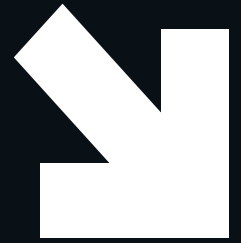


PLANNING THE ROUTE, LEADING THE WAY



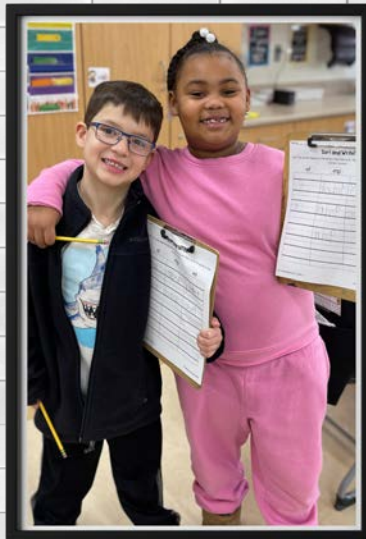
HIGHER EXPECTATIONS ANNUAL REPORT

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Higher
Expectations
for Racine County



TABLE OF CONTENTS



Our Vision

A Racine County workforce that is fully capable and employed.

Our Mission

Higher Expectations engages community partners, aligns efforts, and maximizes resources to promote excellence and equity in education and employment outcomes in Racine County.

Our Vales

Transformative: We work to disrupt the status quo, so that systems will support and shift power to low-income individuals and communities of color.

Community: We amplify community power by sharing our access to high level spaces and developing local leaders' capacity to make collaborative decisions with the community.

Strategic: Through the use of data and analysis, and in partnership with community and key stakeholders, we prioritize major goals and initiatives that lead to systems transformation.

Data Notes

For more information about data throughout this report go to bit.ly/23ARDataNotes or scan the QR Code to the right.



LETTER FROM OUR STAFF

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The systems that support families are complicated. There are so many barriers that can make it difficult for families to find their way to family-sustaining careers. This year, we worked with our partners and alongside families to lead the way to systems-transforming solutions that work better for everyone.

We collaborated with our partners in three key ways. We closely examined systems-level data. We engaged our community to better understand where systems were working for all Racine families, and where there was room for improvement. We also created ways to ensure systems are working more effectively for all Racine residents. Two great examples of that were our work with Racine Unified School District and Racine County.

We helped create systems for Racine Unified to measure their 2030 Strategic Plan goals. We worked alongside Racine Unified staff to create an Early Literacy dashboard where teachers, principals and district administration can track progress in early literacy in real time, which empowers them to teach students with a continuous improvement approach.

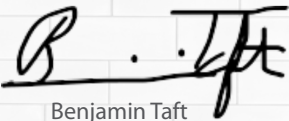
We also worked with Racine County as part of their Early Literacy Steering Committee. This committee was made up of various stakeholders in early childhood – including parents of young children. We co-created innovative ways to make it easier for birth-to-three parents to access pre-literacy resources for their children. Pilots from that work are currently in development!

For our community's older students, we continue to strengthen pathways to high school graduation with Racine Unified, YWCA of SE Wisconsin, Gateway Technical College, the City of Racine, and Racine County. We are also working with Racine Unified, Kenosha Unified School District, Building Our Future, UW-Parkside, Gateway Technical College, and Carthage College to strengthen pathways to post-secondary education.

Within our team, we are working to bolster a community of racial healing so that our entire staff can be their fullest self at work and reach their highest potential. We spent the year strengthening processes with equity at the center and creating more opportunities for our staff to learn and grow where their interests pull them. We had members of our team take classes for Project Management, participate in the Wisconsin Women's Network to learn more about local and state-level policy, engage in HR discussions with Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce (RAMAC), and participate in a three-part Racial Healing workshop that included 1:1 support and guidance for each member of our team.

In exciting news, our team's great work was given the Systems Transformation designation by StriveTogether – our national network! We are honored to be the 8th organization of about 70 in StriveTogether's network to reach this status.

We are looking forward to our continued work to transform systems in 2024!



Benjamin Taft



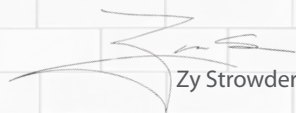
Kristin Jenders



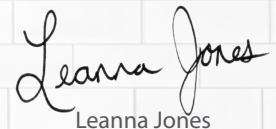
Celeste Heritz



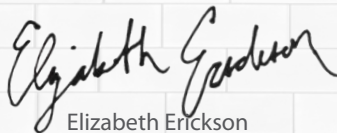
Yalanda Ludtke



Zy Strowder



Leanna Jones



Elizabeth Erickson



Jeff Neubauer



DeAnn Possehl

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COMMUNITY DATA

Higher Expectations uses key outcome measures to track our systems' progress toward our partnership's goals. We track outcomes from career to cradle because our work begins with the end in mind: a fully capable and employed Racine County workforce. We know the route to better opportunities for family-sustaining employment has multiple stops along the way: post-secondary attainment, post-secondary enrollment, high school completion, middle school math, third grade reading, and kindergarten readiness. When our community leads students and their families from one stage to the next in this process, we see outcome areas improve.

