Austin will be recognized as a leader in education with a culture of educational excellence, cradle to career, embraced in every aspect of our community.
Austin is a community blessed with an innovative spirit and commitment to education. In the summer of 2014 Austin Aspires was created to bring to life the work of the Education Leaders Committee from Vision 2020. Austin Aspires provides the backbone support for using the collective impact model to seek improved educational outcomes in our community. After seeking feedback from over 1000 community members, our Leadership Table determined five areas of focus for our shared work in the community. Now dedicated community members are working together to design and implement strategies to achieve these aspirational goals:

- All learners will be ready for kindergarten.
- All learners will be challenged to achieve their academic potential.
- Our community will support and enhance parents and mentors in their role as the primary influencer of our learners.
- Our community will provide equal access to opportunities which encourage our learners to explore areas of personal interest and prepare for post-secondary education or career.
- Our community will address social, emotional, mental and physical barriers to success for all learners.

Austin Aspires is a member of the StriveTogether Network. Using their framework, we are committed to measurable improvement on a core set of student outcomes. The StriveTogether theory of action provides a continuum of quality benchmarks that will guide the implementation of our work. StriveTogether also provides proven strategies and powerful examples from other communities that are changing their practices and significantly improving outcomes.

This work will be challenging and will take time. I am so encouraged by the engagement from our community and its willingness to do whatever it takes to support all learners. Together we can make a difference in the lives of all children and families in Austin.

We would love to have you collaborate with us! Come join our team!

Sincerely,

Jennifer Lawhead
Executive Director
lawhead@austinaspires.org
www.austinaspires.org
Austin Aspires will bring together community resources and families to challenge all learners to seek excellence and equip them to achieve results through shared community vision, evidence-based decision making, collaborative action, and investment and sustainability.

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“Austin Aspires and its quest to improve education in our community is a noble mission we fully support and are honored to be part of. As scientists we know that education is the foundation to inspire thinking and action that will improve our world and our lives. We’re thankful for Austin Aspires as it expands the education experience for all to benefit our citizens, our businesses, and our organizations.”

**Dr. Zigang Dong,**
**Executive Director**
The Hormel Institute University of Minnesota
Community Initiative

In 2011 a group of community leaders wanted to learn more about positive changes being made in communities in our region. They saw an opportunity for Austin to intentionally chart a course for the future asking an important question: What kind of community do we want to be? After collecting over 4000 submissions in answer to this question, 10 vision statements were crafted to reflect ambitious, yet achievable goals for Austin. Education was identified as one of these goal areas, and the Education Leaders Committee was formed. This team did research looking for educational innovations that “work”. They found StriveTogether and the collective impact model of improving outcomes for a community.

Austin Aspires was formed in 2014 to meet the goals of Vision 2020’s Education Leaders. Austin Aspires is a local non-profit agency using collective impact to effect education in our community. Our vision is that “Austin will be recognized as a leader in education, with a culture of educational excellence, cradle to career, embraced in every aspect of our community.”

Austin Aspires staff conducted over 60 focus groups meeting with over 1000 community members. The data gathered during these focus groups was then analyzed by community leaders from education, business, philanthropy, government agencies and faith communities to determine the five areas of focus (goals) for our work together in Austin.

All learners will be ready for kindergarten.

All learners will be challenged to achieve their academic potential.

Our community will support and enhance parents and mentors in their role as the primary influencer of our learners.

Our community will provide equal access to opportunities which encourage our learners to explore areas of personal interest and prepare for post-secondary education or career.

Our community will address social, emotional, mental and physical barriers to success for all learners.

“T he goals are aspirational. It is encouraging to observe and experience genuine collaboration across many sectors - K-12, businesses, higher education and community members; young and adults. On behalf of Riverland Community College students, employees and friends, I applaud the action steps and the evidence-based approach taken by Austin Aspires. You have Riverland’s full support.”

Dr. Adenuga Atewologun,
President/Administrator
Riverland Community College
Collective Impact

Austin Aspires is a local coalition that brings together schools, community organizations, government agencies, businesses and philanthropic foundations. As a collective group we are holding ourselves accountable to measurable improvement on a core set of student outcomes. Working together, we will create a community where all children thrive. We are moving from individual impact where each organization is working on a discrete set of goals in isolation, to shared ideas and aspirations for our community, to collaborative action rooted in shared responsibility and accountability.

In our efforts to achieve better outcomes for all children in our community we have committed to collective impact. Therefore we will:

Measure What Matters
Our partners have built a common agenda around five major milestones along the education continuum. We use timely and accurate community-wide data to drive our work.

Identify Effective Practices
In addition to using data, we look at effective practices in our community. We select best strategies moving forward by identifying what is working and what best practices should be implemented across the community.

