PUTTING COLLECTIVE IMPACT IN CONTEXT

A Review of the Literature on Local Cross-Sector Collaboration to Improve Education

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ABSTRACT

There has been a broad renewal of interest and investment in local, place-based, cross-sector collaboration as a strategic approach for the improvement of educational outcomes and community development in cities across the United States. These initiatives, many of which have adopted a "collective impact" label, are organized at the school district, city, county, or metropolitan level, and attempt to improve education by promoting collaboration among government, business, and civic sectors; early childhood providers, the K-12 system, and postsecondary education; community-based organizations and private providers of services and supports for young people and their families. They also work to bridge gaps between strategies focused exclusively on schools and those drawing on a wider range of services and programs. Increasingly, these local efforts are being linked into national networks.

To help put this emergent movement into context, this paper (1) provides an orienting conceptual framing to describe the initiatives that are the object of study; (2) discusses a number of relevant historical precursors and underpinnings; (3) situates recent local cross-sector collaborations for education in a contemporary landscape of such efforts and within the context of the debate between those who believe educational improvement requires attention to out-of-school factors and those who believe schools can and must make substantial progress on their own; (4) reviews the research on collective impact initiatives, (5) mines the substantial literature on organizational collaborations of various kinds; (6) and reviews the literature on the politics of local collaboration efforts.

The paper concludes with some preliminary and tentative lessons about the challenges and the possible road forward for local cross-sector collaborations for education. In future reports we will present findings that go more directly to the question of how these contemporary efforts are evolving and identify, where possible, leverage points for increasing their chances of success. Those reports will draw on quantitative analysis of over 180 efforts nationwide, deep case studies in three cities, and more moderately detailed cases studies in an additional five cities that will enable us to consider a broader range of variations and contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a proliferation of new partnerships for education that adopt the term "collective impact." This trend reflects a broad renewal of interest and investment in local, place-based, cross-sector collaboration as a strategic approach for the improvement of educational outcomes and community development in cities across the United States. These initiatives, organized at the school district, city, county, or metropolitan level, are attempting to improve education by promoting collaboration among government, business, and civic sectors; early childhood providers, the K-12 system, and postsecondary education; community-based organizations and private providers of services and supports for young people and their families—and by bridging gaps between strategies focused exclusively on schools and those drawing on a wider range of services and programs.

One prominent example is the Strive Partnership of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky. Launched in 2006 and claiming to have pulled together "more than 300 cross-sector representatives" (Strive Partnership, 2015), it has been labeled a "needle-moving" collaborative (Jolin, Schmitz, & Seldon, 2012) that has "shown that, with the proper organizational structure and a commitment from schools, businesses, philanthropies, nonprofits, and other government agencies, it is possible for a community to counter the effects of poverty and social dysfunction more effectively" (Bathgate, Colvin, & Silva, 2011). Another example, Say Yes Syracuse, begun in 2008, provides students extended-day and summer academic support programs; school-based health centers and socioemotional behavioral supports; SAT preparation, college counseling services, and college scholarships; as well as supporting a parent academy, and legal and financial assistance for families. President Obama, highlighting Say Yes as a national model, told a Syracuse audience in August 2013, "So we're hoping more cities follow your example, because what you're doing is critical not just to Syracuse's future but to America's future" (Say Yes to Education, 2015).

Alignment Nashville is a further illustration of the trend. Concerned about poor school system performance and the sense that local nonprofit efforts were unfocused, the Chamber of Commerce got the ball rolling in 2002, first bringing in a consultant to help formulate a strategy and then coordinating a series of meetings involving 20 local organizations and 12 city leaders that led to Alignment Nashville in 2004.With strong support from the mayor and a leading council member, Alignment Nashville reportedly raises over $1.1 million per year from a combination of local and national public and philanthropic sources (Bouffard & Malone, 2007; Seldon, Jolin, & Schmitz, 2012). One assessment linked the group to a 20% increase in graduation rates from 2002 to 2011, with rates continuing to rise at a more tempered pace the following two years (Chary, Ciccarone, Seeman, & Seldon, 2015).

Although based locally, these collaborative, cross-sector efforts are in fact rippling out widely and, in that sense, might be said to constitute a national movement. The rosters

of local partners vary. Typically, these collaborations include some combination among school districts, institutions of higher education, municipal or county leaders, business and civic organizations, social service providers, and community-based groups. Often they take a cradle-to-career orientation and organize themselves around outcome measures that highlight long-term goals and interim milestones. In some places, these are truly homegrown initiatives, cobbled together over time by local leaders pragmatically wrestling with the challenge of mobilizing coordinated, effective, and sustainable strategies for meeting educational needs. Increasingly, though, it appears that these local efforts are being linked into national networks. The original Strive Partnership, for example, created StriveTogether with 64 community partnerships in 32 states and Washington, DC, as of October 2015. Say Yes to Education, which has school- or neighborhood-based chapters in four cities, extended its district-wide model from Syracuse to Buffalo in 2012 (Say Yes to Education, 2014), and has added one additional site in 2015. There are other networks with similar models as well.

The "collective impact" label that many have adopted for this phenomenon is a term of recent coinage. John Kania and Mark Kramer of consulting firm FSG introduced the term in a remarkably influential article in a 2011 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (SSIR). A web search of document titles containing "collective impact" reveals only sporadic, idiosyncratic, or ordinary language uses of the term prior to 2011 (e.g., "the collective impact of service workers on…"); a search we conducted in Google Scholar yielded eight articles in 2011, 16 in 2012, 21 in 2013, and 40 in 2014. For 2014, searching for "collective impact" on Google Scholar in any field yielded 1,350 hits. As another indicator of the enthusiasm for and rapid expansion of the collective impact framework, a "Collective Impact Forum" established online by FSG and the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions reportedly enrolled over 7,000 subscribers within its first six months (Gose, 2014).

Yet, despite the enthusiasm—indeed, perhaps even because of it—there are reasons for caution. The research literature shows that cross-sector collaborations to improve urban communities and educational outcomes have historically been difficult to pull off and to sustain; they have resulted in some individual successes but few widespread improvements. Various lines of social theorizing have attempted to distill general lessons about why these collaborative efforts are important and why they have proven hard to do. To date, however, the contemporary literature and emergent movement for collective impact have been somewhat disconnected from this historical and theoretical lineage, with the risk that, as George Santayana famously warned, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."[1]

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[1] Some accounts attribute the original quotation to Edmund Burke.

philanthropy that works to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and foster the vitality of the arts for everyone, funded the project as a way to learn more about collective impact, an approach they felt has both promise and many unanswered questions. They developed their initial interest in part because of their work in the after-school-programming sector, where they have seen cities build effective cross-sector "systems" to raise the quality and availability of after-school programs citywide. The Foundation, in October 2011, provided a three-year grant to support Say Yes to Education in Syracuse and currently is supporting the Say Yes initiative in Buffalo.[2] At the same time, it recognized that knowledge of collective impact and other cross-sector collaborations—what they entail, what obstacles they face, and how to overcome them—is limited. It charged the Teachers College research team with conducting a broad synthesis of the relevant literature, scanning the range of large-scale, place-based, cross-sector collaborations to improve education—both initiatives that do and those that do not embrace the collective impact label, and carrying out intense fieldwork to explore the implementation in three case sites, including Say Yes Buffalo.

The Teachers College team comes to the project with long-standing interest in three relevant areas: exploring whether and how providing comprehensive social, health, and academic services can improve education for young people, especially those who are disadvantaged; examining how organizations can work together to move an idea from inception to institutionalization; and understanding the political twists and turns as a coalition forms and its members try to work across ideological, racial, and class lines to accomplish something together. We draw on our prior research and experience, making this paper both a compilation of literature that has not adequately been infused into discussions of collective impact and a synthesis and interpretative analysis.

We share the aspirations of the movement toward cross-sector collaboration and believe it has the potential to help communities do more and do better in building and sustaining efforts to improve education. But it is precisely because we share these aspirations that we seek to illuminate challenges as well as prospects. In future reports we will present findings that go more directly to the question of how these contemporary efforts are evolving and identify, where possible, leverage points for increasing their chances of success. Those reports will draw on quantitative analysis of nearly 200 efforts nationwide, deep case studies in three cities, and more moderately detailed cases studies in an additional five cities that will enable us to consider a broader range of variations and contexts.

Our immediate goal in this paper is to provide conceptual framing to orient our own research and help others who are intrigued by this emerging phenomenon to think and talk about it in more common terms. In the first section of the paper we develop a set of parameters to describe the phenomenon we're exploring: local cross-sector collaborations for education. In the next section, we discuss a number of relevant

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[2] Michael Rebell, one of the co-authors of this report, also consulted with Say Yes on aspects of its Syracuse project in 2011 and 2012.

historical precursors and underpinnings. Our intent is to establish more clearly what is and what is not novel and to set the stage for a more serious effort to distill lessons from what has gone before. We follow that by situating recent local cross-sector collaborations' focus on education within the context of the contentious debate between those who believe educational improvement requires attention to out-of-school factors, such as concentrated poverty and social services, and those who believe schools can and must make substantial progress on their own. We then review the literature defining collective impact, the most recent manifestation of cross-sector collaboration, and we discuss the recent research on such initiatives, describing gaps in the research that need to be filled.

Next we mine the substantial literature on organizational collaborations of various kinds, with attention to the question of why good intentions do not suffice. Even when organizations share aspirations, tensions and cross-pressures can undermine efforts to work together. But actors do not always share goals and interests, and conditions may incentivize competition over cooperation. For that reason, we also include a review of the literature that zeroes in on the politics of local collaboration efforts and the core tensions—between locals and outsiders, between elites and community-based organizations, between racial and ethnic groups pursuing opportunity and advantage, between philanthropic donors and those who receive such support—that can lurk behind the veneer of cooperation.

We conclude by offering some preliminary and tentative lessons about the challenges and the possible road forward and some speculations about whether time will reveal this to be a passing phase with little influence, a fitting adaptation that will produce positive but incremental change, or the early stages of a substantial and transformative new movement.

WHAT "COUNTS" AS LOCAL CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATION?

To provide the necessary context to study and learn from collective impact and other cross-sector collaborations, we must first consider what we mean by "local cross-sector collaboration to improve education." We hope to establish some definitional boundaries that are broad enough to capture a wide range of contemporary efforts yet narrow enough to facilitate meaningful comparison. It is important to note that initiatives may shift and evolve over time, a point we underscore later.

Defined loosely, cross-sector collaboration around education happens all the time. A high school principal reaches out to a nearby health clinic for an expert to meet regularly at the school as part of a program to reduce teen pregnancies. A mayor asks the local school board to open school buildings late for an evening basketball program run by the department of parks and recreation as a service to community youth. While these are important partnerships, we need a threshold of scale and institutionalization to

distinguish small scale and periodic efforts from those that are more substantial and institutionalized.

A very narrow definition can be problematic as well. One possibility, for example, would be to anchor our definition in the key elements referenced in the collective impact literature. But that model, while compelling and currently dominating the contemporary discourse, is not the only possible or possibly valid approach for pursuing cross-sector collaboration. Moreover, as we will elaborate, the iterations of collective impact have become less prescriptive and more open-ended, content-specific, and "emergent." That has made them arguably more flexible and pragmatic, but, in the process, the model has become less taut.

And, while reaching certain benchmarks of implementation or quality may be a gauge of whether a program is considered successful, incorporating those benchmarks into the core definition can lead to a tautological confusion. We see this as a red flag in relation to the definition of collective impact. If the only efforts that "count" or meet the definitional threshold are those that are successful along criteria such as bringing together a wide array of actors, establishing a strong backbone, institutionalizing their efforts, building sophisticated data systems, and lasting over time, a high percentage of fledgling and faltering attempts can be dismissed as not having "truly" undertaken cross-sector collaboration. This kind of thinking, common in studies of school-reform efforts, misses a key point. If partial, fragile, weak, and ephemeral efforts are the norm, it does us little good to proclaim that they don't count unless they become more comprehensive, stronger, and more institutionalized. This squanders the important opportunity to understand why they haven't yet ramped up and what might be needed to help them do so.

In this paper and in our ongoing study, we zero in on cross-sector collaborations for education that fit a set of specific parameters. As shown in the box below, they are locally organized, large scale, cross-sector (involving at least two sectors of the government plus the civic sector), inclusive of the school district, focused on educational outcomes, and formal collaborations.

These parameters create a "definition" that places collective impact initiatives within a broader set of cross-sector collaborations, reflecting our conceptualization of collective impact as a variant, or subset, of a phenomenon that is both more general and less new and different than contemporary accounts might suggest. This framing allows us to treat elements that are emphasized in today's collective impact literature—like a single backbone organization and a focus on set and measured outcomes—as variations within the cross-sector collaboration space: variations whose relative adoption and hypothesized impact need to be empirically explored.

Defining Local Cross-Sector Collaborations for Education

1. **Locally Organized:** The locus of collaboration and key decision making is at the school district, city, metropolitan, or county level.

2. **Large Scale:** The initiative encompasses multiple schools.

3. **Cross Sector**: Initiatives are cross sector in two distinct senses of the term: they involve meaningful and regularized collaboration across two or more agencies of government, and they involve meaningful and regularized collaboration of both formal government and key organizations within the civic sector (such as business associations, philanthropies, parent groups, community-based organizations, and/or private social-service providers).

4. **Inclusive of School District**: The K-12 public school district is among the major partners.

5. **Education-Outcomes Focused**: There is central and sustained attention to educational outcomes.

6. **Formal:** Collaboration is not *ad hoc* but formally structured to at least some degree, for example, including an agreed-upon name, a roster of partners, some degree of internal organizational structure, a website.

Despite its breadth, our definition excludes many interesting cross-sector collaborative efforts. While it includes some larger-scale "community school" efforts, it leaves out single-school-centered collaborations. Similarly, it excludes neighborhood-based multi-service initiatives, even large and robust ones like the Harlem Children's Zone, if the key policy decisions are made at the neighborhood level, but it includes some Promise Neighborhood sites, largely based on the HCZ model, that reflect a citywide collaborative effort. It also excludes interagency task forces that do not include nongovernmental actors and state-level initiatives such as the children's cabinets that a number of states have adopted as a means of encouraging interagency collaboration (Rennie Center, 2009).

These parameters also exclude local collaborative efforts around early childhood education or youth development that don't directly involve the public school system and educational outcomes. And, our definition leaves out initiatives to increase college attendance and completion if they fail to involve the K-12 system, are driven exclusively by colleges and universities, or focus only on college admission and financing (thus we exclude initiatives modeled on the "Kalamazoo Promise" if they are limited to the provision of scholarships and information without engaging a broader range of partners). It excludes ephemeral or short-term efforts like community-wide "summits" that bring together stakeholders to discuss goals and values but lack a mechanism for policy development and implementation. It also does not include school-district-driven initiatives in which the superintendent is the dominant actor and other sectors are involved only in a contractual or junior partner status.
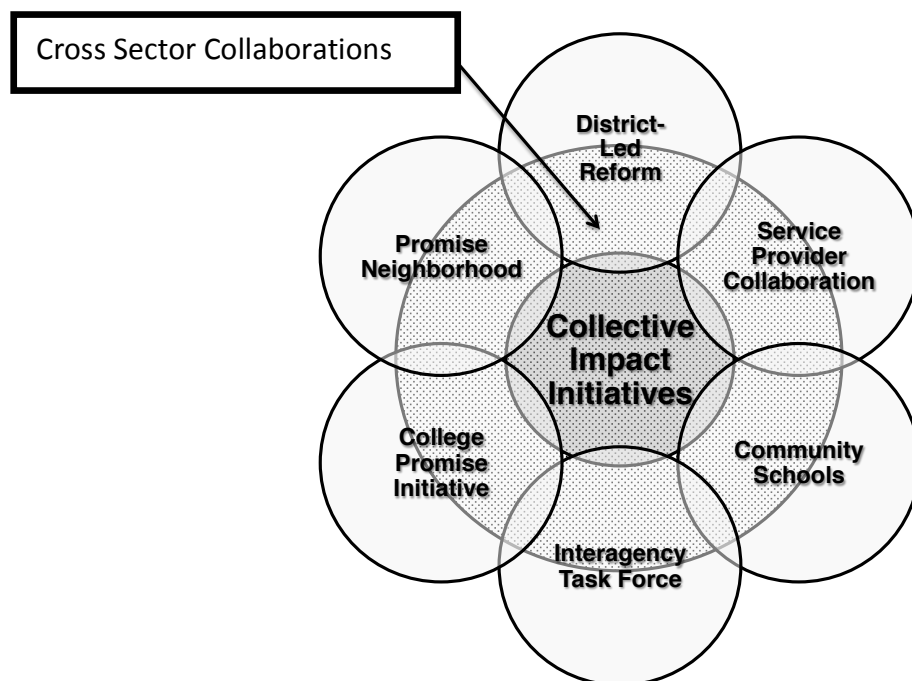
Figure 1. The Ecology of Collaboration to Improve Education

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships among some of these collaborative initiatives, which, depending on their particular characteristics and evolution, may or may not meet our definition of local cross-sector collaboration (larger circle) or the narrower subset that adheres to the collective impact model. It is also important to recognize that local initiatives of all sorts can develop and change over time, so the location of specific efforts in the set of circles represented in the figure is not fixed. A collaboration that initially involves only social-service agencies and community-based organizations might at some point draw in the local school district as a major partner and thereby fall within our cross-sector collaboration definition; if it later adopted elements associated with the FSG and Strive models, it could then fall within the collective impact circle. Devolution is possible too: an effort initially involving a range of collaborating organizations and agencies might see its partners slowly disengage or one partner (e.g., the school system) increasingly dominate. In our research, we will be on the lookout for signs of shifts in either or both directions.

SOME HISTORICAL PRECURSORS AND UNDERPINNINGS

While "collective impact," as a specific form of collaboration, has a discernable origin, cross-sector collaboration in the provision of supports and services for children has

such a long history in the United States that it is difficult to say exactly when it began. All manner of contemporary cross-sector efforts working to improve outcomes for children trace their own origins to the settlement houses at the end of the 19th century. And we can draw a through-line from the settlements to present-day initiatives that should provide new efforts with a rich past on which to build. But understanding and building effectively on historical analogues is complicated by their many inconsistencies, including variations in sponsors, programs, goals, investments, lifespans, historical and political context, local conditions, and their evolution over time.

The social and political history of the U.S. reflects a persistent ambivalence about our collective civic responsibility for the poor. Our nation seems episodically to "rediscover" poverty (Patterson, 1986) and to embrace the notion that there should be a concerted and coordinated effort to provide children from low-income communities with the full range of basic resources, services, and supports they need in order to thrive. After a burst of enthusiasm and investment, attention wanes and other concerns take priority. As a result of these lapses, the history of such efforts, while progressive and evolutionary in some ways, also seems episodic and repetitive (Mossberger, 2010).

To provide some historical underpinnings, this section of the paper reviews the literature on several (overlapping) episodes of concerted efforts to marshal resources to improve the futures of children: community- and school-based private efforts in at the beginning of the 20th century; the growing government efforts to create a system of supports for poor children and families that began during the Progressive Era and ballooned with the New Deal initiatives and the War on Poverty programs; subsequent efforts to confront the challenge of coordinating these new programs and funds; and the most recent past bubble of interest in cross-sector collaboration that happened in the 1990s and first years of this century.

Early U.S. Efforts to Offset the Impact of Poverty on Children

The late 19th century saw a growing belief that some people suffered from poverty through no fault of their own (Bremner, 1956; Patterson, 1986). Early ventures to offset the impact of poverty on children and families were largely private, charitable efforts aimed at individuals. Progressive Era social reformers, particularly in the period from the 1890s until World War I, embraced new holistic and community-based approaches to contend with the human toll of poverty as a result of the enormous rise in immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. These more comprehensive efforts were responsive to specific neighborhood needs, informed advocacy, and influenced policy but depended on a confluence of factors and declined as a movement as those dissipated.