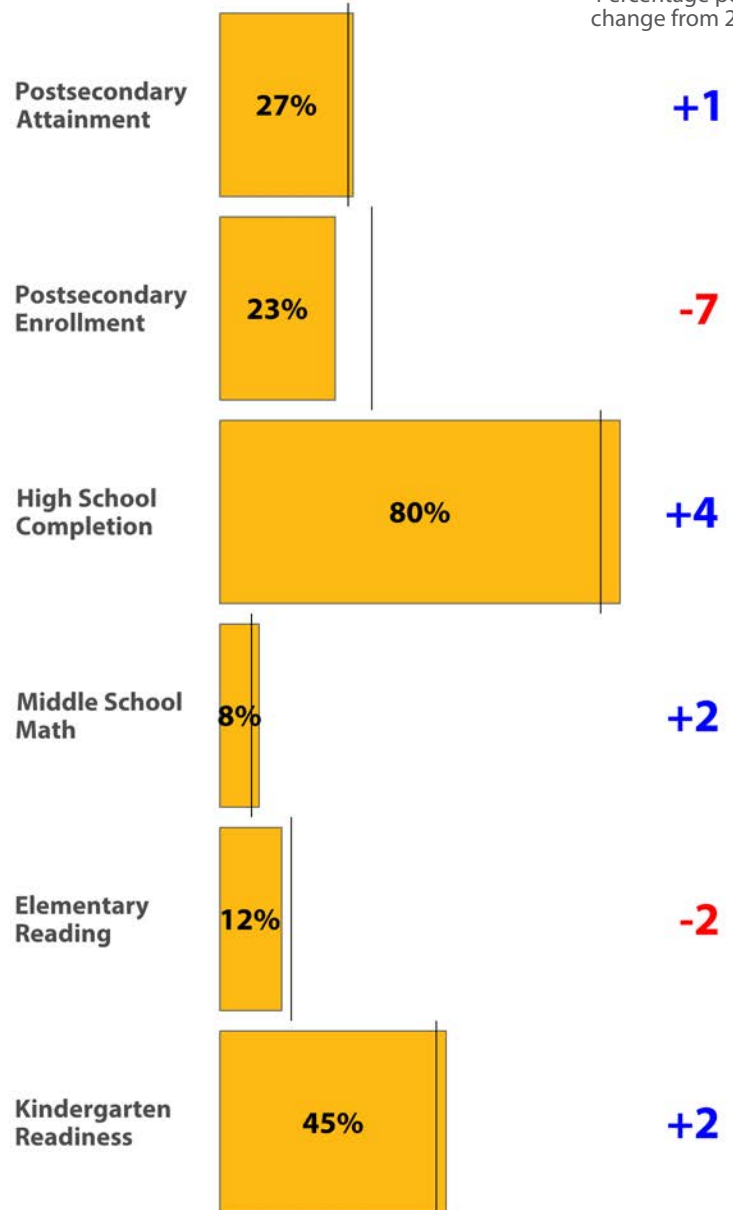
When we see a steady increase in an outcome area, we know that our systems are supporting more students. We can investigate the changes year-to-year, uncover which systems are working better, and work to scale up those efforts to impact more students. Alternatively, if we see a steady decrease in an outcome area, we know that our systems are failing students. We can take a closer look at which students are most impacted, work to identify barriers to access for support systems, and work with partners to dismantle those barriers.

The COVID pandemic showed just how important it is to look at our systems. We saw how quickly they can transform, and this fueled our work to make systemic changes with our partners. In the data visualization to the right, you can see where our systems are supporting students toward progress post-pandemic, and where our partnership still has work to do to help students and their families recover.



Outcome Area Progress 2022

Percentage point change from 2021



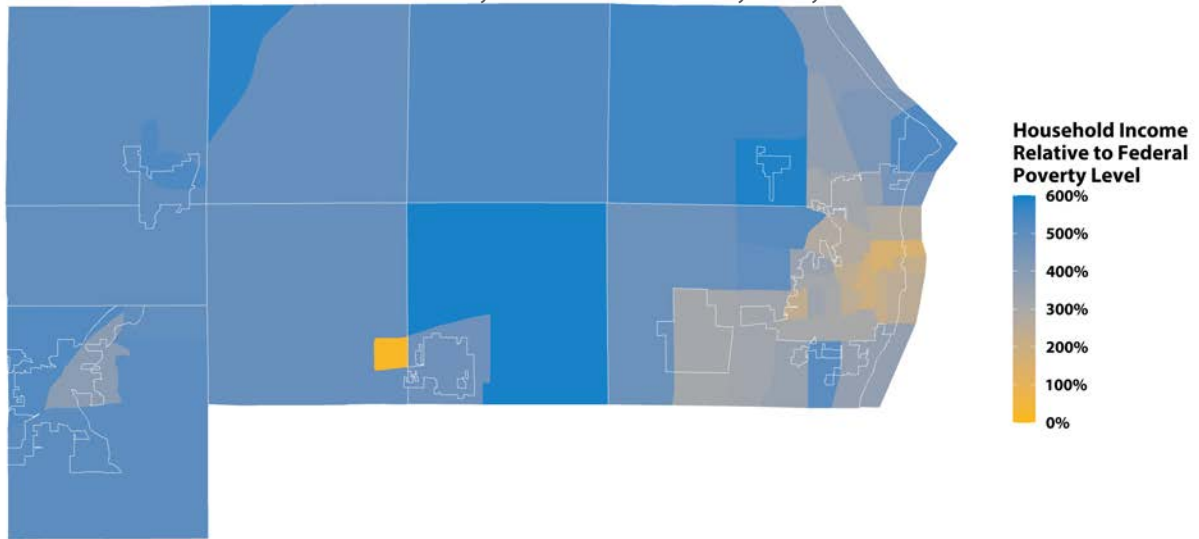
Lines show values for outcomes in our 2022 report

A core part of our work is looking closely at data disaggregated by race and ethnicity to better understand what is, and what is not, working. We believe that data should be used as a flashlight, not a hammer. Our team uses publicly available data, or data from our partners through data sharing agreements, to better understand how systems are working in our community.

We work internally with partners to better understand their program data. We use disaggregated data to make a clear connection between systemic issues and outcomes for students of color, and for families who are economically disadvantaged. Partners use this data as evidence when making real-time decisions, improving and expanding their practices, recognizing and addressing disparities. They also use data to inform how they target resources to support what is working for families in Racine County.

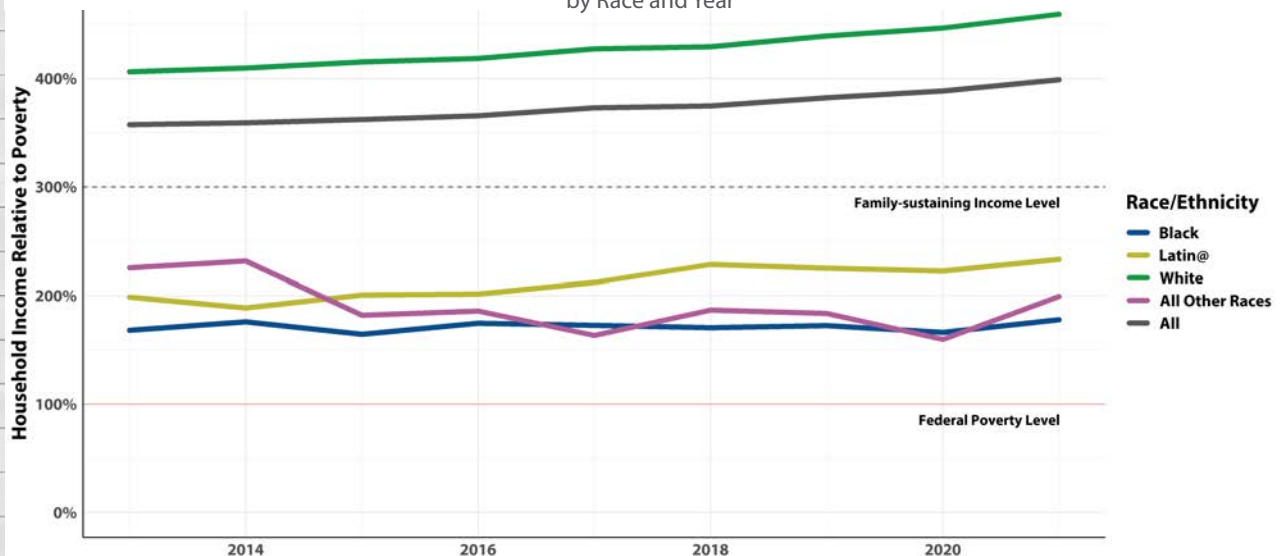
Household Income Across Racine County

from 2022 5-year American Community Survey



Household Income in Racine County

by Race and Year



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

5



Higher Expectations supports area institutions, organizations, and our community towards systems-transforming solutions. We assist partners in their journey from data collection to data visualization, from ideas to grant applications, and from big goals to measurable outcomes. By convening partners across institutions and facilitating actionable conversations, we get everyone on the same path toward systemic changes. Throughout the work, we are a trusted partner to manage a project to ensure the work continues to move forward.

