

Learning from

# PROOF POINT COMMUNITIES



## Seeding Success *Memphis, Tennessee*

### // The opportunity

Cradle to Career Network member Seeding Success represents a Memphis, Tenn., partnership of more than 100 organizations, including schools, businesses and health, civic, faith and philanthropic groups.

Seeding Success supports a cradle-to-career continuum of work that is getting better results for youth, particularly children of color. This work goes beyond just practices and people — it seeks to understand the history of systemic inequity to transform the underlying causes of challenges.

“At Seeding Success, we are always pushing ourselves to think bigger,” says Executive Director Mark Sturgis. “If we can radically transform infrastructure — and we think we can — in one generation, we will interrupt the current cycle of disproportionate opportunity.”

### // Success: the First 8



*From left to right, Shelby County School Board Member Michelle McKissack with Andrea Philips from Maycomb Capital, Shelby County Schools Superintendent Dr. Joris Ray, Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris, Memphis City Chief Human Resources Officer Alexandria Smith and First 8 Memphis Interim Executive Director Regina Walker at the First 8 Memphis launch event.*

Transformational change requires getting clear on goals. Seeding Success saw many 4-year-old children did not have access to high-quality preschool. This hindered their ability to succeed through life. Together, with a group of city and county leaders, Seeding Success committed to providing high-quality pre-K to every 4-year-old child experiencing poverty in their community.

Seeding Success got the city of Memphis and Shelby County government to provide \$40 million to increase the number of classroom seats for pre-K students most in need over the next three years. The plan leverages public sector dollars and a partnership with Maycomb Capital, thanks to an introduction from StriveTogether.

## // Equipping the community

In 2015, Seeding Success was part of the first group to participate in the StriveTogether Leadership Program, a nine-month program that supports network members in using data, facilitating conversations and focusing explicitly on racial equity to achieve better outcomes for children.

Not only did Seeding Success adopt the approach internally, they used it to build the capacity of partner organizations. StriveTogether helped Seeding Success develop Beyond the Classroom, a training to lead others in the community through a similar process.

One training participant, Communities In Schools of Memphis, explored ways to address chronic absenteeism. With attendance data provided by Seeding Success, the organization identified which students needed the most support, then worked with those children's families to encourage attendance. Simple solutions like allowing students to wear their own clothes instead of a uniform led to a 27% decrease in the number of chronically absent students.

Beyond the Classroom is expanding its reach in Memphis to include schools and agencies like the local housing authority. Through this work, Seeding Success has implemented a successful approach to using data to shape policy.

## // Tapping into the power of data

Effective data use has been fundamental in achieving results in Memphis. "Seeding Success has built this data system to provide information so the community can understand what's happening and allocate resources accordingly," says Colin Groth, StriveTogether's executive vice president of strategy and development.

Seeding Success also collaborated with Shelby County Schools to develop Destination 2025, a 10-year strategic plan designed to elevate student achievement. Between 2017 and 2018, the plan led to accomplishments like improvements in kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading, an increase in students earning professional certifications and more.

"We're fortunate to work with the nonprofits, agencies and people who really care about children in Memphis," Sturgis says. "Having a strong national support partner in StriveTogether has really enabled us to accelerate our progress and strengthen our approach."

View the full case study online at [strivetgether.org](http://strivetgether.org).



Grade 3 reading proficiency **increased from 21.4% to 27%.**



The percentage of former pre-K students who were kindergarten ready **rose from 42% in 2017 to 59% in 2018.**



Number of graduates who entered a postsecondary institution **increased by 3% in 2018 to 58%.**



The **79.1% graduation rate** in 2018 keeps Shelby County Schools **on track** for its 2025 goal of 90%.

Source: Seeding Success