PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE ILLINOIS 60 BY 25 NETWORK IMPACT REPORT

February 2020

HPEC

Rockford

NECSS

Evanston

MORE

Aurora P2P

Thrive Chicago

Enlace Chicago

NCI/Starved Rock

OAI/Rich Township District 227

Peoria P2P

McLean County

Vermilion County

Sangamon County

Vandalia ONE

East Side Aligned
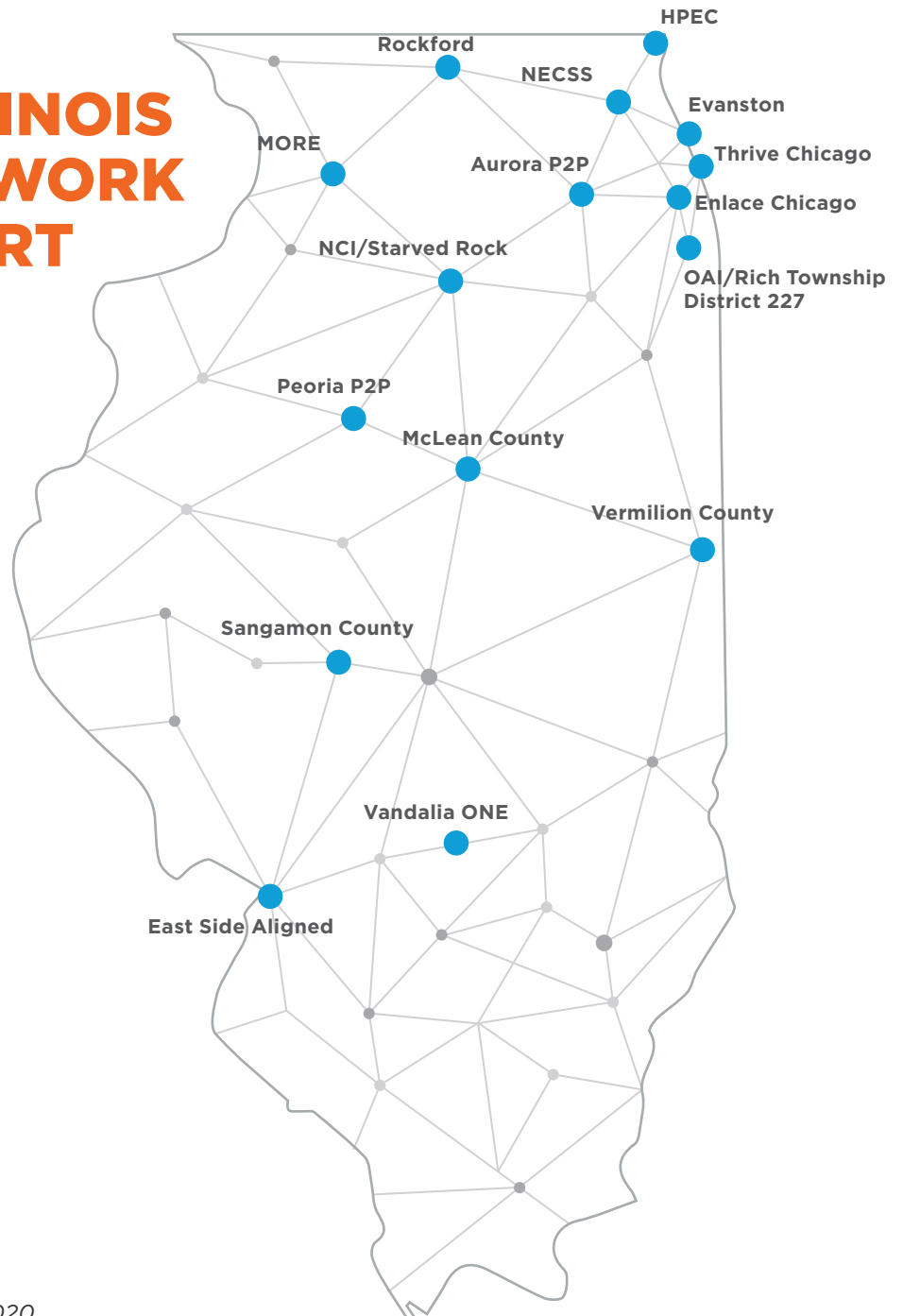
Background

Today, the majority of employers say they need employees with some postsecondary education. However, in 2020 only 50.1% of Illinois residents have a high-quality college degree or postsecondary credential.[1]