“By collecting and communicating data, Higher Expectations pushes us to be more accountable to our stakeholders; by connecting people and advocating for initiatives, Higher Expectations expands our network and accelerates the uptake of our offerings and partnerships.”

- Post-Secondary Partner

“Higher Expectations has provided high-quality, high-level assistance that no one else locally could provide.”

- Local Government Partner

“The Higher Expectations team helps to create a data driven answer to the true state of the community.”

- Funder



“Higher Expectations helps model and share best practices that improve community decision-making. It makes my work more efficient and effective.”

- Community Organization Partner

One of the ways we help our partners and community plan the route of their work is by helping them analyze and visualize their data to get a better understanding of where to begin and where to end. We also work with partners to create systems to measure how things are going along the way and continuously improve efforts when they seem to be headed off track. Throughout this report, you'll see examples of data we have collected to help our partners lead the way.

In recognition of its impact on the lives of youth across Racine, StriveTogether designated Higher Expectations for Racine County as a “Systems Transformation” Cradle to Career Network member. In Systems Transformation communities, cradle-to-career partnerships work with systems leaders to make fundamental and institutionalized shifts in policies, practices, resources and power structures to eliminate structural racism and advance equitable outcomes. The shared goal is for every Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian youth – and those experiencing poverty – to have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential, cradle to career.

Higher Expectations for Racine County is part of a national movement to help every child succeed in school and in life, regardless of race, ethnicity, zip code, or circumstance. The StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network is closing gaps and creating opportunities across education, health, housing, and more. Higher Expectations for Racine County is demonstrating clear evidence that Racine is changing these systems to advance equity and improve results.

“Since Higher Expectations was established in 2014, it has used data to improve cradle-to-career outcomes from kindergarten readiness and early grade reading to high school graduation and postsecondary attainment to not only address workforce needs in Racine County but also put more young people on the path to economic mobility.”
- Jennifer Blatz, President and CEO, StriveTogether

StriveTogether called out notable achievements:

- Advocating for the initial launch of full-day kindergarten for four-year-olds and supporting the school district in expanding access for 2,850 more children.
- Helping schools increase early learning literacy by creating and sharing an Early Literacy Dashboard so teachers can provide students with targeted support to improve outcomes. One principal saw reading proficiency increase from a historical 8-12% to 42% this past year.
- Ensuring 2,020 more adults achieve a high school diploma or equivalent by partnering with others to create the high school equivalency diploma program.
- Supporting a new pathway to postsecondary completion that in its first year enabled 153 technical college students to earn associate degrees instead of certificates and receive credit for the general education requirement toward bachelor's degrees.
- Helping meet the demand for a high-skilled workforce, particularly nurses, by partnering with a local hospital to enable entry-level employees to advance within the hospital system. This included removing the high school degree requirement for certified nursing assistants. Participants who completed the program reported: Less financial stress, better mental health, and greater confidence in their ability to raise their children.

We couldn't have achieved this accomplishment without collaborating with institutions and organizations across Racine County. As we work to support the community, we also want to recognize we wouldn't be able to make systems transformations without the support of our community. We have some exceptional institutional leaders who have shown they are willing to work outside of the status quo and have led changes in systems that will continue to impact students and families for years to come.



7 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

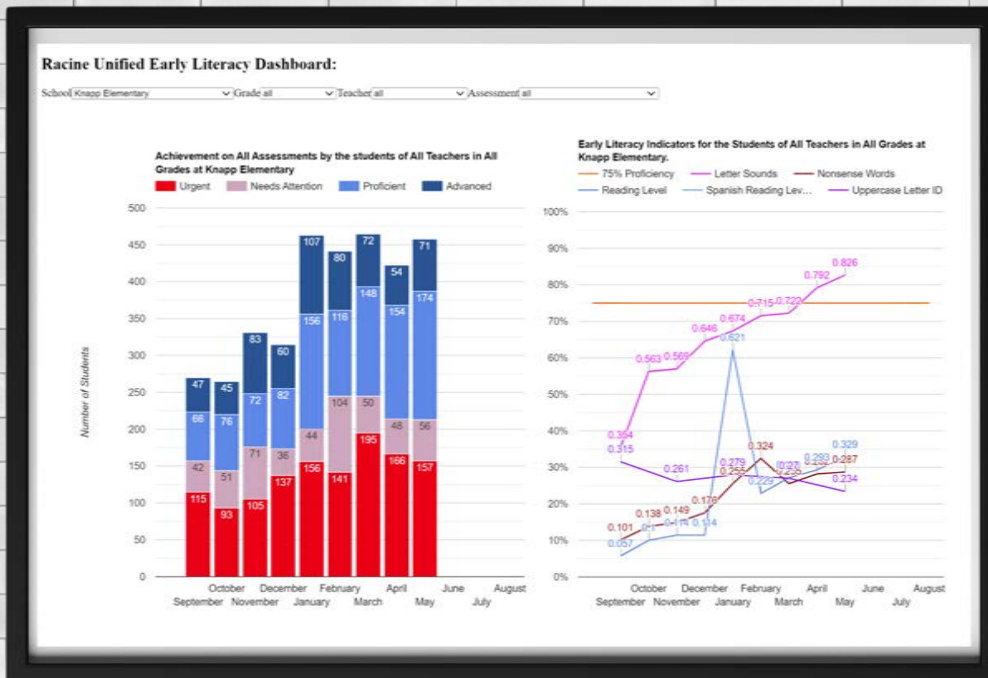
Higher Expectations first learned about Continuous Improvement methodology in public schools from StriveTogether in 2015. Work at the School District of Menomonee Falls was featured at our national network's convening that year. In 2017, Higher Expectations and Racine Unified School District (Racine Unified) set out to create the comprehensive, districtwide Continuous Improvement system which is now being implemented throughout Racine Unified.