Urban Settlement Houses

Responding to the suffering of the huge waves of mostly European immigrants arriving in American cities and living under conditions of extreme poverty, U.S. settlement houses were founded with the goal of strengthening urban neighborhoods, improving

the lives of the desperately poor children and families, and giving them the opportunity to assimilate into their new country. These neighborhood centers were run by middle-class staff, mostly women, who "settled" in the poorest communities in order to understand and serve local needs. Hull House, Chicago's first and perhaps the most influential U.S. settlement house, was inspired by co-founder Jane Addams's visit to the original settlement house, Toynbee Hall in London's East End. Hull House started by offering neighborhood residents enrichment opportunities such as classes in art appreciation and literature. But as Addams and its other founders came to understand the neighborhood's needs better, they added child care, health services, public baths, after-school recreation programs, and classes for children and adults, among many other resources (Crocker, 1992; Soler & Shauffer, 1990; Tyack, 1992). This approach to dealing with poverty was a dramatic departure from the state-run institutions of the time—asylums, poorhouses, prisons, and orphanages that segregated and warehoused "the deviant and dependent" (Kagan & Neville, 1993). It caught on and spread quickly; by 1913, there were 413 settlement houses in 32 states (Dale, 2014).

Settlement houses not only came to offer services and educational activities but also often to foster community dialogue and provide a meeting place and incubator for organizations within the community. "It was not a mechanical institution; rather it institutionalized experimentation, and social service based upon empirical research into local conditions" (Scheuer, 1985). Immersed in the issues of their communities, members of the settlement movement didn't see settlements as an end in themselves but worked to promote larger-scale change, successfully advocating for progressive local and national legislation on issues such as housing reform, child labor, and factory safety, and seeking the establishment of juvenile courts and child protective services, legal aid services, public parks, and health clinics

The mainstream settlement movement was largely segregated and thus neglected the many African-American migrants who moved from the south after World War I and settled in northern cities. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn (1992) writes that some leaders, like Addams, spoke out against racism, and some settlements, like Hull House, set up separate black "branches," but the settlement movement failed to provide guidance on the issue of race. The approach was, however, embraced by African-American churches and other black activist groups that established a number of their own settlement houses throughout the country (Houmenou, 2012; Lasch-Quinn, 1993).

Though a number of individual settlement houses still operate today and continue to provide integrated services to support low-income families and communities, the mainstream settlement movement waned after World War I. A number of factors contributed to its gradual decline, including the diversion of public attention to the war, declining need after restrictions on immigration, the institutionalization of some of the anti-poverty reforms the movement supported, and the professionalization of social work. As African Americans replaced European immigrants in poor urban neighborhoods, philanthropic support for the movement's traditional efforts became

more difficult to secure. Unable to refocus its efforts on these new families in spite of their similar needs for education, social services, and economic and social change, the settlement movement may have missed its opportunity to stay vital (Lasch-Quinn, 1993).

School-Based Neighborhood Centers

The notion of bringing social services into schools and placing schools at the heart of community life was first expressed by John Dewey (1902), who was heavily influenced by his association with Jane Addams (Deegan, 1988). This enduring idea has been embraced at a number of historical moments since Dewey's time, including in the present-day community schools movement. In the early part of the 20th century, particularly as states began to enact compulsory school attendance laws, social reformers saw schools' potential as neighborhood centers for poor immigrant families, while also educating their children. They pushed for additional services and supports including school lunches, medical and dental clinics, school social workers and child welfare officers, vocational services, and summer programs (Tyack, 1992). By the end of 1913, "71 cities in 21 states reported having schools that functioned as social centers; by 1914, 17 states had enacted legislation allowing wider use of school facilities by communities" (Benson, Harkavy, Johanek, & Puckett, 2009, p. 24).

During the Depression, when the impact of poverty was felt much more deeply and widely, school buildings were enlisted to a meet a broader set of community needs for recreation, health and social services, and adult education, and to fulfill a broader community-education mission (Dryfoos, 1994; Rogers, 1998). In Flint, Michigan, this approach first flourished thanks to a partnership between educator Frank J. Manley and philanthropist, General Motors executive, and two-time mayor Charles Stewart Mott, who opened schools to a wide range of programs serving children and working parents. This pioneering effort came to national attention in a newspaper column by Eleanor Roosevelt (1936) that praised the "remarkable …. community plan by which they coordinate all the various community forces—industrial, social, philanthropic, recreational and educational."

The Mott Foundation invested extensively in bringing the model to a larger scale. In the 1950s, the foundation supported a community-school construction program in Flint, bringing the model to all 36 Flint schools by 1953 (Benson et al., 2009; Krajewski, 1997). To promote the approach more broadly, it also launched the National Center for Community Education, which provided training to thousands of educators, politicians, business, and community members in Michigan and eventually throughout the country.

John S. Rogers, who has chronicled the history of community schools, suggests that the "impulse to make schools the center of community life…achieves salience at certain historical moments... in opposition to powerful forces of bureaucratization and centralization" (1998, p. 3); he further connects the impulse with a desire to "recapture a certain democratic strain within American education" (p. 3). Though the approach has

had long-lasting appeal, earlier efforts, at least, showed a limited ability to effect systemic change. This was in part because each of the spikes of interest responded to a period of crisis and ebbed as it passed. In addition, these efforts were not adequately integrated with the core educational mission of the schools, creating struggles between educators, social service providers, and community members about the appropriate priorities of schools, and proponents lacked a robust strategy for expanding initiatives so they could cross otherwise limiting geographic, class, and race lines (Rogers, 1998).

Early Government Efforts to Contend with Poverty

The economic, social, and political factors that set the stage for these holistic, community-based efforts also propelled a growing government effort to contend with poverty. Though government spending for the social welfare of the poor had generally had weak public support, starting in 1911, some state governments established "mothers'" or "widows' pensions" intended to allow poor single mothers to raise their children at home and ensure they went to school (Cohen, 2005). These measures passed because they "not only appealed to the popularity of motherhood, they also exploited America's unique commitment to education" (Cohen, 2005, p. 518), a feature of our national psyche that will come up later.

The Progressive movement started a shift in popular attitudes and growing pressure for the federal government to take a role in providing supports for poor children and families. "Rather than regarding the government as the provider of last resort, Progressives envisioned the federal government's role as the protector of the distressed and the guarantor of individual opportunity and equity" (Kagan & Neville, 1993, p. 10). President Theodore Roosevelt convened the first White House Conference on Children in 1909. The second one took place in 1919, which had been dubbed "Children's Year" by President Wilson. Wilson called for the establishment of "certain irreducible minimum standards for the health, education, and work of the American Child" (Children's Bureau, 1967, p. 6), and, at the conference, there was widespread agreement about "the need for certain basic fundamentals—an adequate family income, as few broken homes as possible [and] adequate opportunity for 'education, recreation, vocational preparation for life and for moral and spiritual development'" (Children's Bureau, 1967, p. 7). However, no federal legislation or funding for these purposes emerged at the time.

The terrible widespread poverty during the Great Depression forced the federal government to take a significant role in funding programs and services for poor children and families. Between 1933 and 1938, President Franklin Roosevelt launched the New Deal domestic programs to stabilize the economy, provide relief for families, and create reforms to insure the country against a similar disaster in the future. Among these reforms, the Social Security Act of 1935 was designed to protect vulnerable groups, including children, from falling into poverty. Along with federal aid for the elderly, the Act included monies for dependent children and maternal and child health, child welfare, and public health services. Starting in this time, school systems also institutionalized some provision of health, mental health, and nutrition programs, originally to benefit

students whose families could not provide them. The nurses, social workers, and food service professionals who provided them became employees of the schools (Tyack, 1992).

An economic downturn at the end of the 1930s, conservative gains in Congress, and a shift in national attention to World War II brought an end to the growth of federal investment in human services. There followed a fairly fallow period of federal attention to services for disadvantaged children during the war years and a subsequent decade of relative prosperity for most but not all Americans. Many African Americans did not benefit equally from the post-war economic boom, and poverty persisted especially in the urban areas in which blacks were segregated. In part because of a growing consciousness of racial inequities created by the civil rights movement, in the early 1960s, policymakers were persuaded once again that poverty must be addressed.

President Johnson's extensive War on Poverty initiatives greatly expanded human services for children and their families and provided aid to schools serving students in poverty. The Great Society legislation included the Economic Opportunity Act and the Manpower Development and Training Act and a great number of social support and education initiatives, including still important programs such as food stamps, Medicare and Medicaid, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and Head Start.

Evolving Strategies for Local Coordination of Government Funds and Services

With the huge proliferation in the 1960s of government funds and programs designed to combat poverty and improve educational and social outcomes for children came enormous practical, bureaucratic, and political challenges of how to coordinate these efforts at the local level. These were made more complicated by the lack of administrative and operational consistency in these new federal grants. Some funds went to the states to distribute; some went to localities. Federal grants were awarded locally to both public and private organizations to deliver services. The result, by many accounts, was a chaotic system of funding and service delivery that produced waste, inefficiency, and underutilization, a lack of evaluation and accountability, and bureaucratic hurdles for agencies, community organizations, and families. Needless to say, it created and fueled doubts about the ability of the government to intervene effectively to solve complex problems.

The federal government tried various strategies to address the challenge of coordinating funds and services at the local level. The Economic Opportunity Act created community action agencies (CAAs), new nonprofit organizations that were supposed to coordinate programs locally and empower low-income communities by involving them in decision making. "The vision was that CAAs would have a planning capacity that would cut across community agencies and sectors, would engage in various linkage strategies; case management, outreach, and case finding, client advocacy, and collocation of activities...according to community needs" (Kagan & Neville, 1993, p. 17). Though they did "launch a new generation of minority leaders into political life" (Schorr, 1997, p. 313),

these new agencies quickly became controversial and politically contentious and as a result had limited success in this role. They were set up as separate political structures for making decisions and providing services, so, among their handicaps, they were disconnected from local government; they sometimes duplicated functions already being performed by local agencies; and they were often in competition with a variety of important existing community entities that influenced local planning decisions, from churches to chambers of commerce. In 1967, the Johnson administration launched HUD's Model Cities program to focus federal efforts on helping urban areas. Drawing on efforts to understand the failings of the CAAs, the Model Cities program privileged planning and coordination before action, the inclusion of the community in planning, and the participation of local government. (We discuss the politics of these efforts in more detail later in the paper.)

With the Vietnam War and election of President Nixon came a "de-escalation of ambitions" (Schorr, 1997, p. 315). Years of federal initiatives that worked with specific communities also gave way to a much greater reliance on state and local governments to administer programs and coordinate more effective and efficient service delivery. In the place of new government expenditures came a new emphasis on research, demonstration projects, and legislation designed to improve access to services for children and families by combatting the fragmentation of services caused by bureaucratic specialization and provide more comprehensive, efficient, and cost-effective service delivery systems. Many of these efforts produced new understanding about how better to deliver services within certain fields (like mental health), but evaluations of these efforts indicate that generally anticipated cost savings did not materialize and supporters lost interest; planners did not understand the communities and families that the projects were designed to serve; and there was strong resistance from service providers and no incentives to motivate them to integrate services (Hassett & Austin, 1997; Kagan & Neville, 1993).

The 1990s' Cross-Sector Collaborative Bubble: Recent Past Efforts

In the 1990s, there was new mushrooming of interest and investment in local multi-sector efforts to transform neighborhoods in areas of concentrated poverty and to integrate and coordinate services for children and families. School-level initiatives embraced the idea that investments in education would not yield dividends unless matched with investments in other areas that affected children's development (Coleman, 1985, 1987) and larger scale initiatives took from earlier piecemeal community development efforts the lesson that education, poverty, employment, housing, and other issues needed to be addressed comprehensively.

National, state, and local policies that supported this approach swelled, and a wide range of actors, from federal and state agencies to national and local foundations, to individual schools and community-based organizations, launched some type of initiative. Crowson and Boyd (1993) wrote, "The broad appeal, rapid dissemination, and "bandwagon" flavor of the coordinated-services concept are shown in the widening array

of proposals and agencies with plans, recommendations and project descriptions…. [E]xperimentation throughout the nation has been growing at a pace that makes the tracking of developments difficult, despite the help of newly established conferences and computerized directories" (p. 148).

The delivery models employed reflected both the burst of energy around collaboration and a willingness to try different approaches because no model had yet emerged as foolproof and effective. The range of efforts included school-based initiatives (community, full-service, and extended schools) that sought to co-locate health and other social services in schools; comprehensive early childhood programs that sought to meet a full range of needs for young children; school-linked services initiatives that created partnerships between schools and providers of other services; school-community partnerships; private interagency commissions; parent involvement/family support and education programs; community-based integrated-services initiatives; and comprehensive community initiatives. Within these models, individual efforts had varying goals, rationales, methodologies, scopes, participants, scales, and time frames.

But as Crowson and Boyd (1993, 1996) noted at the time and in later reflections on what looked almost like a movement toward integrated services, the same implementation challenges that had plagued earlier efforts emerged almost immediately. These included resource constraints, turf battles, institutional capacity deficiencies, bureaucratic inflexibility, leadership problems, confidentiality and other legal issues, communication gaps, authority questions, professional culture and training differences, and wavering political support. Systematic study of these initiatives was made difficult because of their complexity and because there was little agreement in the field about what name should be used to describe these cross-sector collaborations (Driscoll, Boyd, & Crowson, 1998).

The new burst of enthusiasm about school-based collaborations faced the thorny issues involved in trying to change the way schools do business. To create partnerships to provide services in school settings that were more than just add-ons, responsibilities for planning, governance, provision, and coordination of services needed to be shared. Participating agencies had to change how they delivered services, and schools had to change the way they valued those services and personnel. How to include teachers in this work proved difficult. School personnel had to play a role in identifying the students who need services. They were clearly important collaborators but, as Crowson and Boyd (1993) wrote at the time, "may perceive few benefits from involvement in coordinated services because of their tradition of isolated autonomy and their sense of already being overburdened with responsibilities" (p. 162).

School culture, with its professional separatism and hierarchies (e.g., with principals, teachers, and other workers in schools), was an impediment. So was the governance structure of schools in that school boards were almost always elected separately, and often funded separately, from the mayors and councils that oversaw the other service

delivering agencies; these separate governance arrangements made it more difficult for schools to collaborate when they desired to collaborate and gave them protection from collaborations they felt impinged on their turf (Henig, 2013). Parent involvement also was not so easy to leverage or sustain, particularly in communities where parents had not been well served by schools (Chaskin & Richman, 1992). School administrators uncomfortable with community activism brought projects back within school control (Crowson & Boyd, 1996).

Funding these school-based collaborations was an ongoing struggle, and no comprehensive strategy emerged to wean school-based services initiatives from start-up grant funding. The expectation of cost savings from increased efficiencies did not pan out. Then, with federal, state and local funding cutbacks, schools serving low-income communities had to struggle as well with a paucity of available community and social service resources. This layered the additional familiar challenge that "coordination of inadequate resources and/or understaffed resources is obviously a much different undertaking from that of a resource rich program of intervention" (Crowson & Boyd, 1993, p. 156).

During the 1990s (and early 2000s), a variety of new large-scale place-based cross-sector initiatives, collectively often referred to as "comprehensive community initiatives" (CCIs), were also proliferating and could be found in nearly every major American city. CCIs were organized around principles of comprehensive community change, organizational collaboration, and citizen participation, and sought no less than "fundamental transformation of poor neighborhoods and the people who lived there" (Kubisch, 1996). Intentionally different in approach from the traditional coordinated-services strategies of prior decades that had focused on strengthening interagency efficiencies and case-management approaches, CCIs were defined by trying to effect systems change through "sustainable processes, organizations, and relationships" (Chaskin, 2000, p. 1). They brought investments designed to coordinate and create synergy among programs in human services, community revitalization, and economic development within a given geographic area that had previously worked in parallel and without connection (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, & Dewar, 2010; Mossberger, 2010; Stagner & Duran, 1997). In 1997, Lisbeth Schorr wrote hopefully that these new more sophisticated efforts reflected a "new synthesis" of prior efforts and the idea that "multiple related problems of poor neighborhoods need multiple and interrelated solutions" (p. 319).

Some of most prominent CCIs were the Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities initiated by the Clinton administration to promote neighborhood revitalization following the Los Angeles riots of 1992 (Rich & Stoker, 2014), the Annie E. Casey Foundation's multi-site New Futures project, the Hewlett Foundation's Neighborhood Improvement Initiative in the Bay Area, the Enterprise Foundation's Community Building in Partnership in Baltimore, and the Surdna Foundation's Comprehensive Community Revitalization Program in the South Bronx. Another well-

documented and studied set of CCIs was the Ford Foundation's Neighborhood and Family Initiative, which was launched in 1990 and had projects in four cities, Detroit, Memphis, Hartford, and Milwaukee, targeting a low-income neighborhood in each city.

Community engagement and community building was central to this approach. Albeit to an inconsistent extent in practice, CCIs took an asset-oriented approach and sought to build on the strengths of the community, ensure that the voices of those who were most affected by neighborhood issues were central in developing the common agenda for change, and involve them in driving its implementation to ensure maximum effectiveness and sustainability. Individual and collective responsibilities were stressed, as were relationships of respect, trust, and caring. CCIs, for the most part, sought to build on and support existing programs rather than develop new ones. They saw their job as to "fill gaps, connect resources, build infrastructure, and organize the constituent elements of the communities in which they work" (Kubisch, 1996, para.12).

CCIs aimed to influence a broad range of outcomes: economic development, education, health, jobs, housing, and community empowerment and engagement. They sought neighborhood change through investments to increase human, physical, and economic development in poor communities. They expected stronger community capacity, improved access to services, and a better quality of life in the community (Mossberger, 2010). They also hoped to see systems and policy changes such as service integration and funding flexibility. Change would be visible at every level: individual, family, neighborhood, city, and region. However, these outcomes were not always well defined or easily measured (Kubisch et al., 2010).

There is an abundance of documentation both from specific initiatives and in overview of relevance to contemporary initiatives. Among the implementation issues that have been noted as consequential and often problematic are the role of foundations (how directive they should be and how their roles might change over time); the roles and responsibilities of the lead organization and whether these are best fulfilled by a trusted community entity or a new organization; time, costs, and strategies for managing collaboration; how to balance long-term, comprehensive goals with the need for short-term success to maintain funder and community support; how to assess, build, and value community capacity; the availability of data and capacity for data collection; and how to evaluate the success of such endeavors (who did what, how much, what actually changed in the way things worked; what was the impact on individuals, on working relationships within the community, and on system level policy change), and how to make evaluation relevant and useful to the work of the partners (see, e.g., Brown & Fiester, 2007; Council for Children's Rights, 2010; Perkins, 2002).

According to the Aspen Roundtable's study of nearly 50 CCIs from 1990-2010 (Kubisch et al., 2010), the experience of CCIs points to a range of problems that limited their impact. It is clear that CCIs evolved significantly as time went by, that collaborative structures changed over time and through various phases of the work, and that external

factors often played a larger role in what actually happened than planning did. Some individual efforts are credited with specific concrete accomplishments, such as the CCRP's community-based planning and successful of development investment in the recovery of the South Bronx (Miller & Burns, 2006) and CBP's transformation of the Sandtown-Winchester in Baltimore (Brown, Butler, & Hamilton, 2001). But CCIs generally have not been considered fully successful in effecting the widespread change they intended. They were not able to muster the level of programmatic effort necessary to drive major improvements in their targeted communities within the time frame they were allotted—usually seven to ten years (Jolin et al., 2012; Kubisch et al., 2010). Many of the original funders of CCIs no longer invest in this type of effort (Kubisch, 2010).

Aspects of the theory of action of CCIs did not bear out, including the belief that modest investments could drive widespread change and that the impact of broader social and economic trends could be controlled or countered by community-level change. In practice, communities were extremely depleted from decades of underinvestment, local organizations lacked staff and leadership capacity, and the complexities of multiple activities and relationships proved very difficult to manage (Kubisch, 2010). While some CCIs were able to bring additional investments to their target communities, overall they were not able to show that it was possible to ensure sufficient, dependable, and sufficiently flexible funding to sustain these efforts or effect widespread change. In most places, initial funding was inadequate for their broad missions; they lacked the capacity to bring in the level of funding that was really needed; and uncertainty about the amount and duration of future funding made long-term planning difficult. In addition, short-term grant periods demanded short-term results, something that was difficult to balance with the initiatives' comprehensive missions. Other available funding was categorical, and the initiatives were not able to effect policy or systems change to break down silos of funding streams to promote integrated services.