To address this disconnect, in 2009 the Illinois P-20 Council established a goal for Illinois to increase the number of adults with high-quality college degrees and postsecondary credentials to 60% by the year 2025. While the P-20 Council and State agencies monitor this goal and focus on State policy to support it, State policy alone will not drive the local efforts needed to ensure students seamlessly progress to and through postsecondary and into the workforce.

Recognizing the emergence of local initiatives across Illinois to increase postsecondary attainment and the lack of a statewide support infrastructure, the Illinois 60 by 25 Network was launched in 2013 by three Network Organizers [Advance Illinois, Education Systems Center at Northern Illinois University (EdSystems), and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC)]. The goal of the Network is to support communities to increase meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment and civic engagement. Network Organizers support the Network by hosting an annual convening, providing technical assistance, sharing best practices, and connecting local community efforts to State policy to advance the 60 by 25 goal. Network Organizers also provide funds to communities through mini-grants, and have developed the Cradle to Career Dashboard (60by25.org/dashboard) to help communities analyze regional data on education and workforce system characteristics. Network Organizers have also established a Guiding Team comprised of diverse stakeholders to help inform the Network.
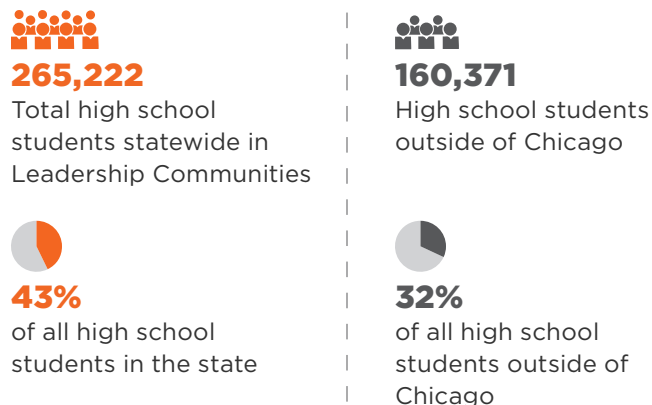
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[1] Lumina Foundation

ILLINOIS 60 BY 25 NETWORK LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES

Since 2015, the Network Organizers have recognized communities with systems in place to drive meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment as 60 by 25 Network Leadership Communities. These Leadership Communities have demonstrated that they have the partnerships, areas of focus, and intermediary organizations in place to work towards this goal. They are willing to capture and use data for continuous improvement, have a plan to implement key strategies for increasing meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment, and engage in peer-to-peer learning through the Network. To date, 16 communities have applied to the Network Organizers for, and received this designation.

Current Leadership Communities include:

- _Aurora Regional Pathways to Prosperity_
- _East Side Aligned_
- _Enlace Chicago_
- _Evanston_
- _Health Professions Education Consortium (HPEC) of Lake County_
- _Making Opportunities Real for Everyone (MORE) in the Mississippi and Rock River Region_
- _McLean County_
- _NCI/Starved Rock Region_
- _Northwest Educational Council for Student Success (NECSS)_
- _OAI/Rich Township District 227_
- _Peoria Pathways to Prosperity_
- _Rockford_
- _Sangamon County Continuum of Learning_
- _Thrive Chicago_
- _Vandalia ONE_
- _Vermilion County_

Percentage of Illinois Students in 60 by 25 Network Leadership Communities:

265,222
Total high school students statewide in Leadership Communities

160,371
High school students outside of Chicago

43%
of all high school students in the state

32%
of all high school students outside of Chicago

GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

The goal of this preliminary report is to highlight key findings on strategies used and lessons learned by the Illinois 60 by 25 Network in using a collective impact approach to help communities increase meaningful and equitable postsecondary attainment and civic engagement. The report is intended to both shine a light on the hard work that communities are doing to move the needle on the 60 by 25 goal and to inspire other communities to implement similar strategies.