From 2017 until 2019, Cheryl Broadnax, StriveTogether's Senior Director of District Improvement, and the Curriculum and Instruction staff at Racine Unified began training instructional coaches and principals throughout the district. This work focused on creating and implementing PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) cycles throughout schools. Teachers **plan** what they are going to teach in a lesson with their grade-level cohorts, they **do** the lessons, they **study** the results of the lesson to see what parts students were excelling at and where students were struggling, and they **act** to help students where they are struggling. Starting again with the next round of lessons, they take what worked into their planning and run through another PDSA cycle. This continuous improvement process allows teachers to better understand where students are struggling in real time, instead of waiting for testing. This creates a process where every classroom can end up with tailored instruction for their students.

Knapp Elementary saw great results in 2022-2023, by utilizing PDSA cycles as a part of their overall efforts for literacy instruction. For example, in September 2022, just 12% of second graders were reading at or above grade level. By May, 41% of second graders were reading at or above grade level.

“Historically, we have seen somewhere between 8-12% proficiency in literacy. We have never seen growth like this before.”

- Rich Wytonick, Directing Principal of The Knapp Elementary



So far in the 2023-2024 school year, the Early Literacy dashboard is averaging more than 6,000 literacy progress observations each month district wide. This shows that teachers across the district are utilizing this tool to track progress in real-time and then make immediate changes to their instruction, adapting it to the needs of their classrooms. A screen shot of the Early Literacy Dashboard is to the left. You can learn more about the Early Literacy Dashboard on page 9.

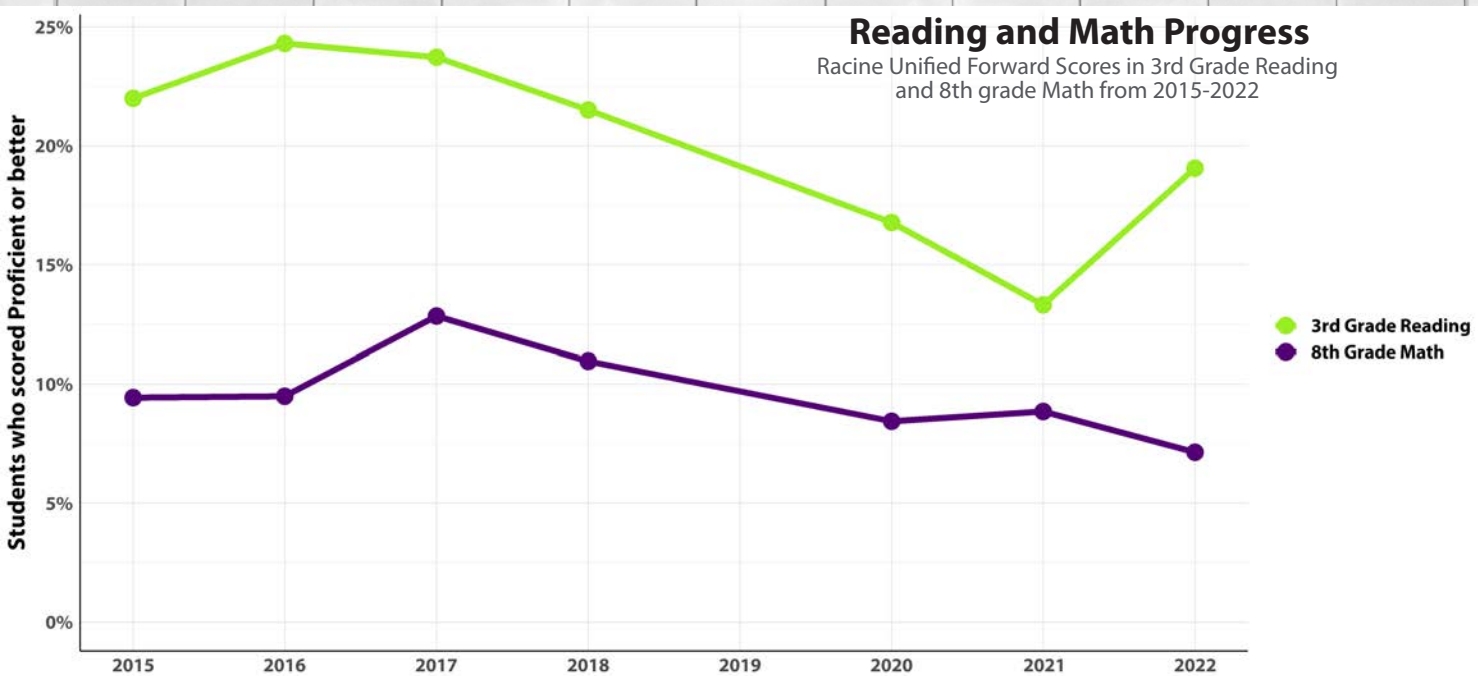
Currently, preparations are taking place to create a Middle School dashboard that will track progress in students' writing skills. PDSA cycles of continuous improvement are being implemented district-wide as a part of School Improvement Plans. They play a significant role in how Racine Unified's current strategic plan measures progress and accountability. By 2027, Racine Unified's goal is to have all elementary schools and K-8's utilizing these instructional cycles.

ACROSS OUR SCHOOLS



We have been working alongside Racine Unified to keep our whole community informed about their strategic plan. The district knows that there are many different factors that play a part in a student's academic success. Alone, Racine Unified cannot change all systems for students and families. To truly see success in their strategic plan, it is important that as much of the community as possible is aware of the goals, and can see the role that they can play in assisting Racine Unified and our students in achieving them.

Below you will see the impact of Racine Unified's strategic focus on third grade reading in the first year of the strategic plan compared to the current baseline for middle school math work that is starting in the next year.



Last year, we shared the strategic plan goals with our Leadership Table and business leaders in the community. This year, we are sharing the progress so far with those same community members and business leaders, and asking them to identify where they can support progress moving forward. Higher Expectations will continue to support sharing out progress through attendance at Superintendent Advisory Council meetings, providing regular updates with our partners, Executive Committee, and Leadership Table members. We will also continue to provide support with community engagement strategies upon request.

“Higher Expectations was an integral partner in engaging our stakeholders to develop the 2027 strategic plan. I’m grateful for their willingness to roll up their sleeves and work side-by-side with us to gather input, dig into the data and determine a strategic path forward for our schools.”

- Soren Gajewski, Interim Superintendent of Racine Unified School District



EARLY LITERACY

One tangible sign of the Continuous Improvement progress in 2023 is the Early Literacy Data Dashboard, which was co-developed by Higher Expectations in collaboration with Racine Unified. The dashboard displays how many students in each elementary classroom are advanced, proficient, need intervention, or need urgent intervention with their fundamental reading skills. Racine Unified experts created the performance goals that define levels of success. The goals follow national standards and build upon one another each month for each assessment.