CCIs put a premium on community participation, both for ensuring community input and leadership in planning and for building community capacity to meet the needs of the neighborhood, but this proved difficult (Traynor, 2007). While there was variation from place to place, resident participation was often limited and episodic, and the initiatives were often dominated by foundation and agency representatives. Community residents were typically low-income people of color, many of them without experience with forums and methods used by the initiatives, which were nearly always run by white professionals. Another common issue was that short-term grassroots objectives conflicted with the long-term goals of the professionals. And the initiatives did not provide sufficient funding or supports dedicated specifically to community building (Chaskin, 2000).

The problem was that in spite of their defining emphasis on grassroots engagement, most CCIs were still to a great extent trying to effect community change through outside, top-down intervention. Given the histories of power and resource inequities along racial lines in the cities where these initiatives were sponsored, this dynamic created tensions

and engendered contentious relationships among sponsoring foundations, community foundations, partnering organizations, and community members that undermined productivity.

By the beginning of the 2000s, this most recent past bubble of enthusiasm for and experimentation in local cross-sector collaboration to meet children's needs had largely burst. As with prior episodes, the confluence of factors that peaked interest and drove investment came apart. Economic recovery, the Republican takeover of Congress in the mid-1990s, and the growing interest in standards based reform and educational accountability as the prime strategy for securing the future of our nation's children also contributed to the shift away from this approach. With declining investment inevitably came more limited returns. Still, many individual school-based and community-based efforts have proved to be persistent, and vestiges of many of the collaborative organizations and structures still exist as well. It will be important for our research to explore how these relate to and affect new collective impact and cross-sector collaborative efforts.

NEW EDUCATION-FOCUSED CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION

As described in the section above, past efforts to provide a broad range of resources, services, and supports to meet children's needs were often initiated to improve child welfare or well-being generally. Typically they were not specifically focused on or evaluated for their effectiveness at ensuring educational opportunity and school success. In this section, we explore the recent local cross-sector collaborations focused intentionally on the resources required for *educational* success. We believe this narrower focus is significant for several reasons. First, it has the potential of greater public support, since education has historically and traditionally held a prime place in our nation's ideology and has been our prime public institution and our main strategy for combatting poverty (Rebell, 2012; Wells, 2009). Second, concentrating on education outcomes may prove an important means for focusing efforts, targeting resources, and controlling costs. Third, the narrower focus makes it easier to study and evaluate the effects of such a policy and to provide accountability for effectiveness and results. In the past, rigorous research evaluation of comprehensive initiatives has been limited by the complexity of the task. With the coherent goal of improving school success, the task of evaluating the success of policy change becomes somewhat more manageable.

Next we describe the contemporary landscape local cross-sector collaborations that focus on educational success, but first we discuss what appears to be their common underlying philosophy, one that rejects the long-standing debate about the primacy of in-school vs. out-of-school factors on determining educational outcomes. In this context, we review the literature defining collective impact, the most recent manifestation of cross-sector collaboration and discuss the research on such initiatives, describing gaps in the research that need to be filled.

Moving Beyond the Schools Versus Social Factors Debate

American education reform over the past couple of decades often adopted the stance that better schools and better teaching could suffice to close deep and enduring education achievement gaps. This "no excuses" bravado was heroic in some ways: it represented a refusal to use broader social and economic inequities as a rationale for timid aspirations. George Bush sounded that theme with his highly cited characterization as "soft bigotry" the position that reducing achievement gaps will not be possible until broad social and economic changes are first enacted. More than 15 years later, Arne Duncan, speaking on behalf of a Democratic administration, self-consciously echoed that position: "This country can't afford to replace 'the fierce urgency of now' with the soft bigotry of 'it's optional,'" he declared in a major policy address (Emma & Severns, 2015).

Impatience with the position that education reform had to wait for social reform also fueled aggressive mayoral-led reform agendas in places like New York City and Chicago, as well as the development of a "no excuses" theme for a number of prominent networks of charter schools. Yet, as admirable as the sentiment may be in many respects, this "schools-can-do-it-alone" orientation also came with a set of costs. Posed as schools *versus* social reform, the argument had a tendency to situate teachers as failures (when racial and poverty gaps remained), and as excuse-mongers (when they argued that disengaged parents, segregated and high-poverty neighborhoods, and timid social welfare policies also played a role). Against this backdrop, prospects were limited for more serious grappling with how social services and urban development policies might complement schooling, as were those for constructing a broader coalition that incorporated educators along with other groups in pursuing a common agenda of making more and smarter investments in the education enterprise.

Many contemporary cross-sector collaborations for education seem to be taking a holistic approach that seeks to bring together the full range of resources that children need to succeed in school. They appear to reject the artificial dichotomy between within-school and out-of-school factors that has persisted since the 1966 Coleman report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, was interpreted to mean that schools couldn't overcome the disadvantages that some students brought to school. Since then educators and policymakers have debated whether schools or social factors are the most critical variable in whether students succeed academically (Gamoran & Long, 2006). In that polarizing context, evidence that out-of-school factors affected school success was used as a reason not to invest robustly in the education of poor children. In the last decade, a new version of this debate has appeared. Proponents of the "no excuses" philosophy of education reform were pitted against efforts to bolster schools with "wraparound services" like after-school programs, health and mental health services, and parent education programs.

Further analyses of Coleman's data showed that both school- and out-of-school factors play important roles in school success for all students (Hedges, Laine, & Greenwald, 1994). A growing body of research has identified specific causal links between poor educational outcomes and cognitive, health, environmental, and other factors correlated with poverty (Basch, 2010; Berliner, 2006, 2009; Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Kagan, 2009; Rothstein, 2004; Rumberger, 2007). And other research showed that what is critical is the complementary relationship between what goes on in school and what goes on outside of and around it (Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005). For disadvantaged children to obtain a meaningful educational opportunity, they need *both* important school-based resources like high quality teaching, a rich and rigorous curriculum, adequate school facilities, and sufficient, up-to-date learning materials, and, in addition, the complementary resources needed to overcome the impediments to educational achievement imposed by the conditions of poverty. The most important of these are (1) early childhood education; (2) routine and preventive physical and mental health care; (3) after-school and other expanded learning opportunities; and (4) family engagement and support (Bathgate et al., 2011; Broader, Bolder Approach to Education Task Force, 2008; Equity and Excellence Commission, 2013; Gordon et al., 2005; Heckman, 2011; Lareau, 2003; Lee & Burkam, 2002; Rebell, 2012; Rebell & Wolff, 2011; Rothstein, 2004; Rothstein, Wilder, & Allgood, 2011; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009).

This comprehensive approach to educational opportunity or "comprehensive educational opportunity," defined by Michael Rebell, Edmund Gordon, and Jessica Wolff (Gordon & Rebell, 2007; Rebell, 2011, 2012; Rebell & Wolff, 2008), posits that providing such services and supports is integral to the concept of equal educational opportunity. It recognizes that most American children thrive academically because they enjoy the benefits of preschool, quality K-12 schooling, constructive learning opportunities out of school, health care, and family support, but, for children living in poverty, many of these vital educational resources are unavailable or inadequate, resulting in dramatic gaps in academic achievement. Two basic premises of the comprehensive educational opportunity approach are that providing access to all of these resources, services, and supports in a coherent manner will have the greatest cumulative effect on educational outcomes and that these services can be provided on a large scale in a cost-effective manner when school districts enter into productive relationships with other government agencies and community-based organizations to deliver the necessary services (Belfield & Garcia, 2011; Belfield, Hollands, & Levin, 2011; Rebell, 2012; Rothstein, Wilder, & Allgood, 2011). A recent analysis of nine comprehensive models in 28 states indicated that the effects of these programs on academic outcomes are promising and that these initiatives have a positive return on economic investments (Child Trends, 2014).

The Contemporary Landscape

The influence of this research is reflected in the contemporary landscape of efforts to boost education opportunity and achievement of children in low-income communities, including the expansion of community schools and the emergence of the Harlem Children's Zone, Promise Neighborhoods, Say Yes to Education, StriveTogether, and

other initiatives that seek to integrate schools, community-based social services, and municipal services. We briefly describe these initiatives and then discuss their relationship to the theory of comprehensive educational opportunity.

Community Schools

As we have discussed, community schools have been an enduring school-based strategy for cross-sector collaboration to improve education. Responsive to communities' needs, they generally operate as partnerships between schools and local organizations, working across sectors to leverage available resources and seek out new resources to provide co-located preventive and intervention services to children and families (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Dryfoos, 2002). They hold a core ideal of developing a shared responsibility for students' education and well being across the range of stakeholders.

A variety of efforts to link social services provided by community agencies with the schools emerged during the first half of the 20th century, but these efforts did not take hold nationwide on a large scale. A renewed federal focus on the needs of low-income and minority students in the 1960s led to a resurgence of interest in this approach and more sophisticated methods for bringing health, social services, parent education, recreation, and other services into the schools. In the 1970s, federal legislation, including the Community Schools Act of 1974 and the Community Schools and Community Education Act of 1978, provided funding to states to foster community schools and develop capacity to support their expansion. Though federal support ended in 1981, state and local efforts continued.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, several national models such as Beacon schools, Bridges to Success, and Children's Aid Society community schools responded to research about the educational needs of children from low-income communities and concerted calls to action by advocacy groups and foundations (National Center for Community Schools, 2011). Several states, including New Jersey, Florida, and California, enacted legislation that created service projects throughout the state calling for coordination of multiple services with the public schools (Campbell-Allen, Shah, Sullener, &, Zazove, 2009). In 2001, the Chicago Public Schools established an initiative that converted 110 of their 600 schools into community schools within a five-year period (Whalen, 2007). In 2014, Congress also passed a Full-Service Community Schools Act under which six states received $5 million to establish "a coordinated and integrated set of comprehensive academic, social, and health services that respond to the needs of … students, their families, and community members" (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

A "full-service community school" is one that combines quality education with a range of health, social welfare, recreation, parent engagement, and family support activities (Dryfoos, 2005). In one of the best-known models, established by the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in 21 community schools in New York City, schools have on-site health

clinics, early childhood centers, parent activity centers, and after-school programs. These schools employ a site coordinator responsible for joint planning with the principal and school staff and recruitment and coordination of community partnership agencies. The CAS model also calls for recognition of a single community organization as a lead partner that maintains a full-time presence in the school (National Center for Community Schools, 2011).

In 1998, leaders from initiatives across the country came together to form the Coalition for Community Schools (Dryfoos, Quinn, & Barkin, 2005). The Coalition is an alliance of 170 national, state, and local community school, education, social service, governmental, and philanthropic organizations. It sponsors research, advocates for community schools, and is a clearinghouse for information about successful programs, practices, and policies across the nation (Coalition for Community Schools, 2014).

The Harlem Children's Zone

In the late 1990s, Geoffrey Canada, the head of a nonprofit organization in northern Manhattan, had become frustrated with the limited impact of the after-school, truancy prevention, and other programs that his agency was operating. He developed a greater vision of how to improve the conditions for large numbers of children from high-poverty communities on their path to becoming well-functioning participants in mainstream American life. To do this, he selected a single geographic area and established an extensive set of programs that would support children's lives from before birth, through their high school years and beyond. Canada believed it important to include all children and their families in a particular neighborhood in this venture in order to achieve a "tipping point" of change that would surround children with hope and positive models. The 97-block area of central Harlem that he chose to implement this scheme is called the Harlem Children's Zone (Tough, 2008.)

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is governed by a board of directors who, together with other philanthropists, have made sizable donations to support the implementation and growth of the project. In 2009, HCZ had assets of nearly $200 million and its operating budget was $84 million, two-thirds of it from private donations (Otterman, 2010). The extensive range of programs that are supported by this budget include the Baby College for soon-to-be parents, Get Ready for Pre-K, the Harlem Gems prekindergarten program, two Promise Academy charter schools, a variety of after-school fitness and nutrition programs, family and community health programs, tenant, financial, and legal advice centers, foster care prevention services, and a college access and support effort (Harlem Children's Zone, 2015).

In 2015, HCZ serves more than 10,700 youth and nearly 8,000 adults, and it claims that over 70% of children in the Zone are engaged in its pipeline of programs each year (Harlem Children's Zone, 2015). The original HCZ concept was to work closely with the principals of all of Harlem's local public schools and provide them with extensive supplemental services. A failure to gain full support from many of the area principals led

to the decision to found two HCZ-run charter schools (Tough, 2008). As a result, although many public school students do receive HCZ services, they do not have access to the full range of programs that are available in the charter schools. Because it is a neighborhood-based effort—not applied to or governed at the city level—HCZ does not itself fit into the definitional parameters we've adopted for our project, but it is important nonetheless as a frequently cited paradigm for efforts that do have such a city-wide focus.

Promise Neighborhoods

When President Obama visited the Harlem Children's Zone during his 2008 campaign, he was so impressed with its vision that he pledged to create at least 20 other "Children's Zones" around the country. True to his word, one of the Obama administration's first initiatives was to establish a "Promise Neighborhoods" program that seeks "to significantly improve the educational and developmental outcomes of children and youth in our most distressed communities, and to transform those communities by …. building a complete continuum of cradle-to-career solutions of both educational programs and family and community supports, with great schools at the center" (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

In 2010, the Promise Neighborhoods program awarded one-year planning grants of up to $500,000 each to 21 communities across the country. In 2011 and 2012, the Department awarded a total second round of 12 implementation grants that ranged from $1.5 million to $6 million per year for three to five years and 25 additional planning grants (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Promise Neighborhoods is now in 20 states and the District of Columbia. The process of applying for and winning a Promise Neighborhoods grant encourages partnership and support at the city level, so, although resulting programs may have a sub-city geographic focus, in at least some cases their supportive coalition qualifies them as a local cross-sector collaborative as we've defined the term.

Say Yes to Education

Say Yes to Education was founded in the 1980s by George Weiss, a wealthy investment banker, who made a commitment to a group of sixth graders in inner-city Philadelphia that if they successfully graduated from high school, he would guarantee their college tuition. Initially, Weiss spent much of his personal time counseling and supporting these youngsters through their middle and high school years. He then extended his program to a number of schools in New York City, Hartford, and Cambridge and developed a more formal web of tutoring, counseling, health, and other programs to help students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds prepare for college (Maeroff, 2013).

In 2007, Weiss and Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey, Say Yes's president, decided to bring their program to scale by extending the college-tuition guarantee, and the range of

wraparound supports, to all of the students of a high-need urban community. Syracuse, New York, a struggling post-industrial city with some 20,000 public school students largely from low-income and minority families, was the site they chose for this ambitious venture. City and county officials pledged their support, and the school district agreed to devote to educational enhancements and wraparound services required for the Say Yes program the entire $3,500 in additional per-student funding that they were slated to receive as a result of a state-court school-funding-equity ruling (Maeroff, 2014). Say Yes's ability to extend its college scholarship guarantee to the hundreds of students who graduate each year from Syracuse's high schools was aided by strong support from Nancy Cantor, then chancellor of Syracuse University. She not only arranged for a substantial number of scholarships to Syracuse University for local high school graduates, but she also helped Say Yes organize a consortium of over 40 public and private universities throughout the Northeast who also pledged substantial scholarship support.

Say Yes's theory of action is based not only on the college scholarship incentive and the associated wraparound student supports, but also on a number of systems and structures that leverage support and resources of the school district, the city, the county, and many local community-based organizations. Say Yes facilitates regular meetings of a community leadership council that includes a cross section of local leadership, a smaller operating committee of key local leaders, and a network of task forces that focus on specific issues. It also retained a number of expert consultants to examine programs and needs, and to help design and construct an extensive data system that seeks to provide a continuously updated personalized "growth plan" for each student that indicates whether or not he or she is on track to thrive on each of a number of academic and social-emotional indicators (Maeroff, 2014).

Say Yes currently provides Syracuse students extended-day and summer academic support programs, school-based health centers and socioemotional behavioral supports, SAT and college counseling services, a parent academy, and legal and financial supports for families (Say Yes to Education Syracuse, 2015). Drop-out and graduation rates in Syracuse have improved somewhat since Say Yes's arrival, but student test scores are still depressed; the program so far appears to have had a more substantial positive impact on lowering crime rates and aiding economic development and real estate values (Maeroff, 2013). Having learned from its initial experiences in Syracuse to forge deeper ties with the school board and to invest more in core educational activities, in 2012, the organization initiated a new citywide project in Buffalo, New York, where nearly 32,000 students attend the public schools (Maeroff, 2013). Say Yes has announced plans to extend its operations to one or more cities in other parts of the country; Guilford County, NC, was added in September 2015.

StriveTogether

Concern about alarmingly low education and economic statistics led a group of college presidents, business, and foundation executives and leaders of school districts and

community-based organizations in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky to come together beginning in 2003 to strengthen the skills of the local workforce so the region could compete in the global economy. These leaders soon concluded that to be successful in this endeavor, they would need to deal with the entirety of students' developmental and educational trajectory, and not just high school and college completion issues. They created the Strive Partnership, bringing together hundreds of community representatives from the school districts and business, and nonprofit groups with a shared goal of improving students' educational outcomes.

To put the plan into action, they agreed to pursue five academically focused goals that together they deemed a "Student Roadmap to Success." These goals included kindergarten readiness, supporting students inside and outside of school, providing academic help, encouraging high graduation and college enrollment, and successful college completion (Bathgate et al., 2011; Edmondson & Zimpher, 2014). The Roadmap provided all involved with a picture of the end goals of the enterprise and of the work needed to achieve them, beyond their individual perspectives.

The group agreed that the first priority should be to delineate goals and measures that would give them a concrete means for measuring whether their collective actions were actually having an impact (Edmondson & Zimpher, 2014). Organizationally, through executive leadership convenings and follow-up committee meetings, each partner accepted a specific role and contribution to meeting the benchmarks and indicators set by the group. Based on the data, the partnership leaders would then tailor future efforts, identifying services or programs that were proving essential and dropping those that were proving less productive. An administrative staff, originally comprised of employees on loan from the KnowledgeWorks Foundation, Proctor and Gamble, and other partners coordinated the work and led the partners through a planning process to help them contribute to the joint goals (Bathgate et al., 2011).

The apparent success of the Strive Partnership project in trending forward on many of their defined indicators such as kindergarten readiness, fourth and eighth grade reading scores and graduation rates (Bathgate et al., 2011), as well as their transformative approach to social change, generated broad national interest in cross-sector collaboration. In 2011, Nancy Zimpher, then president of the University of Cincinnati and one of the prime initiators of the Strive approach, and Jeff Edmondson, a former KnowledgeWorks executive who had led the "backbone" administrative team for Strive Cincinnati, formed the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network. Within two years, projects in over 100 cities throughout the country sought to affiliate with this national network. Recently, the organization declared that only projects that have committed to their theory of action for effective implementation of collective impact and are making progress toward those goals will be accepted as members of the network. By early 2015, 53 community partners in 28 states had made this commitment (StriveTogether, 2015).

The Relationship to the Concept of Comprehensive Educational Opportunity

Most of these contemporary cross-sector collaborations appear to adopt the comprehensive educational opportunity approach as their underlying educational theory. Thus, Say Yes to Education bases its educational program on a "comprehensive" range of supports that specifically includes, among other things, extended day/year programming, mentoring, tutoring, family supports, health care, and early child initiatives (Maeroff, 2013; Say Yes to Education, 2014). The Harlem Children's Zone is committed to a "holistic approach" based on "comprehensive supports" that include each of the component services of comprehensive educational opportunity, as well as many other wraparound programs (Harlem Children's Zone, 2015; Tough, 2008). Promise Neighborhoods seek to build "a complete continuum of cradle-through-college-to-career solutions … of both educational programs and family and community supports … with great schools at the center" (Promise Neighborhoods, 2012). And the "full-service community schools" model includes "early childhood education, individualized instruction; individual counseling, health screening and services, mental health services, and parent education and literacy" (Dryfoos, 1994).

