

Road Map Project

A COMMUNITY-LED REGIONAL EDUCATION INITIATIVE



BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

The Road Map Project is a community effort that supports students from birth through college.

OUR GOAL: double the number of students in South King County and South Seattle who are on track to and graduate from college or earn a career credential by 2020, and close the opportunity gap for low-income students and children of color.

THE CHALLENGE

The best way to break the cycle of poverty is through attaining a postsecondary education. We know that, by 2018, 67 percent of all jobs in Washington State will require some postsecondary education. The industries that drive Washington's economy—technology, science and health, and international trade—demand a well-educated workforce.

But we're falling behind. Too many of Washington State's children start school unprepared to learn, and many never catch up. Only one-quarter of Washington's students will earn a college degree. In the South King County area known as the Road Map region, in 2011 nearly one-third of all ninth-grade students missed at least six days of school and were failing at least one course. Research suggests that virtually all of these students will drop out of school.

In South King County, there are great schools, teachers, and community organizations that help students succeed. However, until recently, they were not always working together or in one coordinated system. Early learning programs did not coordinate with the elementary school grades, nor did high

schools with local institutions of higher education. At the same time, parents and communities struggled to understand how they could engage with their children's schools. As a result, thousands of children did not get the support they needed to stay engaged in school and graduate, and were left behind or falling through the cracks.

THE OPPORTUNITY

Our economic future depends on our ability to educate those who prior generations have left behind. We believe that every child, no matter where they are born, deserves the opportunity to get a great education.

Community members in South King County agree. They are working closely together to build the **Road Map Project**, a collective effort to keep students on track, both in and out of school. Seven school districts, six higher education institutions, local governments, and hundreds of community organizations, education leaders, teachers, and parents are involved in creating a system where every student has the opportunities they need to succeed. The Road Map work is coordinated by a community



A young boy attends the opening of the Educare Early Learning Center in South King County.

organization called The Community Center for Education Results (CCER). CCER helps to bring together the many organizations and people contributing to this work, helps to create cross-sector projects, and generates data and research to help the project move forward.

This strong coalition helped the Road Map school districts secure a \$40 million federal Race to the Top district grant in 2012, which will be used to expand early learning opportunities, enrich science and math learning, and offer support to high schools so more students can take college-prep courses and receive college advising.

Research indicates that parents throughout the region want their children to go to college, and they believe it is possible. We also believe it is possible. There is strong momentum to reach the Road Map's ambitious goals, and a collective dedication to focus on a child's entire education pathway—supporting students from birth and early learning, through their K-12 education experience, and on to achieving a college degree or career credential.

AT A GLANCE

- The Road Map Project is a collective effort in South Seattle and South King County to keep students on track, both in and out of school.
- The project includes seven school districts, six higher education institutions, local governments, and hundreds of community organizations, education leaders, teachers, and parents make up the Road Map coalition.
- We support the Road Map Project through our Education Pathways work in Washington State.

OUR STRATEGY

A few years ago, the Gates Foundation decided to take a new approach to ending the cycle of poverty for more families by focusing on a particular issue, and in a defined region. We chose education and focused on South King County because of its diversity and high concentrations of poverty.

We began to learn more about success in other regions, including the **Harlem Children's Zone** in New York City, and **Strive Cincinnati**, which put together a coalition to work from “cradle to career.” Those working in Cincinnati used a phrase about their community that resonated: they said they were “program rich but system poor.” This meant that isolated pockets of strong programs were not adding up to overall success for students. Strive Cincinnati found that a collaborative approach called **collective impact** was a solution for this problem.

The idea of collective impact is simple: A single program, organization, or institution cannot bring about large-scale social and community change alone. This change requires us to think beyond silos. It requires the efforts of many people—all banding together around a common agenda and goal, and a common way to measure progress. This concept is fundamental to the **Road Map Project**.



The Road Map Project focuses on community-driven priorities, including third-grade reading.

Collective impact also relies on the wisdom of many members in the community—not just leaders in the highest positions, but parents, teachers, and many others. The investments made by the Gates Foundation are guided by the plans and ideas of hundreds of community members actively engaged in Road Map work groups. Community-driven priorities include parent and community engagement; using data to set targets and rigorously measure results; monitoring early-warning signs to make sure students do not fall through the cracks; support for English-language learners; kindergarten readiness; third-grade reading; expansion of college access

and raising completion rates; and improving science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills.