“Education is such a key ingredient in today’s world. To maximize each person’s potential, but continually striving to give access and find better ways to grow is so very important. Austin Aspires is an advocate for this... such a valuable part of our community.”

Mr. Dan Goshorn
Store Director
Hy-Vee

“Austin works to be a better place for kids to grow. Austin Aspires is working to be a place that grows better kids.”

Mr. Tedd Maxfield
Executive Director
YMCA
Our Community

Austin, Minnesota is found in the south-central part of the state. It is located on the Cedar River and serves as the county seat of Mower County at the juncture of US 218 and Interstate 90.

Community

Population 24,563
Persons under 18 25.6%

High School Graduate 85.4%
BA or Higher 20.9%

Median Income $42,268
Unemployment Rate 2.7%
Poverty 15.9%

White 77.4%
Hispanic/Latino 15.4%
Black/African American 3%
Asian 2.4%

School

Free & Reduced Lunch 55.4%
Special Education Students 15.6%

Languages Spoken in Our Schools 50+
English Language Learners 30.7%
Non-White Students 44.7%

*Austin Public Schools only
I work with Austin Aspires, because preparing and equipping the next generation of our workforce is an important issue to me. I like the collaborative impact that we can achieve by partnering with the schools, as well as local businesses. Austin Aspires is a great way to get people out of their silos, and collaborate on ideas that will benefit our students as well as our community.

Mr. Mike Postma, Placement Specialist
Workforce Development
# Board of Directors

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>LeeAnn Ettinger*</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td>Chad Sayles</td>
<td>Vice President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jana Haynes</td>
<td>Secretary Treasurer</td>
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<td>John Engelstad</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary / Treasurer</td>
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<td>Gema Alvarado</td>
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<td>Craig Johnson</td>
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<td>Jill Hart</td>
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*Action Team Member

- Sets policy
- Monitors operations
- Public figure for the organization
One of the things I value most from our Action Team is the chance to communicate what is going on in all our various institutions. I see great potential for more partnerships and cooperation in town, based on the work done in these groups.

Ms. Julie Clinefelter, Director
Austin Public Library
Staff

Serve as backbone organization providing
- Communication
- Infrastructure
- Data management

Convene partners
- Facilitation
- Build action plans to move outcomes
- Mobilize the community
- Build shared ownership

Student Advisory Board

60+ Students from Austin and Pacelli High Schools
- Provide insight into the needs of students
- Assume personal commitment to educational excellence

“I participate on the Student Advisory Board, so I can voice my opinion on topics involving our community. As a student, athlete, and community member, I see and hear a lot about Austin and what needs changing and what has been improved. Overall, I like to be a voice for my classmates to make Austin a better place.”

Miss Morgan Hose, Student
Austin High School

Jennifer Lawhead
Executive Director

Susan Maus
Program Coordinator
Action Team Members

- Establish measures and indicators
- Use data to formulate action plans

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kindergarten Readiness</th>
<th>Academic Potential</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Amy Baskin</td>
<td>Ms. Mona Bachmeier</td>
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<td>Ms. Murielle Atewologun</td>
<td>Ms. Jessica Carlson</td>
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<td>Mr. Jason Baskin</td>
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<td>Ms. Kristi Beckman</td>
<td>Ms. Edwina Harder</td>
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<td>Ms. Shelly Buttshaw</td>
<td>Ms. Catherine Haslag</td>
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<td>Ms. Jessica Cabeen</td>
<td>Dr. Ted Hinchcliffe</td>
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<td>Ms. Angie Taylor</td>
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<th>Parents and Mentors</th>
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<td>Ms. Katie Baskin</td>
<td>Ms. Cheryl Collins</td>
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<td>Ms. Cassie Boettcher</td>
<td>Ms. Sheri Dankert</td>
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<td>Ms. Julie Clinefelter</td>
<td>Ms. Taylor Daubenberger</td>
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<td>Ms. Laura Helle</td>
<td>Mr. David Krenz</td>
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<td>Ms. Sandy Anderson</td>
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<td>Ms. Mary Harders</td>
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<td>Mr. Dewey Schara</td>
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<td>Ms. Jennifer Weibrand</td>
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Outcomes

Austin Aspires will report community-wide data representing students in our public and private school systems. The students were asked how often they experienced the five elements of developmental relationships at home. These student responses are found below.

Glossary of Terms:

Kindergarten Assessment - Screening tool used at the start of Kindergarten to identify present levels of performance related to specific academic outcomes.

NWEA/Scantron - Achievement assessments used to measure each student's progress or growth in school, in language arts, and mathematics. Scores are reported using “growth” which is a method for measuring academic progress a student makes between two points in time.