In contrast, the Strive network's approach, although it emphasizes a collaborative process centered largely on educational outcomes, is not based on an explicit educational theory, nor does it include any particular program components in its theory of action. Its theory of action is based on a "vision for improving outcomes for students beginning at birth, continuing into and through secondary and into and through postsecondary schooling," but its operating premise is that communities should come together, agree on outcomes, and then determine the best programmatic components for reaching those outcomes (StriveTogether, 2014). In practice, however, most Strive partnerships do appear to include many, if not all, of the programmatic components of comprehensive educational opportunity in their goals and indicators (Bathgate et al., 2011).

Our future research will explore in greater depth whether contemporary cross-sector collaborations have adopted the concept of comprehensive educational opportunity. We will pay close attention to the extent to which initiatives endeavor to affect both in- and out-of-school factors that relate to educational outcomes, the ways in which they approach this, and their results.

The Collective Impact Model of Cross-Sector Collaboration

As we've said, since Kania and Kramer introduced the term "collective impact" in 2011, the naming and framing of their version of cross-sector collaboration have proved unusually influential, generating a great deal of discussion, affecting the distribution of philanthropic and public funds, and shaping and reshaping the missions, methods, and nomenclature of hundreds of organizations interested in working together to address social problems. The specifics of collective impact were outlined in three articles written by Kania, Kramer, and Fay Hanleybrown, all of FSG, a nonprofit consulting firm that

facilitates collective impact initiatives in a number of policy domains. These articles were published in SSIR between 2011 and 2013. Additional materials, including a 2014 FSG report on evaluating collective impact, a special supplement on collective impact released in the Fall 2014 issue of SSIR, and a growing number of reports and reflections from other sources, provide further detail, context, and clarity about what collective impact entails, but the first Kania, Kramer, and Hanleybrown articles established the fundamentals for the approach.

The 2011 article, titled simply "Collective Impact," provided a concise definition and laid out the broad outlines of the general model and specific components. Using the cross-sector collaboration for education reform led by the Strive Partnership in Cincinnati as their lead example, Kania and Kramer framed collective impact as the solution to two overlapping problems: the sheer complexity of many social ills and the inability of dedicated but isolated actors to make system-wide progress. In contrast to the status quo, which they termed "isolated impact," the authors sketched out an alternative based on their experience with numerous initiatives across many problem domains. Rather than relying on a loosely organized web of nonprofit, private, and public institutions that struggle with ineffective communication, redundancy of efforts, and gaps in available services, the initiatives Kania and Kramer described featured the intentional and structured coordination of pre-existing community assets to meet needs in a systemic, comprehensive manner.

In this lead article, Kania and Kramer noted that successful examples of collective impact were rare, evidence of the effectiveness of the approach was limited, and it wasn't necessarily an appropriate approach for all types of social problems. Nonetheless, they presented five conditions as essential to collaboration. They advocated particularly for an external nonprofit management operation to support the effort (simplified in Cincinnati to include a project manager, data manager, and facilitator) and for structured processes of decision-making. They noted that collective impact was growing; for example, Strive was expanding to other locations, not by opening branch offices but by sharing a process and set of tools adaptable to local needs. Not long thereafter, in a second SSIR article, Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer (2012) reported a profusion of work embracing the name "collective impact," with "hundreds of organizations and individuals" reaching out to describe their efforts. This proliferation of new examples led FSG to refine its model of necessary conditions for the success of collective impact by proposing three preconditions for collective impact; in addition, the authors attempted to clarify and temper expectations for the rapidity of progress by sequencing collective impact projects into three phases, as shown in the box below. The authors explained that collective impact is a lengthy process requiring years of coalition building in order to establish the relationships necessary to coordinate and act effectively.

The language of this second article, like the first, was heavily prescriptive, but interwoven with more pragmatic and open-ended notes. For example, the authors

described the necessity of a strategic framework for action but observed that "it should not be an elaborate plan or a rigid theory of change" even though it was to include a clear goal, a portfolio of key change strategies, and an evaluation plan for obtaining feedback on efforts. They were explicit on the value of measurement: "Having a small but comprehensive set of indicators establishes a common language that supports the action framework, measures progress along the common agenda, enables greater alignment among the goals of different organizations, encourages more collaborative problem-solving, and becomes the platform for an ongoing learning community that gradually increases the effectiveness of all participants." However, they modified their initial prescription about external management provided by a backbone organization to acknowledge that "core backbone functions…can be accomplished through a variety of different organizational structures." And they concluded, "As much as we have tried to describe clear steps to implement collective impact, it remains a messy and fragile process."

FSG's Model of Collective Impact

Five Key Elements
1. **Common agenda**: All members of the coalition need a shared understanding of the problem and an agreed-upon approach to solving it.
2. **Shared measurement systems**: For alignment and accountability purposes, all actors need to agree on common measures of success.
3. **Mutually reinforcing activities**: Participant activities need to be coordinated to avoid overlap and gaps.
4. **Continuous communication**: In order to build trust, establish common objectives, and build and maintain motivation, participants need to be in consistent contact with one another.
5. **Backbone support organization**: A separate organization is required to provide the administrative, logistical, and coordinating support necessary to create and sustain a successful partnership.

Three Preconditions
1. **An influential champion** who is capable of bringing together executive-level leaders across sectors.
2. **Funder(s)** willing to provide adequate financial resources for a minimum of two or three years.
3. **Perception of crisis:** Widespread sense that the problem has reached a point at which an entirely new approach is necessary.

Three Phases
1. **Initiate action:** The project should focus on identifying the key players and existing work in the policy area, collect baseline data from which they can later measure progress, and form the initial governance structure.
2. **Organize for impact**: The project should create the backbone organization, establish common goals and shared measures, and align the participating organizations around those goals and measures.
3. **Sustain action and impact**: This phase includes the systematic collection of data, the prioritization of specific action areas, and continual course correction.

A year later, in a third article in SSIR, Kania and Kramer (2013) further dialed back on prescription, acknowledging that cross-sector collaboration was complicated and difficult work. Some problems seem intractable; "even as practitioners work toward the five conditions of collective impact we described earlier, many participants are becoming frustrated in their efforts to move the needle on their chosen issues." These must be addressed through emergent initiatives, because proven solutions have not been developed for them, actions around them tend to have unpredictable consequences, and significant uncertainty exists as conditions shift over time. Rather than following an agreed-upon strategy, emergent solutions instead create structures to facilitate interactions and decision making that can respond to unpredictable developments. In this article, Kania and Kramer reframed the five conditions for collective impact as "rules for interaction that lead to synchronized and emergent results" by joining "the power of intentionality with the unpredictability of emergence." Despite this change in tone, the focus on measurement for feedback and continuous improvement remained.

FSG continued to explore the workings of collective impact while supporting and advocating for the approach. For example, they studied the operations and value of backbone organizations through research on six local backbone organizations in Cincinnati (this was an early indicator of the presence of multiple collaborative initiatives in a single locale). This work was reported in six separate SSIR articles (some of which were sponsored supplements to the main publication). Separately, FSG published a three-part guide to evaluating collective impact. In the meantime, SSIR continued the conversation by publishing an article debating the value of coordination versus cooperation (Boumgarden & Branch, 2013), one examining the proliferation of "competing backbones, partially attached sub-backbones, and overlapping backbones" (Thompson, 2014), and one discussing the community's role in collective impact (Harwood, 2014).

Recent Research and Research Gaps on Collective Impact and Cross-Sector Collaboration for Education

To date, there have been very few academic studies or rigorous program evaluations of collective impact or other cross-sector collaborations for education. Many articles and reports about these efforts, while they include substantive and often self-critical observations, come from proponents like foundations, consulting firms, and projects (e.g., Education Northwest, 2013; Gold, 2013; Maeroff, 2013; Stewart, 2013; Summers & Honold, 2013; Walker, Rollins, Blank, & Jacobson, 2013). The body of independent literature that takes a critically reflective and analytic approach to these initiatives in education is limited in number and scope, focusing narrowly on a single effect like housing price increases following school improvement or single case studies with some depth of analysis (e.g., Choi, 2013; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Ishimaru, 2013; LaRocco, Taylor, & D'Annolfo, 2014; LeGower & Walsh, 2014). Nevertheless, recent research points to a number of critical issues that future research must explore to illuminate and improve these ventures. This section points out several of these.

Moving from Founding Conditions to Sustaining Action. A central objective of collective impact and cross-sector collaboration is to align the work of disparate partners around common goals, but that appears to be a challenge for some groups, taking so much effort that little time or energy is left for actual collective action (Easterling, 2013). In the few systematic case studies and program evaluations that have been published about collective impact initiatives, it seems that not only are the founding conditions important in setting the tone, agendas, and structures of the collaborations, but they are often so tenuous that the collaborations have difficulty moving into the implementation stage and sustaining the initiative (e.g., Swanstrom, Winter, Sherraden, & Lake, 2013. Evidence suggests that the collaborations develop in stages as groups build trust, shared repertoires of action, and small wins. But, at this point, the collective action literature appears to be more focused on nurturing the creation of these initiatives than on analyzing their maintenance over time. The outcomes produced from collective impact have not yet been scrutinized, nor has there yet been much focus on whether and how collaborative efforts attain legitimacy and become institutionalized as the normal way to do the business of education. These will be important areas for future research.

Collaborating Effectively with Schools. There also seems to be an acknowledgment that education reform—both in terms of systemic change and realizing better outcomes for children and youth—is a highly complex problem defying easy answers. Consistent with research from the 1990s, the literature on collective impact suggests that working with schools poses unique problems for other agencies and individuals. It does not, as yet, provide much detail on how these problems are recognized, defined, analyzed, or addressed by collaborative partners. Despite a very few muted references to finger-pointing at school districts (e.g., Bathgate et al., 2011), there is little information on the extent to which blaming occurs, or whether partner organizations "fail into collaboration" as posited by Roberts (2000) or how disparate assessments of the nature of the problem are resolved and translated into action plans. Issues of trust are highly salient from both the schools' and other partners' perspective, especially when dealing with matters like the sharing of sensitive or private information about clients, or when one partner perceives another as lacking necessary competence for service provision (McLaughlin & London, 2013).

Involvement in Policy Making. Many cross-sector collaborations for education frame their work as "problem solving" or "meeting needs." This vague language obscures an important consideration of how much the collaborations are involved in policy making, especially regarding matters traditionally under the purview of local government, including school systems. While the conflation of governance and management may offer certain benefits and is certainly a growing phenomenon in new forms of "public management," it also changes the nature of the public arena, challenges democratic participation, and may lead to overreliance on the work of professionals and private agencies versus engaging the broader community (Ishimaru, 2013; Skocpol, 1999). These issues have not yet been taken up in the literature on collaboration for education.

Effectiveness of Governance Structures. The literature on collective impact efforts in education suggests that many projects at least try to follow the structural model incorporated into the Strive Partnership approach, which was described by Kania and Kramer in 2011 (Barnes, Born, Harwood, Savner, Stewart, & Zanghi, 2014). This may simply be because more has been written about Strive than about most other types of collaboration. This is an area in much need of exploration. The research on cross-sector governance provides a range of possible models for shared or brokered governance, and their applicability to education collaborations needs further examination.

In addition to these issues of local governance, collective impact in education presents what appears to be a unique and significant "super-structure" in the form of the national organizations, like StriveTogether, that are sponsoring and supporting local collaborations. This phenomenon is not at all reflected in the larger research on collective governance and collaboration, and we are not aware of any analogues outside of education, except perhaps organizations like United Way. Understanding how local collaborations relate to a national "home office" clearly is one important potential contribution that research on cross-sector collaborations for education could make.

Funding Challenges. Resource dependencies were noted as a prime motivation in all forms of public, private, and cross-sector collaborations. They are evident in the education sector, and much of the literature on education collaborations makes note in a general way of the challenges of securing stable and adequate resources. More detail is needed, especially in terms of how local agencies reallocate resources once they become involved in collaborations. In addition, it is unclear how many collaborations actually start from a condition of "abundance," as when many agencies are independently working in a problem space but are stepping over one another and are in need of coordination (Irby & Boyle, 2014).

Making Data More Useful and Meaningful. As we describe in a later section, information sharing and knowledge development for continuous improvement is a theme in the broad literature about collaboration, noting the importance of communication strategies and boundary practices by which knowledge is developed and transmitted. Information can focus attention and align participants around common pursuits. Performance data on outcomes can be used for feedback loops and continuous improvement, and this kind of information is also essential in managing accountabilities. These themes about data are ubiquitous in the literature on collective impact, both broadly and in the education sector. The descriptive literature on collective impact touts the use of data and outcome measurements as absolutely essential to the process. In addition (or perhaps because of this), every systematic case study or evaluation to date notes the importance of data in helping align efforts across collaboration partners, inform the public, and promote continuous improvement (e.g., Grossman, Lombard, & Fisher, 2014). Many reports note the importance of data for setting the agenda and monitoring progress (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013; Jolin et al., 2012); some describe

innovative ways of using data to map systems and resources going into the projects (e.g., Education Transformation Initiative, 2014; United Way of Southwestern Indiana, 2008); most have outcome indicators for monitoring the outcomes of the projects. But there is very little attention to the challenges of coordinating data systems, the costs of such systems, issues with sharing sensitive data that are subject to privacy protections, and the questions of how data are perceived, interpreted, and utilized by different partners. For example, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013) noted the importance of connecting data to real work in the community, helping people learn to use it, and creating a broad learning culture around data within the community; this is a topic that warrants further attention.

Despite the emphasis on data and new kinds of data potentially available for incorporation into multi-indicator systems, at the moment it appears that the data indicators in use by collective impact projects are fairly conventional, and they do not often reflect a theory of action for the process steps needed to produce particular outcomes. That is, a data point around reading competency does not reflect the contributions of family social services or other aspects of a collective impact collaboration that have been marshaled to affect that outcome. In addition, as yet there seems to be little effort to develop collaborative- or network-level indicators. Instead, some indicators simply point to the separate work of member agencies, and it is hard to point to outcomes aggregated to the level of the collaborative that are not easily attributable to any one agency or partner. In other words, measurement has not yet yielded clear implications for management.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF COLLABORATION: SUPPORTING GOOD INTENTIONS WITH SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS

Social innovators and policy entrepreneurs face challenges in getting their ideas onto the public agenda. In order to build enthusiasm and win allies, they often prioritize simplicity over nuance, stress what is new over what has been tried before, and highlight possible benefits while giving perfunctory nods to probable costs. FSG has been more careful than many to acknowledge some senses in which theirs is a model in progress and not a sure-fire recipe. As previous sections have illustrated, combining multiple educational and social services, coordinating across bureaucratic offices, drawing on both governmental authority and civic resources, and developing plans suited to local contexts are not new ideas for improving education systems and outcomes. But this record of effort, while progressive in some ways, also seems episodic and disjointed, not always producing steady learning and refinement.

Understanding why that is so is important for predicting where collective impact and other promising new iterations of cross-sector collaboration might go awry and for shaping our research so it considers how dangerous tripwires can be avoided. We believe several distinct areas of research may be useful in this regard.

Research on Organizations, Governance, and Management

The longstanding scholarship on organizations in the private, public, and non-profit sectors typically has assumed that the most important organizational dynamics are lodged primarily within single structural forms, such as a freestanding business firm or governmental office. In recent decades, however, practitioners and researchers alike have asked the question of how best to organize enterprises involving multiple, interconnected units. Seeking lessons from examples drawn largely from outside of education, scholars have developed analytic and prescriptive models of what can happen when organizations attempt to collaborate and then encounter challenges. As we have discussed, many of these challenges have surfaced in one way or another in the history of collaboration around education, but responses to them have not led to incrementally more successful approaches.

In this section, we review empirical and theoretical research on collaboration drawn from organization theory, sociology, public administration, and management with the aim of extracting insights that can be useful for new cross-sector collaborations. We begin this review with three broad observations: collaboration is widespread and is growing more complicated; within it, governance and management are often intertwined; and unique forms of networked collaboration are gaining traction.

Collaboration is Pervasive and Complicated

Businesses and governments have been cooperating (and sometimes colluding) since at least the days of "privatized" tax administration and governmental and business involvement in the grain trade in ancient Rome (Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011; Strøm-Olsen, 2006). In states and municipalities, cooperation among bureaucratic units is often written directly into constitutions, charters, and other governing documents, covering matters as diverse as regional transportation systems, public utilities, parks and recreation, fire protection, storm water management, or municipal greenways. Such arrangements can take the form of information and resource sharing, service provision by one unit for another, joint actions, and cooperative decision-making (e.g., Stoner & Siffin, 1964). Often these collaborations have been straightforward and relatively uncontested, and they could be administered by relying on traditional approaches to organization and management.

Increasingly, however, collaboration has become the preferred strategy for enterprises that bring partners together in much more fraught and uncertain circumstances. In some cases, collaboration is sought following the failure of authoritative hierarchies (such as governments) or competitive structures (such as private markets) to operate effectively on their own. This may happen because the problems being addressed are more complex than a single sector can encompass, with many precipitating factors requiring intricate solutions. Even more, problems can be so large in scale and scope, with causes and consequences so enmeshed, that there is little clarity either on the nature of

the challenges involved or how best to tackle them. These are sometimes known as "wicked" problems (Roberts, 2000). Under conditions like these, collaboration has become both more pervasive and more complicated, and analysts acknowledge that it is different enough from traditional forms of organizing to require its own knowledge base (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). Such a knowledge base did not exist and thus could not benefit collaborations for education from the 1990s and earlier. But new efforts, including collective impact initiatives, could profit from this important emerging domain of scholarship and knowledge, especially since many of them are attempting to address highly complex and uncertain problems that might only be solved through new forms of collaboration.

Blurred Boundaries Between Governance and Management

A second observation is that the literature on collaboration seems to reflect increasingly blurred boundaries between policy and administration. In the past, the making of high level policy and planning decisions was conceptually and pragmatically separated from the management of implementation. That distinction has evaporated in many forms of collaboration (e.g., Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2011; Kettl, 2006; McGuire, 2006), especially under regimes of reinvented government sometimes termed the "new public management" (Hartley, Sørensen, & Torfing, 2013; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Rhodes, 1996). In these cases, policy decisions formerly in the hands of the public and its elected representatives often have been handed over to private agents acting with less direct accountability to the public.

This contemporary blending of governance and management has changed the nature of civic government. In at least one view (Osborne, 1990, cited in Rubin & Stankiewitz, 2001), government has shifted from being seen as a solution to difficult and intractable problems, to the problem itself, to a partner in problem solving. In the process, nongovernmental actors (such as foundation heads or management consultants) have taken on roles traditionally reserved for democratically chosen civic participants. More third parties provide more services that were once the responsibility of government; more corporate entities get involved in policy making; and citizen interests are represented by organizational actors instead of direct action politics (Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2007; Skocpol, 1999). To many, the blurring of boundaries between governance and management, and across institutions and organizations, represents a "hollowing out" of the state (Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2007, p. 619). It threatens the participatory underpinnings of democracy, as decisions that were once the provenance of government become transferred to private agencies and actors. Whether the divide between policy and management is wide or narrow, collaborative governance and public management function as two sides of the same coin. They link policy decision making and operational administration in new and consequential ways and raise questions about just how this works in the real world.

This is especially salient in domains such as education, traditionally a site of strongly held views and often intense conflict and contestation over the proper role of public

decision makers and private, sometimes for-profit, professionals and managers. Thus, as cross-sector collaborations, including collective impact initiatives, develop around educational challenges, it will be important to watch how governance decisions are being made, who is involved (including the public and its representatives), and whether they are becoming intermingled with operational decisions about implementation.