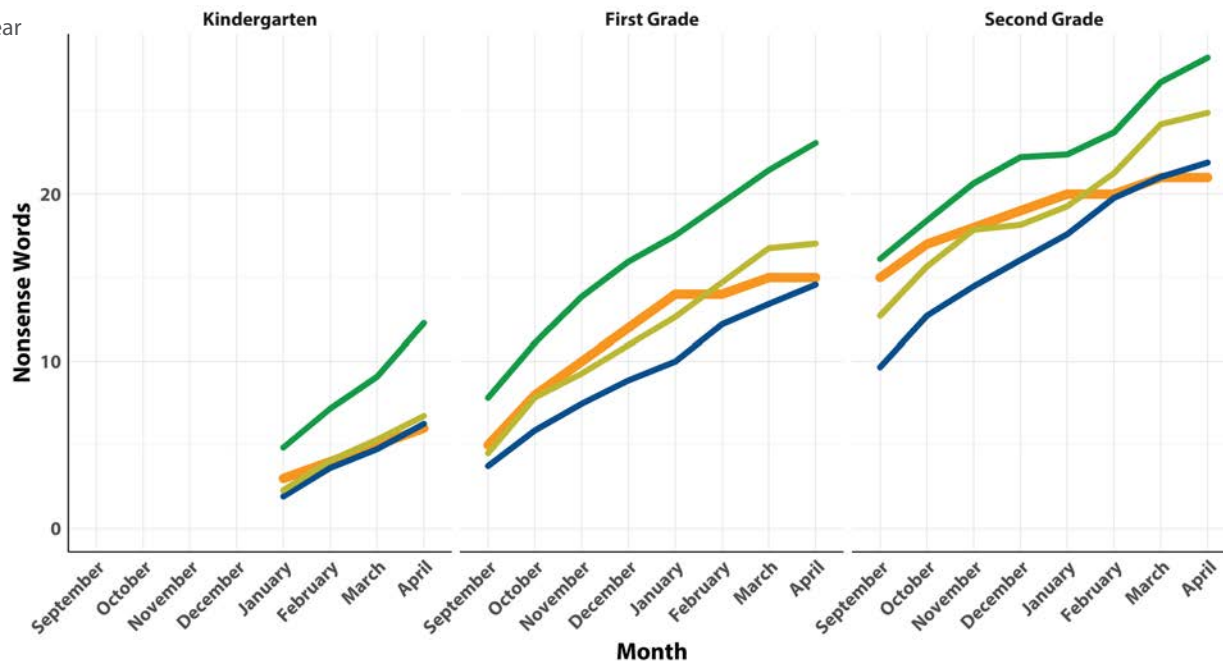
With this tool, teachers and principals can track student progress and identify where additional support is required for every elementary school student from 4K through third grade.

In 2023, Racine Unified created a space for the Early Literacy Dashboard information to exist on Infinite Campus, the school's platform for sharing information about student progress with parents. This means that parents can now see their children's progress through literacy milestones in real-time. As a next step, we want to work alongside the district to help parents better understand how to utilize this tool to support their child's literacy development at home.



Students Meeting Proficiency Standards in Nonsense Words

2022-2023 School Year



STEERING COMMITTEE

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Since our launch, Higher Expectations has been exploring different ways to increase access to early literacy and improve kindergarten readiness in the community. This has included: advocating for the initial launch of full-day four-year-old Kindergarten (4K) and supporting the district in expanding full-day 4K despite it being only 60% funded by the state, supporting the county's launch of Family Connects, recently re-named, Hello Baby, a universal home-visiting program, helping to expand the reach of United Way of Racine County's Imagination Library, and bringing Bright By Text programming into Racine.

We learned through these efforts that a lack of community-wide investment in and understanding of early literacy was preventing us from creating a coordinated plan to reach families with young children. Even more critically, we learned from our efforts that families need to be at the table from the beginning to drive the strategy. This led to a concentrated effort to include community in our collaboration with Racine County when we were asked to engage with them on an Early Literacy Initiative. We started by creating a Steering Committee comprised of multiple community stakeholders, including being made of more than 60% of parents of small children to help guide our work.

In partnership with the Racine County Public Health Department, we are leveraging their funding to create a county-wide early literacy strategic plan. Together with stakeholders in early childhood, including parents of young children, we used a human-centered design process (with consultant Steady State Impact Strategies) to co-create strategies for increased early literacy so that our youngest residents are entering the K-12 system ready to succeed. In

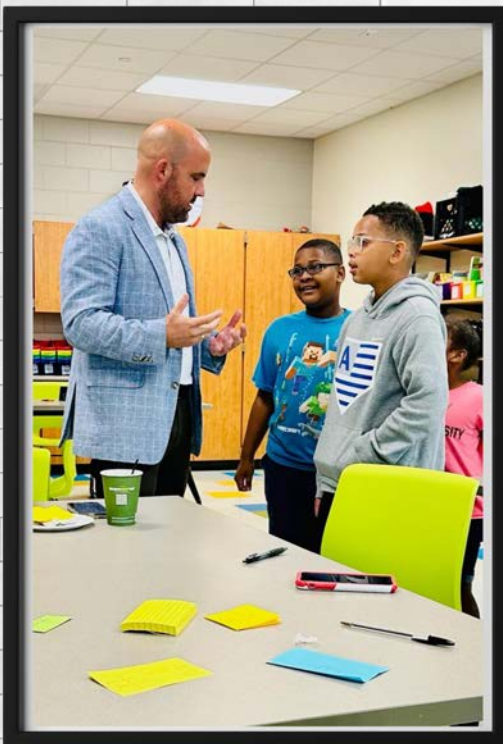
To ensure that family voices are leading this work, we spent months intentionally recruiting and onboarding community members to participate.

Together they have gone through the process of reviewing and contextualizing current data including local literacy data, workforce data, national best practices, and exemplars in growing literacy attainment for early childhood students; researching the challenge, developing a clear understanding (and feeling) of the experience of the people who face the challenge; and defining the challenge through the lens of those with lived experience.

“When they get into school, they don't feel like they're behind or lost or not in control of what they understand and what they don't understand, it will be great to help them grow before getting into elementary school or even kindergarten.”

- Ty'Liesha Mercado, Parent Participant

In September, the groups solidified three prototypes to pilot within Racine County; “Literacy Passport”, a digital or physical document that could be used to track early literacy milestones for children from birth and can serve as a place to learn about literacy resources in the community; “Racine Raises Readers” a campaign that puts a spotlight on literacy for the whole community and aims to make pre-literacy more engaging for our youngest residents; and “Literacy Champions” a program that would incentivize business leaders to do things like allow paid time off for parents to go to parent-teacher conferences and host literacy events for their staff's families to attend.