REACH - Students in grades 5, 7, and 9 took the REACH survey in the 2016-2017 school year. Students were asked how often they experienced the five elements of developmental relationships at home. These student responses are found below.

ACT - The ACT college readiness assessment is a standardized test for high school achievement and college admissions in the United States. The average ACT score in Minnesota in 2016 was 21.7.

4- and 6-year HS Graduation Rates - Students completing the required number of credits and specific coursework in four and six years.

2-year Persistence Rates - Percent of high school graduates starting college and persisting or graduating in 2 years.

Attendance Rates - Percent of students attending school on average.

Reach Student Survey Regarding Youth-Parent Relationships

How often do your parents or caregivers:

Express Care 82.9%  Challenge Growth 82.8%  Provide Support 69.6%  Share Power 66.9%  Expand Possibilities 41.2%

* APS data only
Next Steps

Each Action Team is comprised of community members who view each aspirational goal from a different perspective. We have parents, educators, business professionals, advocates and interested citizens on these teams. Using the continuous improvement model, we have identified strategies to achieve our aspirational goals. Read below about each team, their long-term measures, the data that guides their work, strategies implemented thus far and plans for the future.

All Learners Will Be Ready For Kindergarten

**Long-term Measure**
- Kindergarten Assessment

**Guiding Data**
- Consistent community-wide preschool data collection using a common tool
- Mother Goose Time Assessments

**Strategies in Place**
- Community-wide kindergarten readiness objectives
- Objectives published and printed in English and Spanish (funded by United Way of Mower County) titled “Ready, Set, Go!”
- 1850 “Ready Set Go!” booklets distributed to 25 locations in 2017
- Community messaging about kindergarten readiness skills at summer lunch

**Future Plans**
- 700 kindergarten readiness kits distributed to children completing early childhood screening (funded by First United Methodist Church of Austin)
- Community messaging about kindergarten readiness objectives
- Free curriculum for local in-home child care providers from Mother Goose Time
- Development of parent training opportunities around Kindergarten readiness (funding provided by SMIF Foundation)
It is true that education is a cornerstone of communities in Minnesota but in Austin the community is going well beyond being proud of its schools to actively creating a partnership with their schools. With Austin Aspires, individuals, businesses, corporations, and public organizations are banding together to work alongside our schools to provide educational opportunities as well as finances that will give our children experiences that will help them grow, develop and learn. These experiences will give children the hands-on opportunities that are so important as each child makes their connections to school. These experiences are what truly engage our children in life and learning.

Mr. David Krenz, Superintendent Austin Public Schools

All learners will be challenged to achieve their academic potential

Long-term Measures
- Third grade reading
- Eighth grade math
- ACT Scores

Guiding Data
- Search Institute’s REACH Survey
- Feedback from Student Advisory Board

Strategies Thus Far
- Development of Quality Program Profile used to assess programming
- Created a network of organizations that serve youth with the goal of improving outcomes
- Development of Austin Activities for Youth document to promote community engagement
- Promotion of education through monthly Herald articles

Future Plans
- Local non-profits using Quality Program Profile as a resource
- Identifying goals related to the topic of student engagement and high academic achievement for all learners
- Printing and distribution of Austin Activities for Youth documents

I have been volunteering as a member of an Action Team for approximately two years. It has been enlightening to discuss all the layers and factors that influence a child’s ability to learn. The opportunity to talk and work with other educators and parents has shown me this is a much more complex matter than I thought. I am grateful to be a part of this team, learn more about how to support Austin learners, and contribute to my community in a positive manner.

Ms. Catherine Haslag
Chemistry Faculty, Riverland Community College
Project Director, Science Fair Mentoring Project
Our community will provide equal access to opportunities which encourage our learners to explore areas of personal interest and prepare for post-secondary education or career.

**Long-term Measures**
- ACT Scores
- 4 and 6-year High School Graduation Rates
- 2-year Post High School College Persistence Rates

**Guiding Data**
- Search Institute’s REACH Survey
- AHS/Pacelli Graduate Focus Group Data
- Student Advisory Board Feedback
- Job Shadowing Feedback (Student and Host)

**Strategies Thus Far**
- Creation of job shadowing network for sophomores
- Development of “Adulting: The Manual” as a resource for students and families

**Future Plans**
- Expansion of job shadowing network (partially funded by the Blandin Foundation)
- Printing and distribution of “Adulting: The Manual”

“I joined the Post-Secondary Education and Career Action team to assist in creating multiple avenues for our students. I work with 7th and 8th grade students throughout the day and know they have many aspirations. This committee’s work with job shadowing and the skills needed to be an independent adult, are key steps in creating a career orientated community.”