The Salience of Networks

A third observation emanating from the research on collaboration is that "networks" matter. Although the term has multiple usages, some fairly vague and others highly technical, it frequently is used to denote a particular organizational form different in many respects from both single organizations and other types of multi-organizational associations (Mandell, 2001). In this usage, networks are defined as having more fluid, emergent, and organic properties than tightly designed bureaucratic hierarchies, and they seem to be bound together more by social relations than by formal structures and systems (Powell, 1990). A lively stream of research examines how organizational networks operate and how they differ from one another (e.g., Mingus, 2001; Penuel, Sussex, Korbak, & Hoadley, 2006; Provan & Milward, 1995; Waite, 2010).

Networks may play an especially important role in cross-sector collaborations for education, in two respects. First, national organizations like StriveTogether seem to be functioning as umbrella structures for multiple local initiatives, and it will be important to understand exactly what the linking mechanisms are, how the local projects are connected to each other and to the national office, and what affordances and limitations these arrangements provide. Second, within localities, cross-sector collaborations exhibit a range of collaborative designs, and we expect that while some may be more tightly structured, almost in the form of bureaucratic hierarchies, many others will be loose associations held together tenuously by such elements as shared purpose, shared resources, political opportunities, or even the fear of being left out. How they behave as new forms of networks will be important to explore.

These three themes—that collaboration is increasingly a preferred organizational strategy for addressing contemporary challenges, especially in the public sector, that it occurs through means that often blur the distinction between governance and management, and that it often takes the novel form of a network—offer a set of perspectives relevant to cross-sector collaborations for education, and also point to a number of further important dimensions of collaboration. We take these up next.

Why Collaborate? Reasons and Risks

Organizational collaboration is not always an easy or automatic option. Uncovering the tacit and explicit reasons behind decisions to collaborate might be helpful in understanding how different collaborations evolve, because initial conditions and reasons for collaboration often have consequences for the subsequent framing of joint

action, the dynamics of power and conflict, choices about whether to continue collaborating, and more.

In the literature on organizational collaboration in government and business, decisions to collaborate often appear to be based in resource dependence and transaction cost economics. That is, agencies collaborate to obtain more resources for doing what they cannot do alone, and/or to reduce the costs and risks of those efforts, including political risks (Koppenjan & Enserink, 2009; Oliver, 1990).

Another rationale is the search for better outcomes in valued initiatives (Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011). Organizations may have to fail their way into collaboration, resorting to collaboration only when they do not or indeed cannot succeed otherwise (Bryson, Crosby, & Stone. 2006). Both governmental bureaucracies and market-based enterprises may experience failure, whether through the shortcomings of their particular managerial models or because single-form operations cannot sufficiently address all facets of the problems they encounter. Failure is one thing, however, and blame is another. For example, cross-sector collaborations for education often arise precisely because the local education system is not achieving across-the-board success with students. How this failure is articulated and how a collaboration positions itself around an implicit critique of education may create tensions between the school system and other partners.

Occasionally the impetus toward collaboration is more positive, oriented toward leveraging strengths or advantages, building on community assets (Kapucu & Demiroz, 2013; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993), or recognizing that knowledge has become so specialized and distributed that partners need one another for solving complex problems (Ansell & Gash, 2007). Political opportunity and social/cultural forces also motivate individuals and groups to work together (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003). Not only is it sometimes hoped that collaboration will solve complex problems, but there is also the anticipation that it will help knit the social fabric together in new ways (Bryson et al., 2006).

Some analysts suggest that collaboration is less likely when problems are complex and there is little agreement on them (e.g., Esteve, Boyne, Sierra, & Ysa, 2013), but others argue the opposite, claiming that collaboration can provide an opportunity for multiple, conflictual stakeholders to resolve differences enough to contribute jointly (Ansell, Reckhow, & Kelly, 2009). The need for legitimacy sometimes motivates organizations to join a collaboration (Donahue & Zeckhauser, 2011; Oliver, 1990), as does the desire to monitor and influence decisions made at the collaborative level that might affect the individual agencies (Laumann & Knoke, 1987). Collaboration can help participating organizations develop flexibility and resilience; on the other hand, they may present problems when they introduce uncertainty or rapid change (Baker, Kan, & Teo, 2011). Finally, organizations can decide to collaborate in order to have access to information resources that can enhance their own learning and performance (Koza & Lewin, 1998).

Agencies and organizations have their own motivations for deciding to collaborate with others, but the collaborations themselves make decisions about membership—who to invite in, who to exclude, who to ask to leave. These decisions may be based on perceptions of potential resource contributions as well as assessments of a partner's legitimate role in the collective endeavor. They can be highly consequential for setting the overall direction of the collaboration (Hudson, 2004).

Although collaboration is often viewed as a strategy for sharing or minimizing risks, it can generate risks of its own. Individuals participating in a collaborative venture may find themselves juggling the separate and potentially conflicting identities of their home organization and the collaborative initiative, creating the risk of divided loyalties. This risk can extend to the domain of mission: participants from organizations with very strong missions may have special difficulty adjusting to a collaborative mission and goal set.

Sometimes organizations and individuals may use collaboration as an opportunity to gain advantages, including political and fiscal, which puts other participants at risk of losing their own positions. Occasionally the justifications for collaboration themselves become sources of risk (Kettl, 2006). For example, acknowledging that a single organization or sector cannot succeed on its own poses the risk of having to rely on others for success or not being able to clearly justify one's own contribution to a success jointly produced.

A final risk is that while organizations often seek collaboration to acquire resources they cannot get on their own, collaboration itself generates costs that may make the scramble for resources even more worrisome.

How to Collaborate? Structural Varieties and Linking Mechanisms

In a sense, collaborations are an experiment in "just enough" togetherness. Organizations and agencies typically seek a degree of collaboration that will enable them to obtain resources and achieve goals and benefits, balanced against the concern for risks, costs, and conflicts engendered by collaboration. Decisions about whether and how to collaborate may reflect perceived levels of mission congruence and strategic value, expectations for partners' relative intensity of engagement, the magnitude of resources involved, and the involvement of collaboration-minded managers (Austin, 2000). This results in many forms of organizational collaboration, ranging from loose associations with just one or two linking mechanisms, to closer alliances or joint ventures, to comprehensive co-optations and mergers and acquisitions (Alter & Hage, 1993; Brown & Keast, 2003).

It is likely that different levels of cooperation are appropriate for different needs in different contexts. For cross-sector collaborations for education, for example, philanthropic involvement and arm's length relations may be useful for providing a wider

range of services to students but might have little impact on the development of comprehensive visions for educational and social outcomes. This might be illustrated by a civic foundation agreeing to provide funding for a new after-school tutoring program. Loose, non-binding associations might enable competing organizations to work together on some projects without activating deep-seated antipathies. Such might be the case when activist community organizations that have been critical of local schools decide to join a cross-sector collaboration.

All collaborations have some kind of formal or informal structure, comprised of roles and relationships, tasks and responsibilities, authority relations and information flows. These structures can be self-organizing and very loosely structured, with partners interacting through "emergent rules" that address situational needs (Amaral & Uzzi, 2007). But more often, formal arrangements are necessary to help align participation, decision-making, and actions among diverse members (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2009). Good working relationships and clear routines for negotiating the interests of participating parties have been shown to be helpful, especially when they provide for flexibility, adaptability, integration of actors and resources, and creative problem solving (Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). In their discussion of how collective impact initiatives were developing after the initial flurry of activity, Kania and Kramer (2013) seemed to acknowledge a middle ground of emergence, describing how initiatives make decisions about structure and process gradually instead of adopting pre-designed approaches without adaptation.

In all forms of collaboration, whether tight or loose in structure, "boundary crossing" must be accomplished to create linkages across hierarchical, functional, or internal/external divides (Agranoff & McGuire, 2003; Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, & Kerr, 2002). Organizational boundary spanners are the people who focus in multiple directions and translate interests, agendas, and operations from one unit to another. Similarly, boundary objects are materials and tools, routines, standard operating procedures, vocabularies, and almost anything else that can help one unit make sense of what another unit does so they can work together well (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). Communication is one element of boundary spanning. It is essential for sharing actionable information and building knowledge, but it also helps to set collective mindsets and establish trust, two critical conditions for effective collaboration. In addition, it can replace roles and hierarchy as sources of power, as collaborative networks increasingly rely on social relationships as the glue holding things together. The quality, strength, elasticity and permeability of communication structures are important components of collaborations, and the degree to which communication occurs is a good indicator of the strength of a collaboration (Brummel, Nelson, & Jakes, 2012).

Structural designs and linking mechanisms are salient for contemporary cross-sector collaborations for education because they may reflect key differences between successful and unsuccessful efforts. Predecessor efforts in the 1990s employed a variety of structural forms. But as Crowson and Boyd (1993) observed, bureaucratic

rigidity, lack of adequate communication across institutional boundaries, and other structural problems interfered with program development. New models for structuring collaboration may offer more opportunities for success.

Who's in Charge? Leadership, Governance, and Administration in Collaborations

Leadership, governance, and administrative functions in collaborations may be provided by individuals and/or organizations. For example, the contemporary literature on collective impact puts heavy emphasis on the role of a "backbone organization" in coordinating and administering the collaboration. But the broader literature on organizational collaboration identifies a range of viable options. Each has some advantages and disadvantages that may express themselves differently depending on the tasks, contexts, and preexisting relationships characterizing the collaboration.

In some collaborations, the entire alliance of participants often serves as a governance unit for the larger purpose being addressed by the collaboration, but the alliance itself also has to be governed and administered. In analyzing this, Provan and Kenis (2007) characterize collaborative governance along two dimensions. The first dimension is whether governance is handled completely and collectively by the organizations in the partnership (termed "shared governance") or by a single unit that centralizes management functions (termed "brokered"). Mid-range models might involve brokered management of some functions, while leaving other decisions to fully shared governance. The second dimension, relevant mostly to brokered governance models, is whether the "lead organization" is a participant member of the collaboration or an outside agency agreed upon by all participants. Among these options, shared and decentralized governance provides the greatest opportunity for balanced participation from all member organizations, while internal lead organization governance bears the potential of introducing power imbalances among participating bodies.

These governance options raise the question of the appropriate fit between governance structure and the collaboration itself. Donahue and Zeckhauser (2011) note that governmental units often find themselves taking the lead in cross-sector collaborations, but they are notoriously lacking in imagination, too conservative, and insufficiently entrepreneurial to guide effective collaborations. Provan and Kenis (2007) propose a contingency model, such that each form of governance might be most appropriate, and lead to better outcomes, under certain conditions. Salient conditions that emerged from their research included the size of the collaboration, levels of trust and goal consensus, and the need for network-level competencies for accomplishing the goals of the collaborative. In all cases, however, governance models have to cope with three tensions: balancing efficiency versus inclusiveness (that is, deciding who to invite as members), internal versus external legitimacy (making decisions that are seen as appropriate to the group while managing public expectations), and flexibility versus stability (capitalizing on the nimbleness of nonhierarchy while maintaining enough regularity to inspire trust). In the case of public-private partnerships, another

consideration is ensuring that governance roles are sufficiently transparent and democratic.

In general, the practice of leadership at the individual or interpersonal level in collaborations seems to involve the use of "steering" rather than command-and-control tactics, capitalizing on relationships, and using social tools to move groups toward agreement and action and to maintain accountability (McGuire, 2002; Page, 2003). Because participation is voluntary and all possess "the loaded gun of autonomy" (Rethemeyer & Hatmaker, 2007, p. 631), leaders must continually nurture relationships, frame the structural arrangements and rules of engagement, and facilitate the negotiations that allow participants to stay involved and exercise their autonomy within the constraints of partnership (Huxham, 2003; McGuire, 2002; O'Toole & Meier, 2004; Page, 2003). This leadership style appears even more important in the distinct organizational form of networks (Silvia & McGuire, 2010, in Baker et al., 2011). And yet, while theorists often highlight the importance of relational dynamics in networks, many actual operations employ hierarchical, top-down approaches similar to those in more structured collaborations (Döring & Schreiner, 2012).

Who to Trust? Relationships in Collaborations

Despite the optimistic, positive tones in which it is often described in the research literature, collaboration is very hard work, on an institutional level as well as an interpersonal level. Participants may encounter problems of bias, the privileging of certain perspectives, and outright exclusion. Conformity and groupthink may develop; some collaborations can result in social loafing and free rider problems, and collaboration may produce an aversion to further joint work if the effort fails (Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995).

One factor repeatedly noted in the research literature is the importance of trust, at both the institutional and interpersonal levels. Resource dependence and shared goals are two primary drivers of collaboration, but cooperation typically is actualized only in situations where trust exists (Lundin, 2007). Trust can be quite fragile in contexts where membership is fluid, people can pick up and leave, when trust has become violated, when conflicts occur, or when risks escalate out of proportion to trust (Huxham, 2003; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994). Contemporary collaboration for education will have to overcome varieties of breakdowns of trust that emerged in past efforts, for example, professional wariness between educators and social service providers (Crowson & Boyd, 1993), or mistrust due to political motives in federal subsidy programs.

What's Happening? The Role of Information and Data in Collaboration

The emphasis in the collective impact literature on building consensus around data, especially regarding measurable program outcomes, prompts the need to understand more fully how collaborations collect, use, and disseminate information. In their classic analysis of information as signal and symbol, Feldman and March (1981) described how

data can serve rational functions in organizations by focusing attention and providing evidence to be used in feedback loops and learning sequences. These functions are highlighted in many models of continuous improvement that incorporate the collection and analysis of information about processes and outcomes into cycles of planning, assessing, allocating resources, and improvement (Bryk, Gomez, & Grunow, 2011; Deming, 1981; Page, 2003). However, as Feldman and March (1981) argued, information in organizations also serves symbolic purposes that can be at odds with ongoing learning, for example to enhance the legitimacy of the organization or provide a smokescreen to obscure what is really happening.

More recently, the literature on organizations has explored how various kinds of information – often known simply as "data" – are used in performance management systems for accountability and control (e.g., Mausolff, 2004). This is not new; in many ways, performance measurement is simply a variant of the scientific management approach popularized by Frederick Taylor in the early 1900s. Although the reasoning behind performance management is that increased transparency of, and accountability for, results will lead to performance improvements, many observers have noted that the measurement of processes and outcomes for accountability often becomes separated from technical/rational learning and improvement functions.

In the research literature on organizational collaborations and shared governance structures, some analysts say almost nothing about data or information (e.g., Ansell & Gash, 2007). Others range from tepid to effusive about the value of information sharing and the use of performance measures and other data indicators of process and outcomes (e.g., Agranoff, 2008, cited in Emerson et al., 2011; Emerson et al., 2011; McGuire, 2002). When performance and outcomes are measured in a collaboration, this may signal not only that the collaboration seeks to learn, but that a critical threshold of trust, sharing, and mutual power has been reached (Baker et al., 2011; Huxham, 2003). However, while data use can support improvement and innovation, it can also divert attention to activities that may not be the most crucial or productive.

Within the broad arena of cross-sector collaborations, the collective impact movement's stress on measurement and shared data as key elements of the model aligns with recent approaches to "new public management" (Verhoest, Verschuere, & Bouckaert, 2007) and trends in performance accountability endorsed by the federal government during both the Bush and Obama administrations (McGuinn, 2006) and by the philanthropic community (Reckhow, 2012). But the assumptions made by politicians, philanthropists, and bureaucrats about how data can be used may not reflect what actually happens. Moreover, different stakeholders may react negatively to what they see as an overreliance on measurement, as reflected in organized movements of resistance to standardized testing in schools,

Data use seems to be a paradoxical practice. Quantitative measurement of processes and outcomes can sometimes seem like a "technology of distance" that structures and

expands the exercise of administrative control. But it also can engender trust among participants with differential power, interest, and access to information. Somewhat ironically, it appears that data tend to be treated as fixed and objective, and therefore seem to hold more power and authority, more often in domains with "insecure borders" and "persistent boundary problems" (Porter, 1995, p. 230). These characterizations could aptly be applied to cross-sector collaborations trying to carve out new problem spaces and new modes of operation. For example, efforts to establish comprehensive services for children and youth may rely heavily on selected data points as markers of both need and impact. But the illusion of clarity and authority surrounding agreed-upon data indicators may mask the complexity and uncertainty inherent in what the data actually point to. This runs the risk of generating inflated expectations followed by debilitating disappointments.

Networks and other forms of organizational collaborations offer many prime opportunities for sharing information created by individuals and single units and synthesizing it into new forms of knowledge that simply could not have been generated otherwise (Kumaraswamy & Chitale, 2012). Conversely, of course, there may be potent disincentives that need to be overcome, especially as participants reckon their own costs and benefits related to data against potential benefits to the whole. The operational dynamics of how information is structured, communicated, interpreted, and used may be affected by power and politics across units, by the challenges of different styles of using information, by structural gaps in information networks, and by other complexities of collaborations. This was evident, for example, in the conflicts over the sharing of confidential student information that arose between schools and social service agencies working together in the 1990s (Crowson & Boyd, 1993). And it is likely that data use evolves as collaborations go through their own life cycles. For one thing, Campbell's Law suggests that over time, a measurement comes to be an end in itself rather than the means of shared attention and action.

The technological aspects of data production and communication introduce other complexities into organizational collaboration. New communication channels and technologies can shrink transaction costs for capturing and conveying information (Bimber, Flanagin, & Stohl, 2012). But uncertain methodologies for measuring group performance at proper levels of aggregation in a collaborative enterprise, along with other forms of measurement bias and measurement error, can engender mistrust and undermine data use. Moreover, difficulties in using technology tools in some information systems that are meant to fuel collaboration can infuriate and discourage users (Chung, Ma, Hong, & Griffiths, 2012).

The methods for gathering, analyzing, and communicating performance measurements are becoming increasingly sophisticated and the need for advanced technological skills for processing data is growing. Collaborations may find themselves having to devote considerable resources to hiring and retaining technical experts who can handle this work. In some instances, this may result in covert and overt conflicts between the data

technologists and civic and programmatic leaders. It also could lead some collaborations to feel they must outsource data processing functions, with the potential costs of losing control over data and reducing the potential to build their own analytic capacity.

It is, therefore, important to examine both the rationales and the pragmatic aspects of information and data use in collaborations and to explore whether and how they can be helpful aids in innovation and effectiveness.

Broader Outcomes of Collaboration: Learning, Sustainability, and Democracy

Collaborations vary in the instrumental outcomes they pursue on behalf of their stakeholders and clients. Within the education sector, some may focus on increasing higher educational attainment and achievement for more students, while others focus on quality of life indicators such as better health, earning potential and poverty reduction, or civic virtues for participants. While goals such as these are important, the literature on organizations and collaborations also draws attention to some more general outcomes for collaborations themselves that should be kept in mind. Three of these relate to collective learning, legitimacy and sustainability, and democracy.

One type of outcome is whether collaborations are able to learn and engage in continuous improvement (Hardy, Phillips, & Lawrence, 2003). If they function as hoped and envisioned, collaborations have the potential for bringing to light the kinds of tacit knowledge often so deeply embedded in organizational contexts that they never get articulated or shared (Kogut, 1988), and they provide opportunities for testing new ideas and assessing their costs and benefits (Hartley et al., 2013). That is, do collaborations succeed in getting better at what they do?

A second important outcome of any collaboration is its continuation and legitimacy. One can imagine scenarios where collaborations would write themselves out of business, perhaps by spawning a new single agency or organization that takes care of the problem around which it was formed, or by impelling and teaching a single participant, such as a unit of local government, to address the problem in a new and effective way, or even by completely eradicating the problem. In cross-sector collaborations for education, the local education system could conceivably improve so much that the collaborative effort is no longer needed. But until that happens, collaborative ventures must find ways to ensure their own survival and development and go even farther to establish their action models as the preferred way of conducting business.