HIGH SCHOOL GRADS

In 2018, 15.6 percent of adults in Racine did not have a high school diploma or equivalent degree, almost double the state average. Since the passing standards for the GED test were raised in 2014, significantly fewer individuals passed the exam. Adults without a high school degree were left with limited opportunity to earn a secondary credential and access higher quality employment. Recognizing the need for an alternative to the GED, the YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin began offering a new high school equivalency diploma program (HSED) in Racine in 2017. The HSED program featured a cohort-based learning model; an applied, practical curriculum; and a range of student supports.

In the first three years of the YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin's (HSED) program, it demonstrated exceptionally high completion rates among students who enroll.

Higher Expectations learned, from focus groups with students and conversations with HSED program coordinators, that there are barriers that prevent students from enrolling and completing the HSED program. With these challenges in mind, we helped the City of Racine use ARPA funding to pilot GROW Racine, a program that provides financial support throughout a student's participation in the program. Scholarships are provided in intervals throughout the program at critical stages where students are most likely to drop out, and are not dependent fully on completion. Launching this scholarship pilot has had a tremendous effect on participation in the program and has impacted high school completion in our community. Since the creation of the scholarship, 174 HSED participants have received the GROW Racine scholarships. Of those who have received scholarships, 71% reported salaries below poverty level. A majority, 66% of the scholarship recipients are men, and all but one recipient identified as a person of color.

This year, we did an evaluation of the GROW Racine pilot and found statistical support that the GROW Racine pilot has significantly helped Racine residents earn their high school credentials.

We found that enrollment in HSED programs has stayed at a high level for longer than in comparable communities in SE WI. Racine enrolled a total of 133 more students in 2022 and 2023 than Milwaukee did. In addition, participation in the GROW Racine program has increased among eligible Racine residents, so that it is now nearly 100%, and graduation rates for GROW Racine grantees were 89%, compared to 78% among non-participants.

By combining the increased enrollment and graduation rates among GROW participants in Racine, and comparing those to the declining enrollment and lower graduation rates in Milwaukee, we can estimate that the GROW Racine program led to about 125 additional HSED graduates in Racine in 2021-23.

Based upon their increased chances of labor force participation and employment, 14 of those 125 people probably now have new jobs. Based upon their likely greater income from improved positions, those 125 people are probably earning \$23,000 extra dollars every month. At that rate, it would take the alumni of the program only 11 months to collectively earn back the entire \$261,000 in scholarships that the city paid to the 174 GROW grantees.

In 2022, Gateway Technical College along with partners across the community - including Higher Expectations - was awarded a Wisconsin Innovation Grant for a Southeastern Wisconsin Talent Optimization Project. This project aims to improve current HSED structures and policies to increase access to the program and provide greater opportunities for participants after program completion, as well as expand the HSED program to Kenosha County and Walworth County.

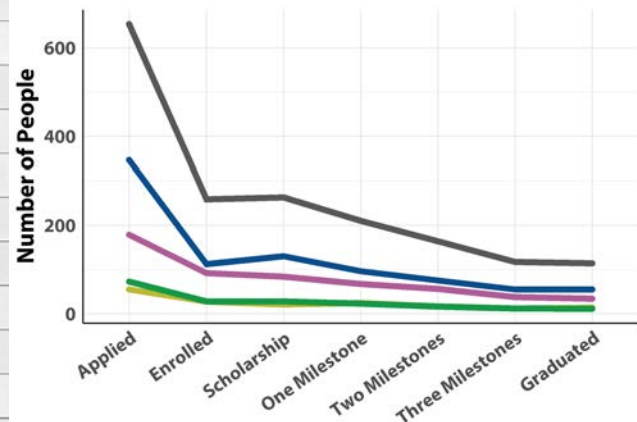
Higher Expectations is playing a key role in learning from current and potential participants of the HSED program in Racine, Kenosha, and Walworth counties to better understand what unique barriers exist in each community. This knowledge will aid in the continuous improvement of program outreach and retention across Southeastern Wisconsin. To connect to potential participants in Kenosha and Walworth counties, we are working with Building Our Future in Kenosha and the Walworth County Economic Development Alliance.

GROW Racine Retention

from 2022-2023

Race/Ethnicity

Black White All
Latin@ All Other Races





In partnership with Racine Unified School District, the YWCA, the City of Racine, Racine County, and others, Higher Expectations has worked to dramatically expand access to high school completion options. The YWCA has a model curriculum for adult learners to earn their high school equivalency diploma that is approved by the state's Department of Public Instruction. In addition to expansive collaborative work to ensure that more adults in Racine County could access this program for free and earn their HSEs, we worked to create more high school diploma options for current Racine Unified students. Initially, this was offering the HSED curriculum at Racine Unified's alternative learning center for a small group of students to test its efficacy at the high school level.

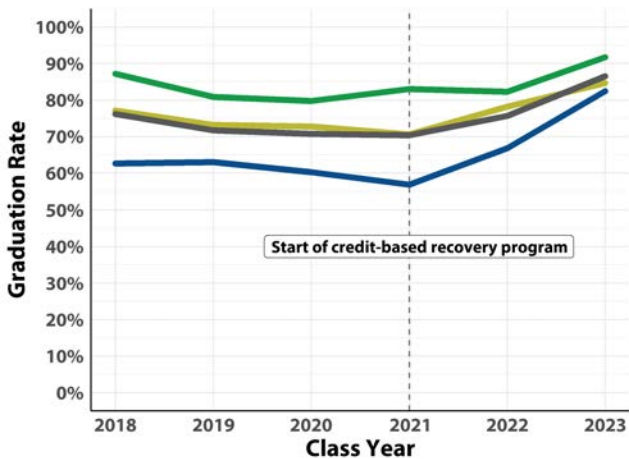
Working with key leaders from Alternative Learning at Racine Unified and the YWCA, we were able to learn how to make the program most effective for students. The district adjusted staff time to be able to offer the program after traditional school hours. Racine Unified also adjusted the design of courses to best meet student need, including identifying prevalent areas for catch-up support before starting the program. The district funded the staff positions needed to offer the program in each comprehensive high school. These adjustments made it possible for students to attend the rest of their traditional classes and graduate with their friends and peers at their own schools. Last year, 140 students were able to graduate from Racine Unified as a direct result of the HSED program at the comprehensive high schools. Other alternative high school diploma programs graduated 33 additional students because of referrals by Racine Unified and the HSED teams. This represents approximately 10% of the senior class who wouldn't have otherwise earned their high school diploma.

Not only was this the first time that the school district collaborated so closely with others to improve their alternative education curriculum, but early human-centered design work at the launch of the HSED collaboration with then-current HSED students set the stage for all of the partners to genuinely engage with students (youth and adult) to adjust and improve the program to best fit their needs.