Everyone has a role to play in the success of students in our communities. The work of the Road Map is helping to show how we can work, collectively, to give all students the chance for a great education.

AREAS OF FOCUS

The foundation supports the Road Map effort by providing funding directly to the institutions and organizations working on educational outcomes in the region.



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Direct Support to Community Institutions

Building Stronger Systems and Partners. We make grants to community organizations and educational institutions that align to and support the goals of the Road Map Project. For example, the Seattle Community College District is using a foundation grant to increase the success of students taking developmental education—or remedial—courses. We support Equal Opportunity Schools' efforts to increase the numbers of students taking Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses in high school. Equal Opportunity Schools is an organization that works with leaders of schools and school systems to enroll more low-income students and students of color in the best academic programs.

We also provide grant funding to multiple school districts in South King County seeking to improve their engagement with parents, and to other districts that are increasing the connections between kindergarten through third-grade teachers and their local child care centers.

Building Alliances. We support the creation of networks and alliances that provide coordinated academic and youth engagement services. This includes college access networks in Seattle and South King County, which bring together school districts, colleges, and community-based organizations. Our grant to the Puget Sound Educational Service District helps bring the community together to plan for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education and careers. Other grants focus on building better collaborations between youth development organizations and schools.

Support for the Infrastructure of Collective Impact

Strong Data. Better use of data helps education leaders and community members see clearly what is working and what is not. The foundation supports the Road Map Project's work to set targets, track results, and make changes as necessary. In 2011, Road Map Project members and advisors selected a set of on-track indicators that, when taken together, give a view of how students in the region are doing. Indicators include the number of children who enter kindergarten ready to succeed, reading proficiency levels at various grades, and absenteeism rates—an early warning that a student is more likely to drop out.

The foundation also funds the Youth Development Executives of King County to determine what key social and emotional indicators of youth academic progress can be tracked. Pilots are now under way in collaboration with school districts on measures of things like student engagement and motivation.

Powerful Community Voice. To be successful, the Road Map Project needs the support and engagement of parents, students, and the community as a whole. We fund a number of organizations working to elevate the voice of parents and community members.

For example, we provide support to CCER to run the Road Map Project Small Grants Fund for education-related community projects. The Small Grants Fund is used to boost community groups, organizations, and institutions that are committed to achieving the Road Map Project goal of improving education results from cradle to college and career.

We also supported a campaign to increase community support of teachers. In 2011, we worked with CCER, Starbucks, and DonorsChoose.org to provide critical funding for teachers' classrooms throughout the Road Map. Through a foundation grant, King County Starbucks stores provided free DonorsChoose.org gift cards, which community members used to support requests for classroom materials and projects posted on the DonorsChoose.org website.



Community organizations support the Road Map through tutoring assistance and other youth programs.

Funding Alignment. The foundation is one of many funders supporting CCER and the Road Map work. We work with these other funders to see if we can better align our investments to achieve results that are more powerful. More than 30 funders meet regularly to discuss funding opportunities and how to align our grantmaking to the goals of the Road Map.

Implementation of Statewide Policies

To boost student achievement, Washington State has adopted a number of important policies and programs. We provide grants that help the Road Map region implement and accelerate the adoption of these key state-level policies, which include:

- Quality standards for early learning and kindergarten readiness that help parents, early learning providers, and teachers understand how well prepared children are for school.
- Successful implementation of a new teacher and principal evaluation program to give teachers and leaders ways to improve their practice and serve students better.
- Expanding the number of families who apply for College Bound Scholarships, which allow all low-income students who maintain good grades to attend our state's public colleges and universities.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation aspires to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. We are dedicated to discovering and disseminating innovative approaches to addressing extreme poverty and poor health in developing countries and improving the U.S. education system. Because our financial resources, while significant, represent a small fraction of what's needed to address these challenges, we work in partnership with governments, the private sector, and other donors and organizations to achieve the greatest possible impact.

LEARN MORE

Our Washington State work:
www.gatesfoundation.org/washington

The Road Map Project:
www.roadmapproject.org

Road Map Project Reports:
www.roadmapproject.org/data-center/reports