Information for the report was derived from interviews with representatives from backbone organizations of Illinois 60 by 25 Network Leadership Communities, representatives from the 60 by 25 Network Guiding Team, and a desk review of Illinois 60 by 25 Network collateral material including Leadership Community applications, Leadership Community reports on mini-grants, and a survey completed by diverse stakeholders in Leadership Communities in fall 2019.

Key Preliminary Findings

Communities identified a number of lessons learned through their participation in the Network and important strategies that they are implementing to help move the needle on the 60 by 25 goal. These lessons and strategies provide valuable insights for other communities across the state. Communities also identified a number of challenges and policy barriers to their work. Following are some of the key findings.

Leadership Communities Drive Policy Implementation

Leadership Communities serve as the tip of the spear to implement new State policies relating to college and career readiness and postsecondary attainment, and their work helps inform state agencies about challenges related to implementing the policies at a local level. In particular, a focus for the Network has been implementation of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act (pwract.org). The PWR Act was enacted with bipartisan support in 2016 and applies a student-centered and competency-based approach to support Illinois students in preparing for postsecondary education and future careers.

Network Organizers have provided over $500,000 in mini-grants to Leadership Communities to support implementation of two strategies of the PWR Act: College and Career Pathway Endorsements (CCPE) on high school diplomas and transitional math.

COLLEGE AND CAREER PATHWAY ENDORSEMENTS

Endorsements will demonstrate students' readiness for college and careers and completion of instruction and professional learning experiences in a selected career interest area. Nearly 40 high schools in Leadership Communities are implementing CCPE as part of a cohort of over 100 high schools statewide. Implementation of Endorsements in the Leadership Communities has informed the State's development of a web-based system to capture Endorsement information for all districts, and the inclusion of Endorsements in the State's Every Student Succeeds Act Plan, Perkins V Plan, and the State's Model Partnership Agreement for dual credit.

TRANSITIONAL MATH

Transitional math courses in high school reduce math remediation needs by guaranteeing placement in credit-bearing courses in any Illinois community college and an increasing number of universities. Several communities including MORE, NECSS, Rockford, and East St. Louis have been approved or are in the process of receiving approval for portability of these courses with their community colleges. In Township High School District 211, multiple years of transitional math implementation has played a key role in reducing math remediation levels from 25% to 17% over the past five years. In East St. Louis District 189, 28 high school students enrolled in transitional math classes in partnership with

Southwestern Community College in school year 2018-2019 and the district intends to grow the cohort. These Leadership Communities have played an important role providing a foundation for statewide scaling, as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) have now adopted a statewide implementation plan for all school districts to implement transitional math beginning no later than school year 2021-2022.

PaCE AND COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

Although not funded through the Network, Leadership Communities are also implementing the Postsecondary and Career Expectations (PaCE) Framework and Competency-Based Education pilot strategies outlined in the PWR Act. ISAC and ISBE provide technical assistance to communities for these efforts.

Using a Collective Impact Model is Deepening and Validating Collaboration

Collective impact provides an approach for key actors from different sectors to work together on a common agenda to solve complex social problems. In the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago, using collective impact re-affirmed the existing collaborative structure and strengthened their regional approach. In McLean County, using the approach allowed them to set a common agenda and organize previously fragmented efforts, which has helped them develop a short- and long-term strategic plan and begin developing a shared measurement system. For OAI in the South Suburbs of Chicago, collective impact prompted them to support coordinated action and strengthen relationships between employers and high schools.