**Mr. Jason Senne,**
Principal
Austin Public Schools

“I know I want to be an engineer, but I don’t know the exact type. I thought about mechanical, electrical, and even agricultural engineering; but never civil engineering, until I shadowed Mr. Lang. Mr. Lang is a professional civil engineer working for the City of Austin. He not only informed us what it was like to be a civil engineer, but actually showed us the places he is responsible for. The decision still isn’t set in stone, but I am now open to the possibility of becoming a civil engineer.”

**Kayla Christopherson, Pacelli**
PARENTS AND MENTORS

Our community will support and enhance parents and mentors in their role as primary influencers of our learners.

“Create a cultural norm of continuously improving our wide, varied, and valuable parenting skills. ALL parents. ALL communities. ALL the time.”

Long-term Measure
- Search Institute’s REACH Student Survey

Guiding Data
- Search Institute’s REACH Student Survey
- Student Advisory Board Feedback
- Parent-to-Parent Session Feedback

Strategies Thus Far
- Piloting of parent/child relationship questions with REACH Survey
- Parent-to-Parent monthly sessions on topics of need
- Table tents at free summer breakfast and lunch with parenting tips
- Social media messaging about issues in parenting #realparenting

Future Plans
- Evaluate and expand Parent-to-Parent model of peer coaching
- Promote existing parenting information in the community
- Exploration of parent education models that are welcoming to all

“I participate on an Austin Aspires Action Team because I imagine a world where parents are engaged in purposeful parenting from conception on up through the ages. I imagine a community that promotes the purposeful parenting through the ages. When families are healthy, communities prosper. My hope is to reach all parents with tools and guides that they can use to raise their children. I hope we can create information that not only supports parents to meet their child’s basic needs (food, clothing, shelter) but all of their needs including social and emotional needs.”

Ms. Cassie Boettcher, Parent Educator
Austin Public Schools
Our community will address social, emotional, mental and physical barriers to success for all learners.

**Long-term Measures**
- Search Institute's REACH Student Survey
- Attendance Data

**Guiding Data**
- Search Institute's REACH Student Survey
- Feedback from Student Advisory Board

**Strategies Thus Far**
- Attendance awareness month in September 2017
- Gathering stories of resilience to share with local youth
- Development of Bright Spots award in collaboration with Austin Human Rights Commission
- Attendance information shared through providers at Mayo Clinic Health System

**Future Plans**
- Pilot of parent communication tool to decrease chronic absence
- Use stories of resilience to inspire local youth
- Implementation of Bright Spots award

“A “Bright Spots” recipient is a person who is:
- Compassionate and available
- Supportive and inspiring
- Welcoming and approachable
More than 60 community partnerships from 32 states and Washington, D.C., are working throughout the country to connect cross-sector leaders around a common vision: improving educational outcomes for students.

Austin Aspires is part of this nationwide movement that connects more than 9,600 organizations to impact more than 8.2 million students as a member of this StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network.

As part of the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, Austin Aspires has access to resources and tools designed to help communities implement StriveTogether's nationally recognized cradle to career collective impact approach, known as the Theory of Action. Austin Aspires now also has a connection with communities across the country to share knowledge and learn from successes, failures and insights as each community works to align resources around improving education outcomes.

“Across the country, Network members are improving student-level outcomes through StriveTogether’s collective impact method,” StriveTogether Managing Director Jeff Edmondson said. “Each of these communities, and the Network as a whole, are committed to putting the child at the center of their work.”

To join the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, Austin Aspires met a set of quality benchmarks that indicate it has engaged a cross-sector group around a common education vision. Austin Aspires also demonstrated its ability to support the creation of a sustainable infrastructure to drive change, and committed to being accountable for improving an identified set of academic outcomes.

StriveTogether, a subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, works with communities nationwide to help them create a civic infrastructure that unites stakeholders around shared goals, measures and results in education, supporting the success of every child, cradle to career. Communities implementing the StriveTogether framework have seen dramatic improvements in kindergarten readiness, standardized test results and college retention.

“Austin Aspires Action Teams are a great way to collaboratively create real and meaningful change in our community. You work with fellow energetic community members to identify and create real solutions, and the scorecarding process ensures that those solutions will make a difference.”

Mr. Jason Baskin, Chair
Human Rights Commission
Our partners support, advocate, and facilitate implementation of collective impact in our community. Members include community leaders from businesses, philanthropy, faith communities, non-profit agencies, and education.
Call to Action

The youth of Austin need you! The success of our work depends on the commitment of our community to our young people. We hope you will join in our work to achieve our vision of “educational excellence” for all in our community.

Ways you can engage in our shared work:

• Join an action team
• Host a job shadow student
• Follow us on social media
• Fund an Austin Aspires initiative
• Volunteer for special projects
• Create a welcoming environment for young people

Stay Connected:

www.austinaspires.org
507.437.0920
lawhead@austinaspires.org