High School Graduation Rates

4-year graduation rate for Racine Unified

Race/Ethnicity ■ Black ■ White
 ■ Latin@ ■ All





EDUCATION PATHWAY

Higher Expectations worked for years to shepherd a unique partnership between UW-Parkside's Teacher Education program, Carthage College's Teacher Education program and the Academies of Racine to add dual credit opportunities for bachelor-attaining programs, (in addition to early childhood education credits already offered through GTC). The Education Pathway program is available at Case, Horlick, and Park high schools. Students are provided the opportunity to earn dual enrollment college credit within the pathway to explore the teaching profession at no cost to them or the district. Students can take up to four teacher education courses (up to 15 credits) graduating from high school and all of the courses will apply toward an education focused undergraduate degree at UW Parkside or Carthage College.

The Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) is a first-of-its-kind collaboration in the state between institutions that traditionally compete for students and whose credits don't count toward each other's degree programs. To do this, there were institutional and state-level policies that needed to change or at least be waived for this program:

- **The institutions' reviewed not only curriculum but also the teacher education standards required for licensure and agreed to accept course credits from each other**
- **The institutions committed to provide the college credit courses for fall for all students ensuring equitable access. UW-Parkside requested a formal policy waiver from Universities of Wisconsin (formerly UW System) requiring tuition charges and Carthage College identified philanthropic funds to help offset costs.**
- **Racine Unified had to change its own course planning and identify teachers who were qualified under the institution's accrediting body and supported to provide these new college-level courses.**



In the 2022-2023 school year, 55 students enrolled in the education pathway levels 2 and 3 courses through the AoR at Case, Horlick, and Park. Students were also able to earn college credits in these courses and visit college campuses to see where the Education Pathway could lead them.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the Wisconsin Workforce Development Youth Apprenticeship program implemented an Education pathway, creating new paid opportunities for students to learn more about the career field of education. Our goal is to increase the diversity of the education pathway students, and create stronger recruitment efforts for Black and Latinx, particularly male students. We are working alongside students to better understand the current barriers and hesitations students have that hold them back from this opportunity.

The students to the left are all Education Pathway students who signed a commitment to return to Racine Unified to teach after their college graduation.

POST-SECONDARY ACCESS 14



Higher Expectations created and signed a first-of-its-kind data-sharing agreement between the University of Wisconsin - Parkside, Racine Unified School District (Racine Unified), and Higher Expectations in 2015. The following Spring, with support from Annie E. Casey and Lumina Foundation, this collaborative looked at their six-year graduation data and saw that our systems were not serving students equitably. Over the next three years, they looked closely at post-secondary systems. Some examples of their work are: incorporating remedial work in classes reduced or eliminated traditional remediation for degrees, collaborating across Racine Unified and University of Wisconsin - Parkside to align math pathways from K-12 to college, creating stronger pathways from an associate degree at Gateway Technical College into a Bachelor's Degree at University of Wisconsin - Parkside, and increasing dual-credit opportunities for High School students at Racine Unified to earn college credits. In 2019, University of Wisconsin - Parkside achieved a 44% 6-year graduation rate after averaging 25% for its first 40 years of existence (the post-pandemic rate is 40% with a goal of 50% by 2025).

Still, Higher Expectations, University of Wisconsin - Parkside, Racine Unified, Kenosha Unified School District, Gateway Technical College, Carthage College, and Building our Future are aware that systems continue to fail students, particularly students of color, when we see the region's post-secondary enrollment rates. This is a nationwide trend. Our community wants to be at the forefront of creating solutions that lift up all students to earn post-secondary degrees and enter into family-sustaining careers. This work has phased into an Equitable Enrollment Collaborative.

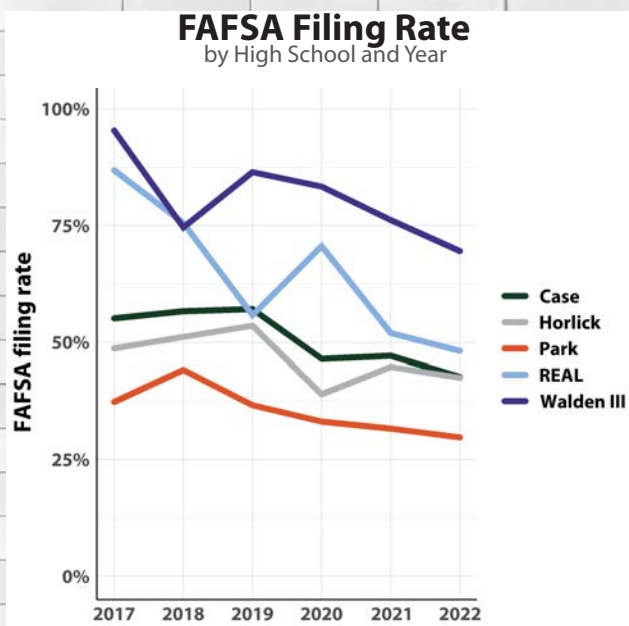
The initial goals of the Equitable Enrollment Collaborative are to increase the number of high school completers in our region enrolling in a post-secondary program the first fall after graduation from 25% to the national average of 62% by 2028, and eliminate persistent equity gaps in post-secondary enrollment by 2030. While there is a solid understanding of the data and results, in order to move the needle on this youth voice from the community must be involved to help us better understand the barriers they are facing to enrollment and completion.

We have learned, through surveying more than 400 current Racine Unified students in the Spring of 2023, that only 60% of students know about the FAFSA and 56% indicated having a plan to complete it. Further adding insights into student feedback, we learned that the majority of survey respondents indicated that they did want to or planned to go to college. Alongside this qualitative data, we also see that across all races, first-fall post-secondary enrollment rates for Racine Unified graduates are at 20-25%. This highlights a clear need for systems-level change.

Racine Unified is already undertaking work to improve pathways to post-secondary enrollment by emphasizing three pathways within the academies: apprenticeships, two-year degrees, and four-year degrees. We are beginning to work with students next year to collaborate on system-transforming initiatives to increase Racine Unified's college-going narrative for students, so that all students can see a clear pathway to some kind of post-secondary education after high school.

“Being invited to the table and having a voice in bridging the gap between secondary and post-secondary educational experiences strengthens our collective resolve to ensure that more students not only have access to attend a post-secondary institution but also have the necessary support structures to succeed.”

**- Jody Bloyer, Chief of Schools,
Racine Unified School District**



COMMUNITY ORGANIZING 15



Over the past 3 years, we've been working on increasing the number of community members who have influence over decisions that directly impact them. We know that those closest to the challenges in our systems are often the ones closest to the solution to overcoming those challenges. Our partners, institutions, and organizational leaders, even with the best of intentions, don't always know the depths of a challenge.

We've been working to uplift community voices in decision-making by bringing more community members into our work. Our team has learned a lot of valuable lessons over the past few years - either from doing things that worked, or keeping a growth mindset when things didn't go as planned.