The Network is a Valuable Community of Practice

Since the Network's inception, Network Organizers have provided an annual meeting, targeted technical assistance and connected communities to one another for peer-to-peer learning. 87% of Leadership Community respondents to a survey in fall 2019 noted that these opportunities are tremendously valuable. For example, Peoria noted that visiting District 214 in the Northwest Suburbs of Chicago helped them understand how to sequence their career pathways and they used that information to inform the Peoria Public Schools pathways curriculum. Several years later, they are now working to implement College and Career Pathway Endorsements.

### "It Takes a Village" – Cross-Sector Collaboration Spurs Innovation

Communities have developed partnerships to offer a number of complementary supports to students as they work towards the 60 by 25 goal. For example, East St. Louis District 189 and Vandalia ONE both highlighted the importance of offering social-emotional supports for students. District 189 has invested in social workers in the last two years, provided trauma-informed workshops to parents and other community members, and trained over 500 teachers in trauma-informed practices. Vandalia ONE has established a resilience team that is working on social-emotional learning to help students and their families. NECSS has organized two conferences on the suburbanization of poverty over the past few years to inform educators and other stakeholders on the changing demographics and strategies to address the needs of students. Enlace Chicago in Little Village has an initiative called Parent Leaders for College, which helps parents understand the college-going culture.

Celebrating Student Outcomes

There are many factors that contribute to a student's success. Network Organizers believe that the strategies and approaches that Leadership Communities are implementing including cross-sector collaboration, developing strong leadership and governance systems, and participating in peer-to-peer learning are some of these factors.

These efforts are bearing fruit and communities are seeing some promising results. For example, for districts that were in the Network in Fall of 2019, community college remedial math enrollment fell 9.1 percentage points in Network districts compared to 6.4 percentage points at the State level. Also, graduation rates in 87 of 98 reporting Network school districts equaled or exceeded the Illinois 4-year graduation rate of 76% for the High School class of 2019. The Network Organizers continue to analyze student outcomes across communities to reflect on disaggregated and trend data to inform action.

Illinois Community Colleges remedial math enrollment fell at both the **Network (-9.1% pts.)** and **State (-6.4% pts.)** levels between the classes of 2013 and 2017.
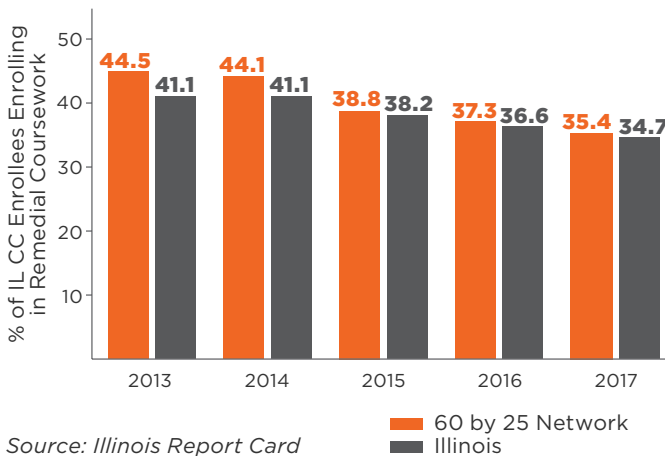
87 of 98 reporting Network school districts equaled or exceeded the IL 4-year graduation rate (76%) for the high school class of 2019.

Source: Illinois Report Card

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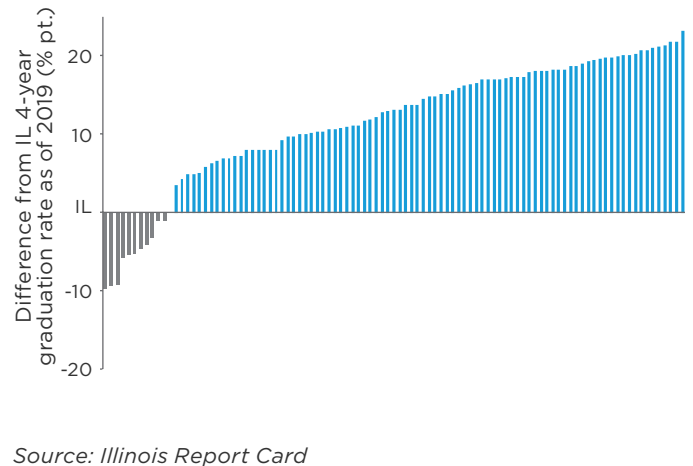
Key Challenges
Identified by Communities

