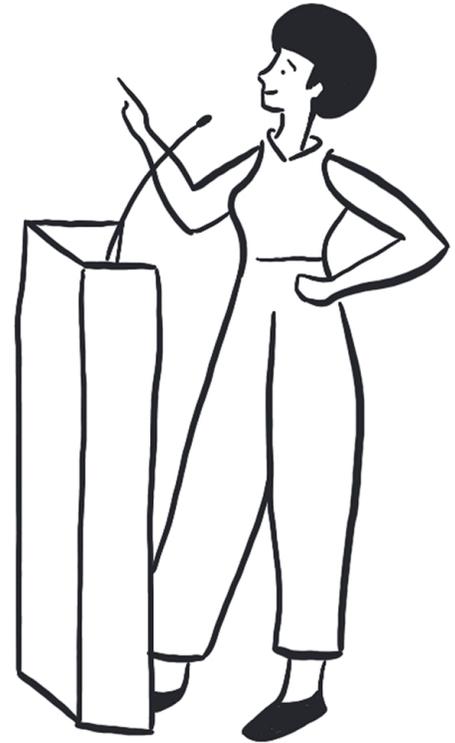


# The Playbook for Community Leaders

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can **change the world.**” -- Margaret Mead



Individuals and institutions in every community can have a transformational impact on students, teachers and schools. Using their significant professional and social influence, community leaders can elevate the conversation, bring people together and enact changes with the needs of children in mind. Students of today are the future leaders and change agents of our communities of the future. Following are ideas and actions designed for individuals as well as community and faith-based organizations, large and small.

# Ideas to Help You Support Students, Teachers and Schools

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## Idea #1:

### Elevate education as the #1 priority to strengthen communities.

Strong communities are always built on a foundation that includes a strong education. Community leaders need to use their influence to elevate the conversation and create change. Here are some ideas to inspire your action.

#### TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Be Active - Meet your superintendent, school board members, and principals, and invite them to present to your group. Upon developing those relationships, you can identify specific education needs and opportunities in your community.
- ❑ Be Heard - Let your voice be heard about education in your community, whether it be a regular column in your local newspaper, actively posting/sharing educational content on social media or presenting at a school board meeting.
- ❑ Be Seen - Be seen at school events. Schools host Back-to-School events and functions during the year. You can get the word about about what you do and let others know that you are committed to helping schools and students.
- ❑ Sponsor a teacher recognition program. In high-poverty schools that lack a PTO or PTA, sponsoring teacher recognition programs is a very real need.

## Idea #2:

# Encourage and incentivize your “circles” to Invest in Education.

There are so many ways to “invest” in the schools in your community. What matters is that you provide the incentives to allow your organization’s members to spend time supporting education.

## TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Encourage Targeted Service - Encourage your organization's members to serve on school boards, School Improvement Councils, or other school or district committees. School Improvement Councils are mandated by law to include community members but many struggle to find them!
- ❑ Celebrate Champions - Recognize those within your organization that volunteer their time with children and schools. Caring adults and mentors can make a significant impact in the lives of children.
- ❑ Schools are always looking for mentors, tutors and reading buddies to work with students in school. Young people cannot have ENOUGH caring adults in their lives!
- ❑ Leverage Your Members' Skills - Organize a career shadowing day by pairing students with community leaders. Or provide members (perhaps, retired business leaders) to be career mentors to high school students.
- ❑ Invest in The Fundamentals - Sponsor a book fair for students in summer reading camps, allowing students to choose their own books to build their own personal libraries. All school districts have to provide summer reading camps for students who struggle in reading.
- ❑ Show Students a Path Forward - Work within your organization and circles or organize a character education event to showcase role models within your community who exhibit character traits in the Profile of the SC Graduate (honor, integrity, perseverance, etc.)
- ❑ Foster Real World Experience - Leverage your organization or network to partner with a school or class to conduct a community service project, which would allow students to apply academic skills to address a real-world need.

## Idea #3:

# Create Exponential Change Through Partnerships.

There is strength in numbers! Creating strong collaborations that lead to higher impact is essential if we are to fix education. There are always people in communities trying to do work. When they join together, they can make an even bigger impact. Be a dot connector. Be a force multiplier.

## TAKE ACTION BY

- ❑ Connect the “Skills Building” Dots - Schools are less connected to outside organizations than you think. Leverage your influence/network to pair schools with organizations or employers to foster deeper relationships and tangible programs (like job shadows, internships and work study programs) that will help students hone the skills needed to win in the future. Talk to your local schools to see what they’re looking for.
- ❑ Create Non-Traditional Learning Opportunities - Partner with local attractions (parks, museums, sports teams, etc.) and schools to sponsor field trips during the school year or summer, offering one-of-a-kind experiences to children. In high-poverty schools, students (or the schools themselves) may not have the financial resources to pay for field trips, and these students often haven’t visited local attractions in their own communities!
- ❑ Be a Force Multiplier - Reach out to like-minded organizations to form broader partnerships to 10X your organization’s school supply drive during the summer for local elementary and middle school families.
- ❑ Improve The “Learning” Experience - Bring together nonprofits, home improvement stores and schools (even students) to take on beautification and learning projects like building experimental gardens, creating outdoor learning spaces and other beautification needs. Never underestimate the power of the “environment” in a child’s learning process.