

# Funders

## A call to action and tips for maximizing the impact of an investment in early learning

### **Understand the conditions for success necessary to start and sustain early literacy improvement at scale.**

Review the [Conditions for Early Learning Success self-assessment tool](#) to understand the capabilities and resources necessary to start and sustain an early learning transformation. This can help you identify key capabilities to be built that may require private funding to improve early literacy outcomes.

### **Tailor your investment to specific and high-impact areas of need within your community's education ecosystem.**

Use the self-assessment as a basis for conversation with decision makers at a collective impact organization invested in early learning in your community and/or with your local school system. Collaboratively identify areas of need that may align with your investment interests.

### **Connect with other funders interested in improving early literacy outcomes and consider pooling investments.**

Investing together can both increase the scale of investment to enable an early learning transformation and help foster coordination among early learning champions to amplify impact. If your community has a collective impact organization that emphasizes early learning, they may be able to convene and coordinate this funding group.

### **Invest against clear and measurable long-term goals, and hold a high bar for measurement of impact.**

Dallas ISD and the community established clear third grade reading goals, with milestones and underlying metrics tracked along the way so that funders were consistently updated on progress. You should invest against similarly clear objectives and hold recipients of your investment accountable to providing consistent and analytically rigorous updates on progress.

Private investment in early learning can help provide the resources necessary to catalyze improvement in early literacy in your community, especially if that investment is made strategically.

Research suggests investing in high-quality early learning has a substantial return on investment, changing individual lives, building the future workforce, and creating lasting intergenerational impact.<sup>1</sup> Learn more about actions you can take to maximize the effectiveness of your investment in early learning below.

### **Consider funding a strategic partnership to help your local school system establish the conditions for success.**

Bringing in a strategic partner that can provide support in crafting a clear strategic plan and vision to achieve early literacy goals, build a school system's analytical capacity, and drive key initiatives can help accelerate progress. Having a sustained strategic partner can help guide school systems through the challenging transformation process while simultaneously providing rigorous analysis of results to help you understand the impact of your investment.

### **Look to establish a proof point that may influence policy and guide public dollars in the future.**

An investment that demonstrates significant progress in improving early literacy outcomes can ultimately help to drive public funding toward replicating that success. This played out in Dallas, as Dallas ISD's progress ultimately informed Texas' House Bill 3, which provided increased funding and accountability for high-quality early learning.

### **Make a long-term commitment and be patient with your investment.**

While you should hold a high bar for measurement of impact of your investment in early learning, establishing the conditions for success and transforming early literacy outcomes for your community will take time. Initial results may not show expected growth; look for leading indicators, such as increased Pre-K enrollment or improving classroom quality, which may indicate that growth is on the way. Making a long-term commitment will give your school system or other investment recipient the stability necessary to strive for sustainable, long-term improvement.

<sup>1</sup>For a collection of research on the impact of high-quality early learning, visit [The Heckman Equation](#)