In addition, collaborations need to obtain and maintain internal legitimacy from their member organizations, including those whose failure may have spurred the initiation of the collaboration in the first place, so they will not abandon or undermine the effort. Legitimacy is a concern at the outset of a new collaboration, because doing something new and different, without selling the innovation adequately, places the collaboration at risk of not attracting adequate support. In fact, there can be a tendency at times to

imagine that the hardest work is in establishing a collaborative, and that once organizations and individuals learn to work together, maintaining the effort is straightforward. But as collaborations mature, the challenges of legitimacy and sustainability may take new forms rather than fade away. When partners perceive threats to their own interests, or when simple inertia takes over, progress can stall (Baker, 2011). Other conditions that undercut collaboration include lack of capability of the coordinating partners, insufficient commitment to innovation, and outright conflict. Even when collaborations are successful, they pose risks for participants, including the need to be accountable to other stakeholders, potential loss of important boundaries of confidentiality, the channeling of resources away from service providers and toward the collaboration itself, and the chance that other participants will express a lack of respect toward collaborators (Nowell & Foster-Fishman, 2011).

An important cautionary note about outcomes from cross-sector collaboration is offered by Moynihan and colleagues (2011). These authors note that democratic values such as transparency, equity, participation, and accountability are at risk of being subverted in collaborations that function as "performance regimes" emphasizing market-oriented tools such as strategic planning and performance measurement to drive effectiveness and efficiency. Measuring goal performance with quantitative measures puts the focus heavily on a limited range of outcomes that are hard enough to define, address, and measure in single-provider systems and harder still in collaborative delivery models. Democratic values could be part of a collaboration's scorecard but usually are left out. Moreover, performance measurement strategies often assume that the connection between measurement and management will be seamless and the measurements themselves will shape future behavior appropriately. This is overly simplistic even in simple production systems and more so within the complexities of collaboration. If "what gets measured gets managed," Moynihan et al. argue, then collaborations need to develop a full range of measurement targets, including the desired values of participatory government. To this end, process goals, and goals measured at the community, network, and participant levels, may be especially helpful (Provan & Milward, 2001).

These brief descriptions of different aspects of collaboration, drawn from organizational research and theory, point to many characteristics that are likely to vary in the cross-sector collaborations for education that are the focus of our field research. Our task will be to describe and analyze these characteristics and explore how they combine to produce collaborations that progressively improve, meet their goals, and/or achieve stability and legitimacy in their contexts.

Competing Interests and the Politics of Collaboration

Proponents of collaboration and comprehensive approaches to local challenges often assume well-meaning actors who share common interests and who must simply be brought together in order for good things to happen. They will then come to better understanding of one another, acquire better information on local problems, and

develop an organization infrastructure for making decisions and implementing them. Political science often starts from a different base, with the assumption that people and organizations have values and interests that do not neatly or easily align. Political science assumes that the distribution of power and influence is uneven. It assumes that the particular venue within which decisions are made has an effect on which sets of interests get greater or lesser attention. Starting with these assumptions leads to a different perspective on why previous efforts have not had greater success and how newer initiatives might fare better.

This section provides a review of literature that focuses on the politics of collaboration when interests don't neatly align. The first two sections focus on tensions between local interests and outside interests or larger communities. One zeroes in on the political history of federal place-based programs to highlight the tensions between centralization and decentralization and between national and local venues for decision-making. The second deals with similar issues of inside versus outside, but with particular attention to how national foundations interact with local communities. Following that are two sections that consider civic capacity building within local arenas. The first of these considers the tradeoffs that may exist between broad coalitions and focused ones and elite-centered efforts and those that engage wider and more grassroots actors at different stages in the process. The second highlights the particular political challenges involving race and ethnicity.

The Intergovernmental Politics of National Governmental Initiatives to Improve Cities

Since the mid-1950s, national urban policy has wrestled with the challenge of revitalizing central cities through major initiatives like urban renewal, the Community Action Program, Model Cities, and empowerment zones. As described earlier, these were "place-based" initiatives, focused on improvement in geographically defined areas (usually cities or neighborhoods within them), as distinguished from "people-based," or mobility, programs—such as housing or school choice—that aim to help individuals or families better their circumstances by facilitating their exit from bad situations in pursuit of better neighborhoods, schools, or other supporting institutions.

Besides a focus on revitalizing places, programs from urban renewal through empowerment zones shared the attempt to find a workable and effective balance between the competing pressures that emerge when funding, laws, and regulations involve federal, state, and local government; when initiatives require partnerships among government, nonprofit, and for-profit actors; and when local elites and local citizens do not always share the same priorities. Federal funds were deemed necessary to make up for local fiscal limits and to incentivize local elected officials to address the needs of poor and black neighborhoods that lacked political muscle to demand these effectively on their own, but dependence on outside money left such initiatives vulnerable to shifting national politics and priorities. Although each of these efforts met with charges of representing the intrusion of "big government," each was premised on

the involvement of private partners, whether for-profit developers and local business elites, as with urban renewal and empowerment zones, or nonprofit community-based and social service organizations as with the Community Action Program and Model Cities.

Here, too, the programs struggled to find the right balance between providing their partners enough autonomy and influence to attract their participation and retaining enough central and government control to ensure that the goals defined by nationally elected leaders were not ignored, redirected, or flouted by private entities more concerned with their own economic interests or organizational needs. For example, while Congress may have intended urban renewal as a way to steer and support big city efforts to clear slums and out-of-date economic infrastructure, in some places it was transmuted into a targeted program of "Negro Removal" (Rossi & Dentler, 1961; Teaford, 2000). Some policy architects envisioned the Community Action Program as a way to give relatively disempowered groups an opportunity to shape efforts to revitalize their neighborhoods, but in some places the programs were captured by groups with controversial agendas that sparked sharp political backlash, while in others they were captured by local political machines that used them to supplement their pools for patronage (Greenstone & Peterson, 1973; Moynihan, 1969).

The history of federal place-based revitalization initiatives reveals some elements of social learning, as each successive effort attempted to correct for the most obvious failures of the preceding ones. For example, urban renewal was primarily a bricks and mortar approach to housing and community development, but subsequent initiatives reflected the lesson that social services were also required if renewal efforts were going to benefit the populations in declining cities and not simply buff up the physical appearance of downtown neighborhoods. Writing about the Community Action Program, Greenstone and Peterson (1973) highlighted the importance of education and job training as well as the need for "better coordination among existing government agencies serving a low-income clientele, such as the school system, state employment service, and local departments of welfare, housing, youth and health, together with private social welfare agencies." The Community Action Program also was designed to bypass locally elected officials who, based on the urban renewal experience, were perceived as untrustworthy partners. Funding would be channeled to community-based organizations and leaders whose problems the programs were meant to address, but subsequent efforts reinvolved local officials, in order to provide more coordination, capacity, and alignment with local policies. Model Cities was meant to better concentrate resources in the belief that sticky urban problems required substantial investment drawing from resources across different bureaucracies; however, congressional politics spread the resources thinly across more places than originally envisioned, and obstacles to cross-agency collaboration proved no easier to surmount at the local level than was the case in Washington, D.C. (Frieden & Kaplan, 1977; Haar, 1975).

Shifting partisan and ideological trends, along with changing fiscal conditions, also account for some of the evolution of national place-based policies. The transition to the Nixon administration spelled the end of Model Cities before it really had a chance to demonstrate whether it would succeed or fail. Within a year of taking office, the administration proposed over a 40% decrease in the program's budget, and the program lost impetus, finally ending in 1974 after only eight years. Until the 1980s, the elasticity of the progressive federal income tax meant that the national government often had surpluses even when local governments were economically distressed, but the Reagan administration successfully pushed to make tax brackets automatically reflect inflation. That meant Congress would have to pass tax increases openly if it wanted to increase revenues, and reluctance to take that politically unpopular step made it more difficult subsequently for local governments to count on continued and unfettered federal support.

The evolution of the empowerment zones approach further reveals the sensitivity of federal place-based initiatives to changing political currents and suggests the importance of local capacity and buy-in. Enterprise Zones, a precursor to Empowerment Zones, was an approach to urban revitalization that fit well with the antigovernment, pro-market ideas that the Reagan administration brought to the national policy agenda in the 1980s. The core idea was to eliminate or greatly reduce taxes and regulation in distressed neighborhoods in the expectation that this alone would suffice to encourage investment, which would lead to jobs and, eventually, amelioration of other social ills. While the program was never signed into law (Lemann, 1994), the effort to do so helped to catalyze a series of state-initiated Enterprise Zone laws (Green & Brintnall, 1991), and President Clinton subsequently refashioned the idea into one that fit with a "New Democrat" vision of how national and local resources, and public and private interests, could be coordinated.

The Empowerment Zones (EZ) initiative, launched in 1993, combined elements of the market-oriented strategy but "also met the objections raised by Democrats that an enterprise zones program must go beyond tax incentives [and deregulation] to include direct federal assistance for community development and social programs" (Rich & Stoker, 2014)**.** Rich and Stoker described the program as comprising "something old, something new." They identify four themes that characterize both EZs and earlier federal efforts:

1. how to craft a *comprehensive attack* on the problems of concentrated poverty and its consequences;
2. how to design an *institutional entity capable of coordinating* a comprehensive antipoverty initiative and, in particular, where (inside or outside city government) to locate such an entity;
3. how to *mobilize and engage residents* in distressed neighborhoods and the groups and organizations that serve them in the design and execution of revitalization strategies; and

4. how to effectively *engage state governments* in urban revitalization initiatives. [emphasis added] (p. 36)

Rich and Stoker provide case studies of empowerment zones in six cities (Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia). These initiatives vary in multiple ways, including the extent of collaboration, the degree of citizen influence at various stages, and the kinds of outcomes they emphasized. The most important correlates of program success, they conclude, had to do with the capacity of local governance and the extent of citizen participation. "While we appreciate the virtues of collaboration," they concluded, "our research suggests that collaborative processes alone are not enough" (p. 227). Good local government "generates, channels, and sustains capacity so that energy is directed at problem solving" (p. 228). Community participation, they found, could undermine success under some conditions, but overall it played positive roles in shaping local responses that fit local context, tapping additional energy, ideas, and specialized knowledge that would not otherwise have been available, and expanding public accountability. In other words, the politics behind collaborative efforts, especially the involvement of local governments, are consequential.

The Politics of Philanthropy: Foundations as Catalyst, Supporter, Arbiter, and Target

Foundations and other donors are an important part of the collective impact story. At least some of the momentum in the use of the term "collective impact" may be attributable to grant seekers' recasting their work to conform to the label in order to open funding channels not otherwise available. But this role of philanthropy can be double-edged. Foundations are sometimes better at getting balls rolling than keeping balls in the air. And even when they try to stay in the background and leave key decisions to others, others often regard them as the central actors. That can lead some grantees to feel dependent and act in ways that are overly deferential. It can lead others to become resentful of what they see as intrusion or cooptation of local values and control. These historically manifested problems may be exacerbated in the contemporary era as foundations have become less locally bound and more instrumental in pursuit of their own visions (Hess & Henig, forthcoming; Reckhow, 2012).

The central role of foundations in collective impact is best understood in the context of longer-term shifts that have been unfolding within the public and philanthropic sectors. Shifts in government and social welfare approaches have reduced direct government funding in favor of greater reliance on partnerships and contractual arrangements with nonprofit organizations (Boris & Steurle, 1999; Lenkowsky, 1996; Salamon, 1995; Salamon & Elliott, 2002). Foundations, which once considered themselves an alternative to government as a venue for pursuing the public good, have been drawn into increasingly complex relationships with government and the nonprofits they fund. In these relationships of mutual dependence, each sector simultaneously prods, partners with, and follows the lead set by the others. Many see this closer relationship to government as a realistic and functional response to the fact that neither sector has the

capacity to solve tenacious social problems on its own. But others warn of dangers if nonprofits generally become too dependent on government contractors, who can be fickle partners and who may stifle the innovative role that nonprofits and foundations might otherwise provide (Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

At more or less the same time, many foundations began to scrutinize their own practices. Sometimes this came at the urging of new board members, drawn from corporate sectors, and sometimes it infiltrated via government efforts to shift from a focus on inputs ("how much are we spending to address this problem?") to outcomes ("are we moving the dial in terms of the outcomes we care about?"). The result was pressure to professionalize, to reduce reliance on personal relationships and intuitive judgments about the sincerity and commitment of nonprofit leaders, and to devote more attention to bottom-line questions about effectiveness and making sure the foundation was getting the most "bang for the buck." Foundations have become more intentional about their missions and measurement of impact, looking for niches in which they might specialize, requiring organizations they support to provide more data about their spending and performance, and increasingly subjecting themselves to some of that same pressure of measured performance accountability (Anheier & Leat, 2006; Barman, 2002).

As with the move toward closer alignment with government, foundations' efforts to champion performance accountability have been met with both admirers and detractors. The former see this as a corrective to what some saw as a casual tendency by foundations to develop cozy and comfortable relationships with favored recipients without any rigorous attention to whether their money was being well spent. The latter fret that the emphasis on outcomes narrows the vision and impact of foundations, leading them to pursue measurable goals over others that might be more meaningful, and that the emphasis on accountability corrodes the sense of partnership and trust with their recipient organizations**.**

Some of these changes came later to the education world than to other areas of foundation interest, but they have begun to appear there in equal measure (Hess & Henig, forthcoming). Although less extensive than the broad literature on foundations, new attention to education philanthropy includes studies and reports that are largely celebratory (Broad, 2012; Brooks, 2005; Lenkowsky, 1996), others that are sharply critical (Barkan, 2013; Ravitch, 2013; Saltman, 2010; Scott, 2009), and a small but growing body of empirical works that are more descriptive and analytic (Hess, 2005; Reckhow, 2012; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014).

These studies highlight the emergence of a new set of education donors drawing their funds and culture from media and technology sectors rather than industrial and utility sectors; shifts in orientation even among older foundations, making them more focused and intentional in their giving; a relative shift away from place-based foundation giving to giving across a wider geographic area; and a shift away from giving to individual

schools, traditional school districts, and member-based organizations to support for a new range of nonprofit intermediary organizations that operate outside formal government parameters and depend on grants and contracts rather than dues-paying members for their operating funds (Reckhow, 2012).

In their desire to leverage change, some education funders have decided that the power of good ideas and evidence is not enough. They have shifted some of their attention to the need to find—or build—local political constituencies to press for and to sustain their new policy initiatives. Reckhow and Snyder (2014) specifically examined the policy advocacy related to grant making of the 15 largest K-12 grant makers for 2000, 2005, and 2010. They found:

1. Funding for national policy advocacy grew from 2000 to 2010. Total annual giving by the 15 funders increased from $486.6 million in 2000 to $843.7 million in 2010 (a 73.4% increase), and giving for national advocacy and research grew from $56.3 million to $110.6 million (a 96.4% increase).
2. Funding for traditional public education institutions declined; for example, funding for traditional public schools dropped from just over 16% to just over 8% and for state DOEs from almost 12% to less than 2%.
3. Support for jurisdictional challengers, "organizations that compete with or offer alternatives to public sector institutions," increased. For example, their funding for charter schools increased from about 3% to about 16% and funding for alternative institutions for teacher recruitment and training (such as Teach for America) grew from less than 1% to almost 10%.
4. The big donors' grants have been converging on a shared set of organizations. In 2000, 23% of major foundations' grant dollars were given to organizations that received funds from two or more major foundations; this increased to 64% of grant monies in 2010.

The specific turn toward advocacy and coalition building has champions who see it as the culmination of a long learning process through which foundations may have now found the right balance between initiating reforms and ensuring they are implemented, between promoting their own ideas and supporting structures that can better fit ideas to local circumstances, between using civil society to fill in for government and exploiting the legitimacy and capacity that elected governments can bring to bear, and between tapping the innovation and passion of those seeking to do good and insisting on the institutions and focus that performance accountability systems can provide.

The idea of collective impact through cross-sector collaboration nestles nicely within these trends in philanthropic thinking and development. Adopting a system-wide umbrella structure that incorporates multiple kinds of service deliverers holds out the promise of increasing efficiency through coordination and the elimination of duplicative efforts. Incorporating formal government (e.g., by way of including mayors and school superintendents), which is another defining element of collective impact, addresses the

sense that foundations need to leverage their donations by influencing public policy (Greene, 2005). Incorporating civic organizations and community-based groups holds out the prospect of creating an advocacy voice and a vehicle for sustaining initiatives when formal leadership turns over and, eventually, when the foundation moves on to other places and priorities. Partnering with a "backbone" organization gives foundations a trusted on-the-spot partner to whom they can delegate responsibility for the kinds of day-to-day decisions that are dictated by local context and change. And stressing the importance of measured outcomes aligns with foundations' growing commitment to accountability and confidence and comfort with the notion that social progress can be measured and needs to be if progress is to be maintained.

But there are potential risks to local communities if their efforts become too dependent upon philanthropic funding, rather than more stable and deeper public channels of funding, or too dependent on the visions and priorities of those funders rather than ideas and visions crafted within communities themselves. And there are risks to foundations, too. Funders cannot ignore the possibility that by putting too much reliance on local stakeholders whose interest and vision may be narrower and more self-serving than hoped for, support for cross-sector collaborations might end up distorting efforts. This could happen, for example, if local partners, in their eagerness to demonstrate adherence to the prescribed model, rush to adopt outcome measures without first engaging in thoughtful and public deliberation, rigidly pursue specific fixed outcomes at the expense of pragmatic adjustment to changing conditions, or short-circuit the development of broad and deeply inclusive coalitions in pursuit of local elite-centered focus and coherence. Such risks are of special concern if cultivating a tighter relationship between networks and funders preempts that between local leaders and their local constituents.

Civic Capacity and the Politics of Coalition Building and Maintenance

Education policy and politics in the U.S. used to be a much more localized affair and one in which school districts were institutionally buffered from the normal ebbs and flows of partisan electoral politics. As federal and state courts became more aggressive in enforcing broader norms about racial and fiscal equity, the cocoon of localism was burst. And today presidents, Congress, governors, and state legislators are increasingly involved in education. In the process, school districts have also seen their orbit of responsibility penetrated by outside actors: not just state and federal governments but also local general purpose politicians—strong mayors and ambitious city councils—and nonlocal private and for-profit actors including foundations, publishers, testing companies, alternative teacher-training organizations, charter management organizations, and the like (Bulkley & Burch, 2011; Henig, 2013; Marsh & Wohlstetter, 2013).

A substantial literature in political science explores the conditions under which different organizations, interests groups, and other political actors find ways to work together. Political scientists tend to assume that individuals and groups have conflicting interests:

when one wins, others typically lose. This implies that collaboration is something that must be explained: it is not a natural state and even when tactical considerations steer groups toward working with one another (for example, to get legislation passed), they are presumed to be keeping an eye out for where their interests diverge from their allies of the moment.

Much of the literature on the politics of coalition building explicitly or implicitly acknowledges the challenges articulated by Mancur Olson. In his classic text, *The Logic of Collective Action,* Olson (1971) explained that when a "collective good" is at stake—something that would benefit all people or groups in a particular subset, even if they did not themselves pay for the benefit with time, money, or political effort—rational self-interested actors have an incentive to "free ride" by letting others carry the cost of delivering the collective good, with the result that voluntary coordinated efforts often will be anemic or not take place at all. Olson argued that this incentive to free ride can be managed, however, if "selective incentives" also are allocated—benefits that accrue only to members who participate. But this entails a delicate balancing act: respecting the need to provide collaborating groups with a pay-off without allowing those internal pay-offs to override pursuit of the collective goals or to come out of the hide of nonparticipating groups that also have legitimate needs.

Much of the literature on the politics of collaboration focuses on lobbying and interests groups at the national level (Hojnacki, 1997; Holyoke, 2003; Hula, 1999), but more directly relevant to cross-sector collaboration are the studies of civic capacity, coalition building, and the challenge of sustainable reform in big city politics (Clarke, Hero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erickson, 2006; Gold, Henig, Orr, Silander, & Simon, 2011; Henig, Hula, Orr, & Pedescleaux, 1999; Orr, 2000; Portz, Stein, & Jones, 1999; Shah & Marschall, 2005; Shipps, 2003; Stone, 1998; Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001). "Civic capacity" refers to the ability of some communities to have a range of actors, including public officials as well as business, nonprofit, and community groups, shape a common perception of reigning challenges and work together to pursue them through both formal and informal channels. The National Science Foundation-funded Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project empirically explored variation in the sources and consequences of civic capacity in 11 central cities (Stone et al., 2001).

