COMING NEXT

As great a start as Thriving Together has had in our community, it's the future and what's coming next that is truly exciting.

With the AzMERIT testing system now in place, we have a new set of data with which to track student progress. There have been a few bumps in the road so far, but we're confident that using AzMERIT as a baseline, we'll find the best ways to measure student improvement.

We still have two Collaborative Action Teams launching in the future – Kindergarten Readiness and Workforce Readiness. Thriving Together is in the preliminary stages of identifying the right partners to work with

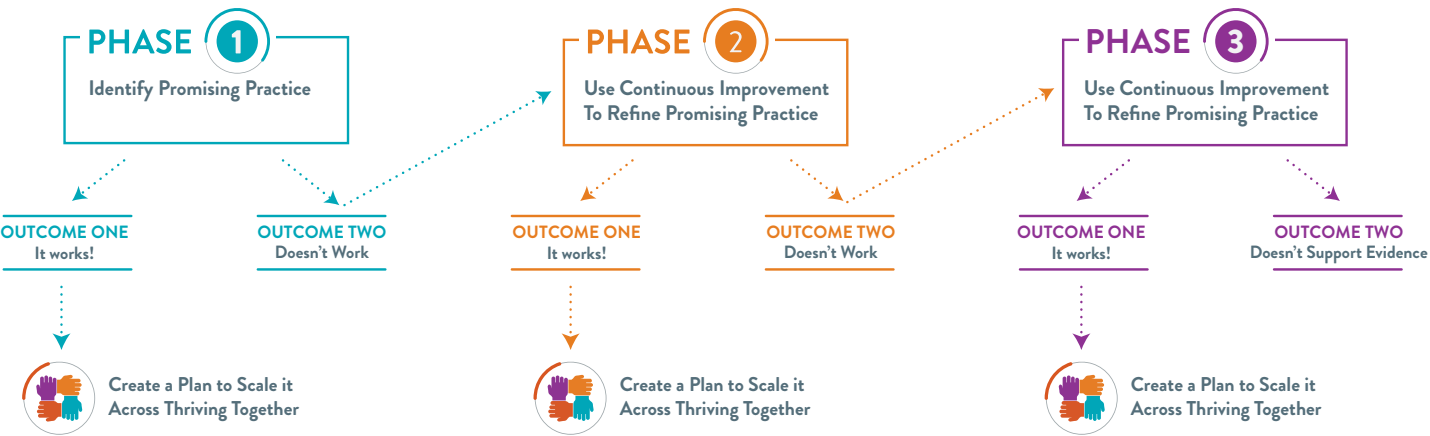
in the formation of a Collaborative Action Team for Kindergarten Readiness. We anticipate this team launching in the next 12-24 months.

But the big focus will be on “scalability,” and taking the best practices Thriving Together identifies in our schools in Phoenix and replicating those practices from district to district, school to school, classroom to classroom. As this happens, the education we provide our children can only improve, and their futures can only get brighter.

SCALABILITY IS THE KEY

As mentioned in previous pages, Collaborative Action and Continuous Improvement will only move the needle on a broad scale if the practices we identify as working well can be scaled across the initiative's boundaries. So now that we're starting to identify what's working, our focus is turning to a new question – How can we make it work in as many schools as possible?

This diagram shows how we approach identifying what works. Once we've done it, it's the Collaborative Action Team's next goal to implement these practices across the Thriving Together boundaries. Right now, a fraction of schools are using these best practices. But that will change over time as our work continues.



“ THIS ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR KIDS, IT'S ABOUT THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY. THE CHILDREN WHO BENEFIT FROM THRIVING TOGETHER WILL SHAPE OUR COMMUNITY FOR DECADES TO COME.”

- Dr. Chad Gestson, Superintendent,
Phoenix Union High School District

MAKING SYSTEMS WORK FOR STUDENTS

Thriving Together’s initial work has been all about making changes in the classroom to improve educational results. But there’s also an opportunity to think even bigger.

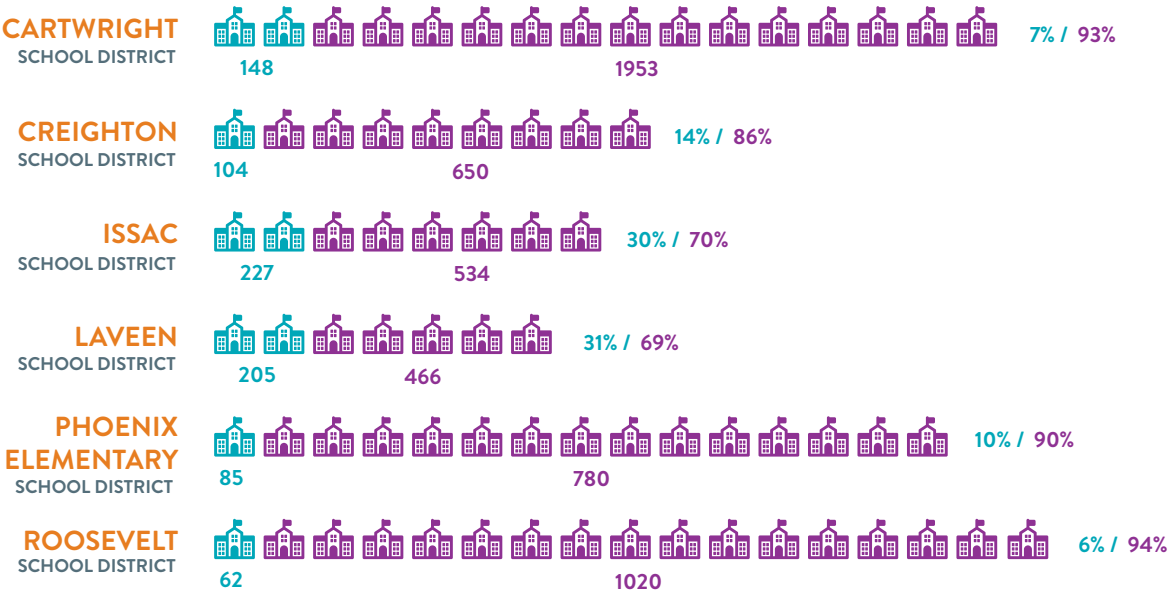


People often talk about taking business-sector practices and implementing them into education. The goal is to use the resources available to make the systems in place more efficient. Schools and school districts are large organizations with many large systems – such as human resources, or finance, or administration, or myriad other support services. And most schools perform these functions very well.

But if you have the private sector engaging in education, why not take advantage of that expertise to think beyond the classroom? Why not use the resources available to identify ways for the systems within education to function better, and serve children and families with the goal of getting better results?

This was an “A-Ha” moment for the Thriving Together Leadership Council, an opportunity to have an even bigger impact on our schools and our communities. And it’s going to be a major focus of Thriving Together moving forward.

3RD GRADE CAT SCHOOL PARTICIPATION & SCALING





Uniting Communities for Student Success

www.ThrivingTogetherAZ.org