Ensuring Equity and Access

A key tenet of the Network is helping communities to ensure that all students, especially those from underserved and underrepresented populations, receive the supports they need to succeed in school and life. Equity is emphasized in all the mini-grant programs and was the central theme for the 2018 Annual Conference. Also, disaggregated data is provided through the Dashboard. While communities are all focused on access and equity, some have identified this as an ongoing challenge. For example, in McLean County they are struggling with rural equity of opportunity. To address this, they're working with community organizations including the Center for Disability to provide technical assistance on inclusive practices. For NECSS, defining what equity means across the region has been a challenge. To address this, their data committee is analyzing disaggregated data to identify and target student groups of focus.

Evaluation, Time Constraints, and Funding

Communities identified defining shared outcomes, tracking progress, and communicating their work as challenges. Many communities struggle to commit time for collaboration, particularly without dedicated staff to manage these functions. Another common challenge is identifying sustainable funding to support the collective impact work, especially in rural communities.

Key Policy Barriers
Identified by Communities

Educator Shortage, Licensure, and Credentialing

Many communities across the state are facing challenges related to the educator shortage and, not surprisingly, Leadership Communities highlighted this as a barrier as well. East St. Louis and McLean County identified the educator shortage as a major barrier, while NECSS noted that teacher licensure for Career and Technical Education (CTE) creates challenges for their eligibility to teach in funded courses. Peoria noted that the teacher credentialing requirement for early college is a challenge especially for rural schools.

Student Transportation

In instances where students participate in work-based learning experiences that are used for school credit, transportation is a constraint because the school must provide transportation, which is cost-prohibitive. For example, in Peoria there are no opportunities to partner with nonprofits and public transportation is not an option, while in North Chicago they use taxis, which is not scalable.

Leadership Communities Have Valuable Advice for Their Peers

"Focus on outcomes from the beginning - logic modeling can be an effective way to do this."

-Lynne Haeffele, *McLean County*

"Bring people together who have the passion for the work. Be patient, persistent and prioritize."

–Darryl Hogue, *MORE*

"Start small and work your way up as you see success."

–Anisha Grimmett, *Alignment Rockford*

"Have a strong, well-understood Memorandum of Understanding or joint resolution of all the stakeholders. Find a neutral backbone organization that can support the coordination of the work."

–Brent Baker, *Peoria*

"Develop partnerships with the local community college and universities and engage local businesses and government from the beginning."

–Jennifer Garrison, *Vandalia ONE*

Implications for the Network Moving Forward

Based on the Leadership Community survey results, input from Guiding Team members, and the findings of this report, Network Organizers will offer additional supports for communities in 2020 including the following:

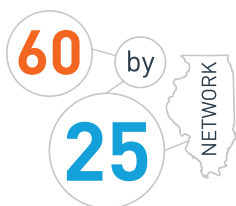| Organize regional meetings to provide peer-to-peer learning opportunities for communities | Build the data capacity of leadership communities, both through the Dashboard and local data workshops | Seek funding and identify policy changes needed to address the educator shortage | Seek funding to support the capacity of backbone organizations, particularly in rural communities | Continue to encourage State agencies and funders to utilize the Network as a key partner in State policy implementation |

As the Illinois 60 by 25 Network continues into its eighth year, the Network Organizers are excited to continue to work with existing Leadership Communities and engage with other Network members and stakeholders to help Illinois progress towards its 60 by 25 goal. The Network continues to provide a structure to connect state policies with efforts at the local level, and to support communities in increasing meaningful and equitable postsecondary opportunities for their residents.

60 by **25** NETWORK

www.60by25.org

Network Organizers

Advance ILLINOIS

Education Systems Center
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

ISAC
Illinois Student Assistance Commission