The civic capacity research established the importance of broad and multi-sector coalitions as a potential antidote to the tendency of urban school reform initiatives to fall apart over time. Hess, in his book on "spinning wheels" in urban school reform, traced some of the transitory and shallow nature of urban school reform to leadership turnover, particularly to big-city superintendents who—because they know that micromanaging school boards will provide them little prospect of serving long tenures—have an incentive to start new and flashy initiatives to build their reputations as innovators and increase their career prospects while avoiding the harder and longer-term work of improving core instruction (Hess, 1998). As developed by the Civic Capacity and Urban Education Project, and drawn out in subsequent work (Briggs, 2008; Sirianni, 2009), the

civic-capacity literature suggests that embedding the reform agenda in a broader coalition that includes groups that are stable stakeholders in the educational health of the community makes it more likely that positive momentum can be maintained even when formal leaders come and go.

The importance of local supportive constituencies also gains credence from the literature on the politics of policy implementation. One strain of implementation literature highlights the tendency of top-down policy initiatives to be delayed, diffused, co-opted, or ignored as implementation decisions are handed down the chain from Washington, D.C., to local public and private actors (Derthick, 1972; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984). Another emphasizes the special challenges of implementation in a "loosely jointed," hard to monitor and steer sector like education (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Elmore, 2004; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977; Weick, 1976). One way to respond to these implementation challenges is to sharpen mandates, reinforce monitoring and oversight, tighten lines of accountability, and ratchet up sanctions for noncompliance; this has been the primary strategy associated with the test-based accountability movement that began in the 1980s but was sharply accelerated by No Child Left Behind (Anagnostopoulos, Rutledge, & Jacobsen, 2013). But another has been to encourage broader involvement by supportive constituencies at the local level, arming them with the information and capacity to initiate corrective action when formal agencies fail to act with sufficient energy or effectiveness (McCubbins, Noll, & Weingast, 1987; McCubbins & Schwartz, 1984). The emphasis on outcome indicators expressed within the collective impact literature is compatible with this idea that local stakeholders, if they have access to meaningful data and a platform for mobilizing when problems arise, could keep policymakers honest, using democratic pressure—rather than simply depending on bureaucratic regulation to ensure that policies are carried out with fidelity and effectiveness.

The literature on civic capacity especially highlights the importance of mobilizing both formal and informal mechanisms for getting things done. Formal governance is housed in institutions like school boards and mayors' offices. Formal government authority can be substantial, but it is not sufficient to tackle tough social challenges. Governance regimes include formal officials, but also the array of civic actors they enlist and depend upon for resources, knowledge, and support if they are going to succeed. Stone et al. (2001) emphasize the role of local governance regimes, binding elected officials and civic stakeholders, as sources for organizing capacity and linking it to democratic structures. Swanstrom et al. (2013) take this further based on their case study of 24:1, a collaborative initiative in the Normandy School District outside of St. Louis. Despite noting substantial successes in mobilizing the community and encouraging cooperation in place of conflict, they reflect on the continued fragility of the effort and suggest that strong institutions must also be in place. But Briggs (2008), noting that strong urban regimes are elusive and their formal processes constraining, argues that a strong regime is not necessary if there are "civic brokers" able to step up in their stead (p. 302). In particular, civic actors may be in position to add "soft power" to the formal authority of

governments—the "magnetism and informal authority to influence the actions of others [that] comes from perceived integrity, trustworthiness, and values that resonate…" (p. 39).

A second relevant finding of the civic-capacity literature, however, is that sustaining coalitions around schooling, which involves investment in the human capital of a community, is more difficult than doing so around physical and economic development. Indeed, in many cities, partnerships between municipal government and the downtown business community turned their attention to school reform after reasonably successful collaborations to promote urban renewal, commercial revitalization, and the creation of more vibrant downtown areas. The same organizations, often led by the same individuals and employing many of the same strategies, rolled up their sleeves to tackle school reform and found they were on trickier ground. Maintaining system-wide efforts to invest in human capital is simply harder: compared with physical redevelopment, investment in human capital involves aiming for outcomes that are more uncertain, less readily quantified, and under the best of circumstances likely to be much slower to manifest themselves. The causal chains between the policy levers often pulled in the hopes of improving outcomes in schools—levers such as smaller class size, improved teacher training, or accountability; charter schools; standards reform—are more indirect, speculative, and sensitive to context and implementation quality. As traditionally conceptualized, too, the costs of meaningful education reform are near term and material (including not just the costs of the programs themselves, but also the disruption of neighborhoods and the teaching profession).

For much of the 20th century, large urban school districts were buffered from political turmoil by traditions of localism (which kept national reform notions at bay) and embedded bureaucracies and strong teacher unions (which deflected local demands for change). The high-stakes partisan and ideological battles at the national level, and the broad institutional changes that have been occurring since *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), make education a "high reverberation" policy subsystem "characterized by frequent reshuffling of mobilized stakeholders, multiple and strongly felt competing value and belief systems, deeply held stakes by both educators (the professional providers of education) and parents (the consumers), and ambiguous boundaries" making the prospects for stable and steady reform highly problematic (Stone et al., 2001). Traditional regimes increasingly are challenged by a new set of actors and ideas. These emergent reform regimes "often substitute a national constituency for what historically was a very localized one and emphasize expertise in management and technology in place of the traditional focus on pedagogical and instructional skills" (Henig, 2013, p. 151). Included in the mix are national charter management organizations; publishers and testing firms; consulting organizations such as McKinsey, Parthenon, or the Boston Consulting Group; advocacy organizations like StudentsFirst and Stand for Children, and national foundations, like Gates, as discussed above (Bulkley & Burch, 2011; Henig, 2013). Such external forces can bring new ideas

and needed challenges to local complacency, but they also contribute to political volatility and make the challenge of maintain civic capacity more complicated.

Along with the broader literature on urban governance regimes that informed it, the literature on civic capacity also underscores that it matters which groups and interests are incorporated as part of the network of public and private stakeholders that operate between elections to shape policy agendas (Lauria, 1997; Shipps, 2003, Stone, 1989). While business interests are nearly always important components of urban policy regimes, in some cities public employee unions, civil rights organizations, and community-based organizations are also at the table, and where that occurs there is more likely to be a progressive tilt to the policies pursued. Briggs (2008), for his part, makes the case that change may be initiated at the grassroots level, but that exclusive reliance on grassroots may be unreliable: "our problems demand the attention and continuous learning of policy makers, as well as resource providers, opinion leaders, and other influentials ('grasstops') as well as 'grassroots' stakeholders" (p. 309).

The Politics of Race and Ethnicity

Of great importance is the recognition of the often charged and sometimes subtle ways in which racial and ethnic diversity complicates the challenges of sustaining broad coalitions in predominantly African-American cities (Henig et al., 1999) and multi-racial and ethnic communities (Clarke et al., 2006). Very positive changes—in the extent to which minorities have gained positions of authority within schools, schools systems, and local politics, and in the views of average Americans about race and the potential and desirability of narrowing race-based achievement gaps—have masked the fact that race and difference remain as powerful forces. The school reform movement has downplayed attention to race and ethnicity for a combination of reasons, including a conviction that we really are moving into a post-racial society, a suspicion that continued movement in that direction is more likely when issues are framed in race-neutral terms, and concern that race remains a sensitive political wildcard that can scramble lines of alliance and disrupt existing coalitions. Even where racial change has created black-led cities and school systems, Henig et al. (1999) found that race and racial identity impeded coalition building via effects on both African Americans and their potential allies.

Because public schooling has played a critical historical role in the advancement of black families and neighborhoods, and because the profession of education made it possible for black teachers and principals to play critical leadership roles in black neighborhoods and within the civil rights movement, black political and community leaders are wary of education reforms that threaten to undercut black professionals employed by school systems or the ties between local schools and the surrounding neighborhoods. Yet many of the favored proposals for school reform—value-added assessments for teachers, closing under-performing schools, and favoring "schools of choice" such as charter schools, over those rooted in local attendance zones—are perceived to do just that. At the same time, "the high salience of race also imposes

constraints on white actors in local education," feeding a reticence to take leadership roles lest their involvement be framed in racial terms as part of a racially motivated conspiracy to "recapture" local education systems and make them more responsive to the interests of "gentry" families and a corporate cartel (Henig et al., 1999, p. 277). Tight control and a-racial framing may keep such lines of racial sensitivity unprovoked for periods of time, but the research on civic capacity and urban school reform suggests that it often does so at the cost of a subsequent backlash and draining of enthusiasm and camaraderie.

DRAWING TENTATIVE LESSONS FROM HISTORY AND THEORY

Our broader research project is intended to provide empirical evidence about how things have changed and how transferable to local education collaborations are lessons derived elsewhere. This is the first of what will be a series of reports, with future ones presenting findings from our broad scan of local cross-sector education-focused collaborative efforts and more detailed case studies of the origin, development, and early results of efforts in several urban sites. Recent accounts of the resurgence of cross-sector collaboration thus far say too little about political conflict, the dynamics of negotiation that were entailed in establishing the collaborations, the delicacies of race, and the details of funding including philanthropic investments. While we have little doubt that these are important, the particular ways in which they play out can be complicated and are not yet well documented or understood. This will be a primary focus of our research to come. As a prelude, our reading and digesting of the research literature suggests some tentative lessons, and we summarize those here.

Managing and Supporting Loose Networks of Collaborators May Require Special Organizational Resources, Skills, and Capacities

Collaboration takes time and effort. It can be an expensive investment and, importantly, involves risks to those who participate in good faith. Individuals and organizations come into the process with deep investments in their reputations, established beliefs and relationships, and commitments to organizational missions. Even when there are multiple and meaningful shared goals and values, individual and organizational interests of the potential partners rarely align in all respects. At the simplest level, people and groups are competing for resources and support that, while not necessarily fixed in a zero sum game, are nonetheless finite. Their prior personal and organizational successes—the things that make them valuable potential partners—were hard earned and they will be reluctant to fritter them away. Reputation for success matters, as does the ability to justify to their own constituencies why they are diverting energy from the activities the organization normally has prioritized.

The literature on organizational collaboration identifies an array of strategies that have potential to reduce or compensate for these kinds of challenges and cross-pressures. One broad type involves the provision of selective incentives: benefits that flow to the participating individuals and organizations to compensate them in some way. These do

not have to be direct and immediate material benefits. An organization might benefit if its participations gains it information, status, visibility or a good reputation upon which it can later capitalize. But even these less material incentives are likely to be finite, and there may be tension that emerges between expanding the base of participants—which might serve the collaborative well in many respects—and thinning out the benefits accruing to the original insiders. There are risks, too, that selective incentives may displace larger collective goals, and the risk of resentment on the part of groups that were not part of the initial joining together and who come to feel that they have been dealt out of the game.

Alternatively, or in addition to selective and material incentives, collaborative efforts might try to build relationships of social capital, mutual trust, and reciprocity. These are like machine oils for collaboration: they do not so much eliminate the need to provide some degree of selective incentives as substantially reduce the friction that accompanies working together, thereby reducing the cost of participating. And if the participants genuinely come to identify with the collaborative effort they may shift or redefine loyalties and alter their own missions in ways that make them more likely to align. This kind of transformational change is the holy grail of collaboration, but it is very rare, especially in heterogeneous and—important to remember—open and dynamic systems where new actors enter, former leaders burn out or move to other things, so that relationships must be continually refreshed.

The Political Challenges to Collaboration that Complicate Organizational Challenges Are Tempting to Downplay but Can Be Less Predictable and Knottier to Resolve

Tensions among potential and actual partners in cross-sector collaborative efforts go beyond issues of information, coordination, and building relationships of trust. Even when there is allegiance to abstract common interests, putative organizational partners almost always have distinct political interests that are at odds. That is to say, the individuals and organizations represented are competing for resources, status, visibility, and reputations at the same time that they may sincerely be trying to find and build upon common ground. Broadly speaking there are at least two kinds of political conflicts that collaborative efforts unavoidably face. The first involves conflicting interests that emerge because individuals and organizations are competing for shares of goods—resources, status, reputation, visibility—that are finite. The second involves conflicts not just over share but when values and priorities are at odds.

Leaders may be tempted to downplay internal competition by emphasizing the potential for collaboration to expand the pie of collective benefits. If the pie of good things is perceived to be growing, potential allies can more comfortably believe that all participants will benefit and feel less mistrustful of putative allies who might otherwise be seen as competitors. But genuinely expanding the pie is not always possible, especially when governments are under fiscal stress. Moreover, the message that everyone can benefit can run counter to the "doing more with less" theme that has been part of the

originating rationale for collaboration. And even an expanding pie does not sate all discontents; just as economic growth does not lead the wealthy to ratchet down their expectation for greater returns, organizations often want larger and larger shares of the benefits to be had. Failure to realize this can lead to missteps. One kind of misstep may occur when collaborative leaders assume too easily that the fact that others are showing up at meetings indicates they are ready to make real contributions; sometimes attendance is motivated primarily by organizations' fears of being left out, and they come more in the spirit of cautious observers than converts to a new way of getting things done. A second kind of misstep can take place when growing ease and camaraderie among frequent attenders of steering group and other meetings mistakenly are taken as signs that the organizations represented are reading from a common script. Those sitting comfortably around the table may find they are called to task by their home organizations, accused of being co-opted, and unable to deliver on the promises they may have negotiated.

Political differences can run even deeper than this, however. In many instances organizational priorities are competing even more directly: not just over share but also over very basic priorities and values. Cleavages—either submerged or overt—may exist between those who prioritize strategies to attract and hold businesses and more affluent residents versus those who see the first and ultimate goal to be responding to the needs of an historically disadvantaged set of organizations and families. Or between those who want to emphasize building local institutions (e.g., local colleges) versus promising residents support to attend the most selective colleges and universities no matter where those are. Or between those who think it is critical to target early childhood because that is where children often fall irreparably behind and those who see such strategies as tantamount to abandoning a whole generation of young people currently struggling in subpar and under supported schools and communities. The broader and deeper the span of the collaborative effort—the wider the range of groups enlisted, the deeper the outreach from beyond the elite to encompass the grassroots—the more certain it will be that conflicts over values will threaten the effort from within. This makes it tempting to draw the circle of collaboration more tightly around elite elements who have worked together previously, share similar understandings of the community and its needs, and can quickly mobilize around a set of goals and measureable outcome targets.

Central Cities' Scale, Heterogeneity, and Historical Tensions Around Race Exacerbate Organizational and Political Challenges

Because they are so integrally linked to individual and group senses of identity and justice, race and ethnicity are more than just another interest around which groups align. And these tensions play out earlier and often with more vehemence in cities. This is not only partly due to the fact that cities are more internally diverse. It is also the case that because of their historical role as the settling point for aspiring but needier populations, cities have developed a deeper infrastructure and broader range of social services, both within government and the nonprofit sector. These serve simultaneously as resources

for the disadvantaged and as distributors of goods over which political battles are pitched.

The history of desegregation battles and the special role that public schools have played in the African American community make school related politics especially volatile. Even where racial change has created cities and school systems in which key institutions and resources are overseen by black and Latino officials, race and racial identity impede coalition building via effects on both African Americans and their potential allies: legacies of mistrust and misaligned perceptions of what is possible and what is fair.

Recent Changes in the Education Sector May Present Additional Special Challenges

Education debates carry extra resonance because they involve children. Adults who may be willing to compromise on their own interests are more reluctant to do so when their children are involved. This changes the time clock against which some highly mobilized groups measure progress. It adds a layer of urgency that can motivate action but also undermine strategies that depend upon relationship building and steady progress oriented around long-term objectives. The resonance and volatility inherent in debates that bear upon children were dampened for many decades by Americans' general sense that schools—in the nation and especially in their own communities— were performing well. But beginning with the famous 1983 *A Nation at Risk* report, that confidence has been considerably bruised. Asked about their local community's schools, Americans still express considerable confidence: in 2014, half gave them a grade of "A" (12%) or "B" (38%) and only 17 percent said they deserved a "D" (11%) or "F" (6%). But asked about schools nationwide, only 1 percent granted an "A," 16 percent said "B," and fully 29 percent gave a grade of "D" (19%) or "F" (10%) (PDK/Gallup, 2014). This pattern has extra consequences because of the growing role of states and the national government over education policy since the early 1980s. Attention and public discourse are focused much more now on national initiatives—No Child Left Behind; Race to the Top; Common Core State Standards—and in that arena, Americans' anxieties about schools and schooling are sharp.

Other changes, as we have discussed, have introduced new or more involved actors into the education sector, including large-scale charter management organizations, alternative teacher preparation groups such as TFA, testing companies, and testing tutors. While these bring new resources and ideas, they also add to the sense of volatility and uncertainty, creating or exacerbating cleavages between "insiders"—who feel they know the local community better—and "outsiders" who along with resources and ideas may bring different perspectives and loyalties that locals find unsettling or worse.

As education issues have migrated to the national level of debate, they have also become more entwined with deep-seated partisan and ideological battles. To many Republicans, Race to the Top and the Common Core standards become entangled with

the "imperial presidency"; to many liberals, charter schools and high stakes testing become entangled with battles against privatization and corporatization of American schools. Even when there is a genuine air of pragmatism at the local level, these partisan and ideological wars increasingly penetrate local arenas because urban districts are seen as high visibility "testing grounds" for broad notions of government and its limits.

The Persistent Core Challenges of Funding Stability and School Quality Improvement Should Not Be Overlooked or Underestimated

The history of collaborative multi-sector initiatives reveals that the conditions giving rise to such efforts change and the framing that helps to build initial buy-in can prove counterproductive when it comes to sustaining the effort over time. The current wave of enthusiasm, in particular around the concept of collective impact, appears to have benefitted from a combination of tight fiscal constraints on government and enthusiastic endorsement and investment from the philanthropic community. The fiscal constraints have contributed to an eagerness to embrace collaboration as a means to reduce duplication and unearth potential complements in services and support so that the local ecology will be more efficient in generating "bang" for the available bucks. Important foundations have embraced this notion and have provided critical support. The collective impact model's emphasis on backbone organizations, moreover, seems to have encouraged at least some foundations to overcome their reluctance to provide basic operating funds rather than project-focused support.

One issue to consider is whether too little attention is being paid to long-term funding stability. What happens when government grants (Promise Neighborhood, E-3, Early Childhood) run out? What happens when foundations lose interest? With framing built around nonprofits, non-school-based social services, and community and civic coordination, public school systems—which are the institutional center of the challenge—may run the risk of being treated as an afterthought. Support and coordination with outside-school organizations is critical, but if the intent is to make genuine gains in learning and educational achievement, there undoubtedly need to be improvements in the formal K-12 institutions as well. The reigning models for cross-sector collaboration seem almost intentionally agnostic about what is needed to make schools better. That may be tactically wise, since it avoids sounding a note of criticism of existing public school systems, perhaps necessary if those systems are going to be enticed to abandon their more traditional stance of go-it-alone professionalism. But there may be too much emphasis on organizational matters and too little on core educational theory and implementation of school improvement strategies. And, to the extent that adequate funding is part of the answer, philanthropic pockets are nowhere near deep enough to provide the resources for sustained educational improvement. According to one estimate, foundations currently spend about two billion dollars each year on K-12 education, what Greene (2015) labels almost a "rounding error" when compared with the $600 billion in public dollars spent.

LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT MIGHT WE FIND AS WE STUDY CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION FOR EDUCATION?

We conclude this paper with a more speculative section that is based on our deep dive into the research literature on past cross-sector initiatives; current education-focused models, including collective impact; and educational, political, and organizational theory and practice—and that looks toward the empirical research that is the next phase of our project. Thinking forward into this work, several possibilities present themselves that are consistent with our research and current knowledge but that have very different implications.