To measure our team's progress in community engagement, we used a community engagement spectrum from StriveTogether. This spectrum measures engagement in six categories, explained below.

We are proud of the progress we have made over the past years and are determined to continue to deepen and strengthen our engagement with the community. We are working to create more opportunities for youth to collaborate and shift power within our work, and are actively creating opportunities for community members to serve on a community leadership board and govern our operations.



Community Engagement Spectrum

Ignore

There is no community engagement

Inform

Information is provided to the community

Consult

Feedback is gathered from community on analysis, issues, alternatives, and decisions through focus groups or surveys

Involve

Concerns and aspirations from community are considered and understood

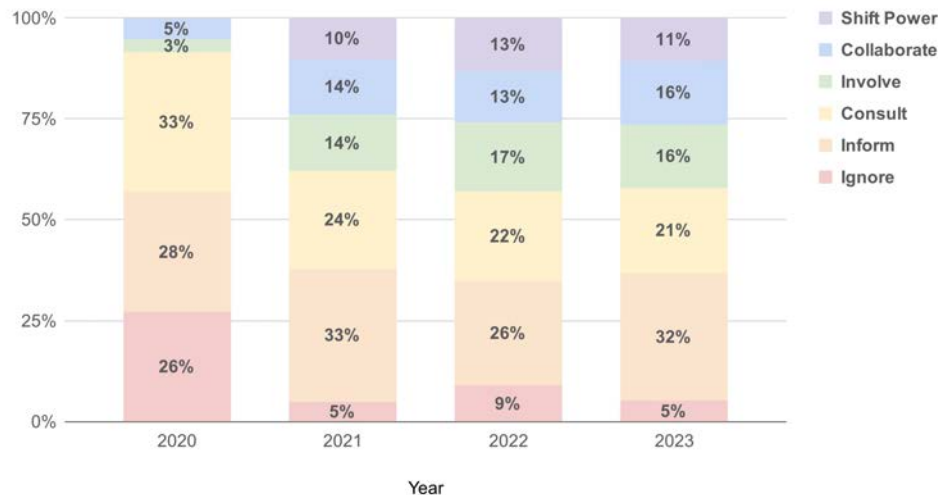
Collaborate

Community is seen as a partner in each aspect of decision-making

Shift Power

The final decision-making power is in the hands of the community

Higher Expectations Community Engagement Activities by Year



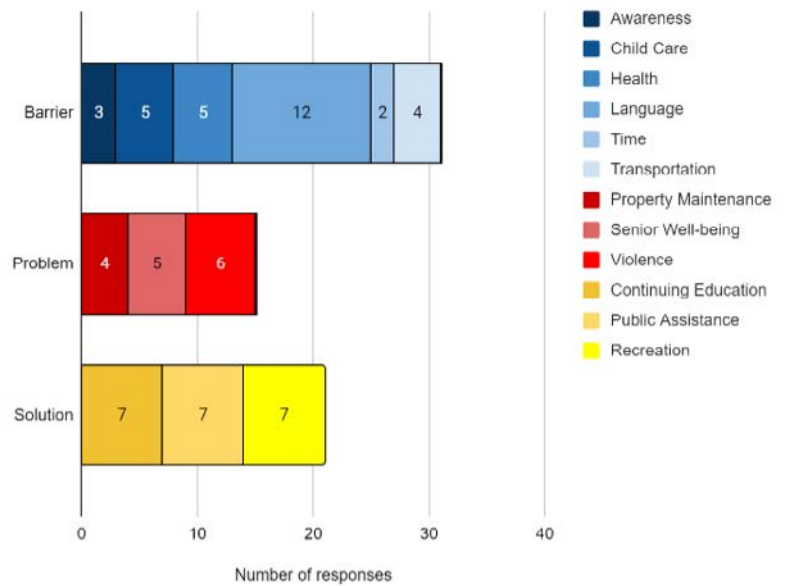
Higher Expectations of Racine County aims to align community members with efforts that impact their lives. We want those most impacted by systems that are not working to lead in creating solutions to transform those systems.

Higher Expectations created Community Fellow positions as a strategy to empower more community members to do this work. Community Fellows initiate and facilitate conversations with community members with support from the Higher Expectations team. The purpose of this role is to further understand where systems could change to most impact Racine families.

This year, one Community Fellow, Emma Martinez, surveyed the Mead St. Lakeside Community Oriented Policing (COP) House area. Here, we learned that improvements could be made in their monthly foodrive.

Emma attended these food drives as a local community member and volunteer and recognized points of interest to bring back to the Higher Expectations team. To learn more, Higher Expectations worked alongside Emma to create a survey and go door-to-door to better understand the needs of community members. The results of that survey highlighted that awareness, childcare, health concerns, and time conflicts were key barriers to participating in the food drive. Several of the surveys indicated that they had not known about the food drive happening in their community. Others indicated they did not have reliable transportation to get to and from the food drive, and indicated they would benefit from the ability to get the food boxes delivered to their home.

Mead St. Lakeside COP House Food Drive Barriers, Problems, and Solutions Survey



“As a community fellow, the importance of my role is imperative when considering the needs, wants and desires within the community. I feel as though my role fits well into the community as I do not display myself as a person in a higher position or status, but rather a vessel or a voice willing to communicate on behalf of the community.”

**- Emma Martinez
2023 Community Fellow**



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OUR STAFF



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Co-Executive Director

Celeste Heritz

Fundraising & Operations Coordinator

Kristin Jenders

Project & Facilitation Manager

Leanna Jones

Community Engagement Manager

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Co-Executive Director

Jeff Neubauer

Co-Executive Director

DeAnn Possehl

Post-Secondary Network Manager

Zy Strowder

Student Engagement Associate

Dr. Ben Taft

Data Impact Manager

LEADERSHIP TABLE 18

**Brian Agen**

VP of Human Resources
Modine Manufacturing

John Batten*

President & CEO
Twin Disc

Jonathan Delegrave*

Racine County Executive

Joe Dillon

President
InSinkErator at Whirlpool

Scott Menke

Interim Chancellor
UW-Parkside

Brian French

Vice President
CNH Industrial

Soren Gajewski

Interim Superintendent
Racine Unified School District

Ali Haigh*

President & CEO
United Way of Racine County

Jackie Hallberg

President & CEO
Goodwill Industries of
Southeastern Wisconsin

Karen Hanson

VP/Chief Nursing Officer
Aurora Medical Center

Mario Martinez

Marz Insurance

Cory Mason

Mayor
City of Racine

Kristin McManmon*

CEO, Milwaukee South/Racine Market
Ascension

Matt Montemurro*

President/CEO
Racine Area Manufacturers and Commerce

Tom Moore

Senior Vice President
Johnson Financial Group

Dr. Ritu Raju

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