Possibilities We Will Probe

Contemporary enthusiasm for collective impact approaches is the latest in a long history of episodic embraces of local, collaborative, multi-sector initiatives around urban and community development, social services, job training, youth, and education. In light of this long history, what might we find as we explore the education-focused projects that have grown out of this resurgence of interest as manifested especially in the collective impact movement? There are several distinct possibilities. One possibility is that the contemporary enthusiasm for cross-sector collaboration is just another of education's "spinning wheels," a recycled version of past efforts, dressed up to look like something new, and adopted for the sake of novelty. Another is that, though the core elements of the approach are not new, this is the right moment for revisiting it, with changes in the American education landscape opening up prospects for success that might not have applied in earlier decades. And, finally, it may be that today's models for cross-sector collaboration for education are actually an improved product that builds on past efforts in a way that promises to avoid the miscalculations and implementation failures of the past. We explore each of these possibilities and what we might expect to see if they were to play out.

The Spinning-Wheels Scenario

Analysts have identified policy churn—the tendency to cycle rapidly through shallow reform efforts—as an ingrained characteristic of American (particularly urban) education and a significant threat to more serious and sustained efforts at substantive change (Farkas, 1992; Hess, 1998; Shah & Marschall, 2005; Stone et al., 2001). They attribute this pattern to several factors: a tendency within American culture to tire quickly of the familiar and to embrace all that is new; a stunted sense of history that makes it less likely that recycled ideas will be recognized as such; incentives for school boards and superintendents to appear to be at the "cutting edge" and to substitute symbolism and the appearance of action for the hard, and often expensive, work of institution-building and sustained change; the practice of foundations to provide only short-term support, leaving some efforts to languish if revenue alternatives cannot be found; and an overreliance on formal leaders who lose elections, are not reappointed, or whose career

ambitions lead them to move on to other positions to be replaced by successors who feel they need to make their own mark.

One of the strongest rationales in favor of collective impact and other formal cross-sector collaborations is that embedding reform support in a broad and lasting coalition may immunize it against some of the forces that contribute to shallow and ephemeral reform, but there is another possibility. Rather than being a solution to the "spinning wheels" legacy of shallow and iterative reforms that fail to gain traction on the real challenges, the current enthusiasm for collective impact could simply be its latest manifestation.

The contemporary literature tends to present the collective impact approach as a new and sharp departure from previous efforts led by government, local civic leaders, or foundations to wrestle with a particular set of interconnected problems. These earlier efforts often came up short, but they were serious attempts. They had smart and knowledgeable people at the helm, who were no less aware than are today's proponents of the nature of the challenge, the desirability and difficulty of mounting cross-sector and sustainable responses, and the need to adjust general templates to local conditions and capacities. In many instances these historical efforts made demonstrable progress and gave early appearance of being on course to "solve" the riddle of mobilizing and augmenting local capacity. When they failed, it was not typically because of weak motivation, simple hubris, base incompetence, or dim leaders unable or unwilling to learn. Momentum, where garnered, may have flagged because improvement was slower and narrower than enthusiasts expected, because other challenges made legitimate claims on organizational priority or societal resources, or because the forces working against progress had wider and deeper roots than the local efforts anticipated. Building those historical efforts was often difficult and once in place they were not self-sustaining; rather they required ongoing devotion of effort, which was harder to maintain after the early enthusiasm ebbed and new ideas and new leaders raised the prospect that alternative approaches would lead to more dramatic results.

Signs that today's local cross-sector collaboration efforts are merely education's "next new thing" would be that early momentum is not sustained, that founding enthusiasm and creativity are replaced with mechanical repetition, that initial philanthropic funding is not parlayed into more regularized and dependable sources of revenues, that loss of funding leads to lowered expectations and loss of appetite, that coalitions crumble with shifts in leadership, that initial collaboration is followed by bickering and a narrowed scope of true involvement, and that rhetoric outstrips actual change with a shift from ambitious and measurable goals to more superficial initiatives coupled with slick public relations and media strategies. Given the history that we recount in this paper, we think a dose or two of wary skepticism is in order. But there are also reasons to be more optimistic. Two big ones involve the possibility that the time is now ripe for efforts that in the past may have fallen on less fertile ground, and the possibility that, despite its

elements in common with historical efforts, today's exploration of local cross-sector collaboration is developing some new ideas and methods that can make a difference.

The Right-Time Scenario

Even if the core concepts are not so new, it is possible that because of the changing landscape of education policy and politics, collective impact and other cross-sector collaborations may be the right thing at the right time. If this were the case, we would expect to find that some of those changes provide new openings that are propitious for the kinds of locally based, cross-sector collaborations that are our focus here.

For decades, public education in America has been characterized as deeply resistant to change. Explanations for this vary in ways that matter a great deal. Some point the finger at self-protective unions (Moe, 2011)**,** intrusive bureaucracies (Chubb & Moe, 1990), ill-equipped school boards (Miller, 2008), superintendents who focus on splashy but shallow reforms (Hess, 1998), or a "loosely coupled" system in which teachers have free reign to ignore formal mandates to change (Lipsky, 1983; Weick, 1976). Others lay the blame on state and city governments with entrenched political constituencies willing to invest only enough aid to schools to maintain the status quo—that is, to ensure that middle-class and upper-class students continue to succeed and that enough exceptional students from new immigrant groups can get ahead. Regardless, the conventional wisdom holds that schooling today looks pretty much like it always has. If ever true, the charge no longer has bite. The past three decades have witnessed substantial and focused efforts at reform. Some of these have come in the form of centralization of authority within our federal system; since at least the publication of the *A Nation at Risk* report, first the states and then the federal government ramped up their involvement in education.

A tendency to measure reform by chronicling inputs—how much money is spent, how many teachers have advanced degrees, whether school buildings are bright and classrooms well-equipped—has shifted to an insistence on measuring outcomes. Locally determined and fragmented arrangements for testing students—which made it nearly impossible to compare performance across districts and over time—have been replaced by common state-based systems and the availability of national and international benchmarks. While governance has to some extent been centralizing, implementation and politics have broadened, opening space for a range of new actors, including some who are outside of government: mayors granted power to appoint school boards and superintendents; individual charter schools; charter school networks; private companies that produce tests, score, and analyze them; for-profit and nonprofit providers of supplemental education, teacher education, and professional development; and more involved and more influential philanthropists and venture capitalists (Bulkley & Burch, 2011; McGuinn, 2006; Ravitch, 2013; Reckhow, 2012; Viteritti, 2009).

These changes have made the landscape of education policy and politics much more complex, and that complexity can be dysfunctional if it makes it harder to get enough agreement to get things done or if it exacerbates the tendency to cycle through

ephemeral reforms driven as one group and then another successfully promotes its favored approach. But we may find that they also create a more fertile ground for the kinds of local cross-sector collaborative efforts that came and went in earlier times. The growing role of general purpose governments and politicians—the expansion of mayoral control; the rise of "education governors"; and increased attention from presidents and Congress—has dissipated some of the advantages in access and influence that teacher unions had built within education-specific venues like local school boards (Henig, 2013). As school boards and teachers unions have recognized their declining status, some among them have articulated a strategy for expanding their base of support, jettisoning their historical stance that educators alone have the requisite expertise to shape policy in favor of constituency-building efforts to reach out to parents, community-based organizations, and unions in other sectors that share some of their unhappiness with the recent arc of school reform or social policy (Henig, 2013; Oakes & Rogers, 2006; Rogers & Terriquez, 2009; Weiner, 2012). If this is case, we would expect to discover that organizations and groups that have sometimes stood in the way of progressive change—hidebound school district bureaucracies; resistant teachers unions; micro-managing school boards—have lost some of their effective veto power and begun to reconsider whether they *want* to play a blocking role.

In addition, we may find that the changing landscape has promoted a form of collective learning, including, as we discussed earlier, a reconsideration of some of the favored tenets of recent reform that operated to favor a narrow, schools-can-do-it-alone approach. After two or three decades in which the schools-focused efforts have been politically ascendant, even many adherents concede that the track record is just as halting and uncertain as had been the case in the preceding decades. This may be opening up potential for a more pragmatic both/and approach that seeks to pursue school reform and social reform simultaneously and in concert (Henig & Reville, 2011). And there are reasons to expect that such pragmatic approaches are more likely to emerge at the local level than in Washington, D.C. (Henig & Stone, 2008).

Moreover, while the profusion of new actors in the education arena presents some distinct challenges to collaboration, we may also find that it opens the prospect of enlisting new partners, tapping into new wells of capacity, and refreshing the ideas and perspectives available to be drawn upon. The first generation of mayoral control was dominated by administrations that favored strong testing, accountability, and a full-speed-ahead approach to school reform that frequently left parent and community groups feeling like they'd been pushed to the side (Chambers, 2006; Henig & Rich, 2004; Viteritti, 2009), but because they sit atop a range of agencies that have potential to help families and children, we would expect to find that mayors also become champions for a broader collaborative and cross-sector approach including less emphasis on accountability and more on community schools (Wall, 2014).

Charter schools were initially seen as a direct threat to traditional public schools systems, but it has become clearer over time that at least some districts and some

charter providers may be able to find grounds for collaboration and a common interest in advocating for public investment in public education (Holley, Egalite, & Lueken, 2013; Yatsko, Nelson, Lake, 2013). Teach for America has been charged with replacing seasoned teachers having local ties with novice teachers with little familiarity or commitment to the communities within which they are assigned, but there is at least some evidence that TFA alums move on to a range of education reform activities including advocacy leadership and running for public office in the places where they previously taught (Higgins, Hess, & Robinson, 2011; Jacobsen & Linkow, 2014). Foundations have been criticized for being too timid, too aggressive, or backing the wrong array of reforms, but most contemporary accounts make the case that they have become important actors in shaping the education agenda, not only by direct funding relationships with local districts but by supporting an array of local advocacy organizations, and while it's not clearly been done to date, these have the potential to build a grassroots foundation for sustained collaboration and change (Reckhow, 2012; Reckhow & Snyder, 2014).

Partisan gridlock at the national level, as noted earlier, has helped to fuel a general interest in the new localism—the notion that local arenas are more conducive to collaboration, creativity, and the pragmatic adoption of initiatives that are reflective of local values and adaptive to local context (Barber, 2013; Crowson & Goldring, 2009; Henig & Stone, 2008; Katz & Bradley, 2013). Whether the reality lives up to the promise remains to be seen, but the notion that "the time has come" for local cross-sector collaborations to both flourish and succeed is credible on the surface.

The Improved-Product Scenario

The other and most optimistic possibility is that the contemporary manifestations of local cross-sector collaboration, while familiar in broad strokes, represent a new and improved version of what has gone before. Three elements of the contemporary movement, although not in themselves dramatic innovations, have the potential to add up to a more pragmatic and self-conscious approach to sustained incremental progress and collective learning. Two of these—the emphases on the importance of a lead or backbone organization and a strong focus on measureable outcomes—are prominently referenced in the collective impact literature. A third—the contemporary movement's predilection for establishing networks to create and sustain cross-city/district forums for sharing ideas and learning—has received less explicit attention but may prove to be at least as important a distinguishing attribute.

Attention to a lead or backbone organization may be a useful corrective to naive thinking on the part of some supporters of local cross-sector collaborations. It is tempting to imagine that voluntary coordination of effort in pursuit of shared goals is rational, natural, and self-sustaining, even among disparate groups, at least once artificial barriers rooted in misinformation and politics are swept away. However, Olson (1971) underscored that individuals and groups may rationally avoid necessary investing in collective action, even when there is a good chance that working together would leave

them better off. Robert Putnam's work on social capital identifies historically reinforced absence of trust and expectations of reciprocal support as another obstacle to natural inter-group cooperation (Putnam, 1993, 2000; see also Axelrod, 1984). These obstacles are not insuperable, though. Olson argued that the enticement to free ride can be managed if "selective incentives" also are allocated—benefits that accrue only to members who participate. And social capital, missing or thin in some areas, can develop and facilitate cooperation elsewhere. Although collective impact proponents have not made their argument explicitly in these terms, a lead organization that is already established in the community and recognized as an "honest broker" might lend social capital to a collaborative effort, and, as conduit for external funds, it might dole these out in ways that provide the kinds of selective incentives needed to keep various partner organizations on the team. It may also help to allay mistrust and suspicion grounded in race, ethnicity, and other social cleavages. But it is also the case that various past efforts have had organizations that served a backbone role, even if they did not employ that designation.

The emphasis on measurable outcomes is also featured as a critical defining element within the collective impact literature. Performance accountability is not a new notion—it has roots going back to the Progressive Era and achieved wide prominence during the Kennedy/Johnson years. But the data environment in education *has* changed. As an outgrowth of No Child Left Behind, many states and districts now have much more sophisticated systems for collecting and analyzing student-level information. These outcome measures are intertwined, for now at least, with the establishment of accountability systems for school and teacher performance.

The emphasis on common goals may entail something else besides performance accountability; it may represent a theory of action premised on the benefits of narrowed focus and the potential for deliberation about outcomes as a strategy for moving past old battles, challenging preconceptions, and forging new and more genuinely shared common interests. This would be consistent with long-time notions of continuous improvement in organizations and production processes (Deming, 1981). The 11-city study of civic capacity in urban education mentioned earlier found some support for the notion that constructing and sustaining multi-sector coalitions may be facilitated when stakeholders share a common definition of the problems their community faces (Stone, 2001). Theorists who study "deliberative democracy" argue that thoughtful and mutually respectful discussion about goals can lead to more rational and broadly accepted policies and encourage stakeholders to reconsider prejudices about their interests and those of others (Fishkin, 1991; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Lindblom, 1990).

The emergence of various cross-city networks for sharing information and support is the third reason to consider that there may be something new and improved about the collective impact movement and some other cross-sector collaborative efforts. The online Collective Impact Forum, for example, provides a common meeting ground for groups utilizing collective impact in their communities. Organizations with "expertise in

collective impact" provide resources, such as videos, webinars, podcasts, and articles that other groups can use to help guide or strengthen their collective impact work. These so-called "co-catalyst" organizations also are tasked with "accelerating" collective impact or expanding the network of initiatives around the country. The "resources" section of the site characterizes itself as follows: "We've created a curated central pool of resources so that what's experienced and learned by one initiative can be accessed by all" (Collective Impact Forum, 2015).

While the Collective Impact Forum primarily offers shared information and support to which any interested communities can gain access, there is also a growing array of somewhat narrower networks combining information and support to a select group of members who, to various degrees, are expected and even held accountable to embrace some specific practices. The most well known of these, the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network, now has over 60 members, involving over 9,000 organizations, across 32 states and Washington, DC. StriveTogether offers resources (referred to as "learnings") intended to help members avoid pitfalls. Initially the network appeared ready to take all comers, but now collective impact initiatives must follow fairly strict requirements to stay in StriveTogether and maintain the benefits of a Strive partnership. In January 2015, the StriveTogether website counted 21 communities at the "exploring" stage at which partnerships were just beginning to align around a common vision and to develop core outcome indicators. There were 41 members who had reached the "emerging" stage, having created and shared a "base line report card." Twelve were at the "sustaining" stage, with a defined accountability structure, annual report cards, and collaboration to set academic and nonacademic benchmarks and collect data on these points "to enable continuous improvement." None, as of that date, had reached the "systems change" stage, where the partnership can sustain leadership changes, communicate success stories as well as recognize challenges, and share data in a timely manner across internal partners to enable continuous improvement (StriveTogether, 2015).

A number of similar networks also exist; it is possible for communities to belong to more than one although it appears that some degree of competition may exist as well. Promise Neighborhoods share some of the guiding principles of Strive in that they must adhere to basic organizing commitments set forth in their grant approval documents. For example, Promise Neighborhoods are required to "coordinate with the local education agency and partner with at least one public elementary or secondary school" with the goal of improving college and career outcomes (Bathgate et al., 2011). PolicyLink, the Harlem Children's Zone, and the Center for the Study of Social Policy jointly operate a Promise Neighborhood network and a Promise Neighborhoods Institute that provides technical assistance, management coaching, communications strategies to Promise Neighborhood sites and to communities that seek to apply to become Promise Neighborhoods (Promise Neighborhood Institute, 2015). Ready by 21 is another network that provides leadership and tools for implementing collective impact strategies. The Ready by 21 strategy was created by the Forum for Youth Investment with the goal

that all children will be prepared for "college, work, and life" (Ready by 21, 2015). Alignment USA grew out of a local effort, Alignment Nashville, which began around 2003. After ten years, founders of the Nashville effort, convinced that they had a workable and exportable model, initiated Alignment USA, to expand and share lessons learned. As of late 2014, Alignment USA had seven members around the country and indicated that about a dozen other cities may join the network over the next year.

Taken together, the emphasis on backbone organizations, measurable outcomes, and collective learning through cross-city networks may add up to something that is genuinely new and of value. If this is the case, in these initiatives we would expect to see backbone organizations showing themselves to be stable and valued partners to the school system, local service providers, community-based organizations, and local elected leaders, and we'd anticipate real outreach into the community, helping to uncover common interests rather than substituting the backbone's interests and needs for those of others or being seen as representing the interests of some elements of the community while marginalizing those of others.

We would expect to find evidence that open and searching discussions about mutually desired and measureable outcomes bring about the hoped-for marriage of deliberative democracy with disciplined attention to performance, rather than unleash conflicts or produce an artificial allegiance to a narrow and manipulable set of activities with unintended negative consequences. And we'd expect to discover communities using the process of deciding upon outcomes as an opportunity to air, consider, and negotiate among broad and competing visions of the public good, rather than converge too quickly on outcomes that are favored by the advantaged, easy to operationalize, easy to explain, or easy to obtain. We would anticipate that, with the focus on data, we'd see growing local capacity to analyze progress and feed knowledge into a broad public dialogue about next steps rather than continued privileging of those with specialized technical expertise at the expense of parents and interested citizens. It will be important to learn whether measured performance and the regular public release of data build confidence and needed momentum or if weak, slow and unsteady progress reinforces fatalism. And we'd expect signs of the value of emerging networks, saving local communities from unneeded failures and enabling local collaboration to gain the kind of traction that eluded earlier efforts. Missteps or uncertainties encountered by local initiatives would be eased through network guidance, information, and support, gleaned from collective experience. And the network would provide stability to enable continuity of effort through the turnover of local leaders, though changes or challenges to local group and personal relationships, and in spite of deep-seated local political alliances and rivalries.

CONCLUSION

In distilling lessons from theory and history, we have emphasized the daunting nature of the challenges to local cross-sector collaboration to improve education. That has been

somewhat deliberate on our part: it is meant as a corrective to the bubbles of enthusiasm and high expectation that, in the history of urban school reform, have often burst, releasing frustration and fatalism. However, while many cross-sector collaborations have ended up faltering before they reached their high goals, they nonetheless accomplished good things at the height of their arc, and some left imprints that continue to provide benefits today. One of the lessons of past efforts is that they often took root in the soil left by even earlier efforts in their communities. While frustration is one kind of residue of deflated efforts, others can be lines of communication, working relationships, models of what is possible, and seasoned leadership. The existing literature, as well as some of our preliminary research, supports this notion that successful collaboration typically builds on a foundation of earlier efforts, even when those earlier efforts may have seemed to fade without having achieved their stated aims. One area that we intend to explore more deeply in our field research is how the history of prior initiatives either bedevils or benefits contemporary efforts. But this lesson also alerts us to one possible positive outcome of today's round of collaborative efforts that would not necessarily get captured by a focus on the educational outcomes that the stakeholders bring to the fore: the possibility that they will lay down patterns and habits of interaction that will stand the community in good stead in terms of its ability to muster collective responses in the future to challenges not yet identified.

The resurgence of interest in local cross-sector collaboration as a strategy for wrestling with education challenges is encouraging. Using the famous 1983 *A Nation at Risk* as a convenient marker, we are more than three decades into serious efforts to reform American education. Sharp arguments are made about whether the system was or is in crisis and whether the reform efforts have been helpful or counterproductive, but probably most would agree that education levels and gaps are not what we would like them to be and that reform efforts to date have accomplished less than the proponents of those reforms aspired to or expected. The fact that communities nonetheless are resilient, hopeful, and willing to keep trying is something to celebrate. What we know, now, is that the challenges will not be overcome by enthusiasm and effort alone. What we have yet to learn is how best to channel enthusiasm and effort in ways that can make more substantial and sustained headway.

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