



## LEADERSHIP PROFILE

# StriveTogether

Every child. Cradle to career.

**Chief Executive Officer**  
**Cincinnati, OH**

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*“A national movement to improve education for every child, from cradle to career.”*

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### THE OPPORTUNITY

A national movement has been building all across the country, rooted in a shared commitment to improved educational outcomes for all our children. By bringing together a wide range of partners — not just families and educators from early childhood, K-12 and higher education, but also businesses, government entities, philanthropy and nonprofits — these communities are transforming the way they work together across often siloed sectors to achieve better outcomes for every child, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, from cradle to career.



This movement was initiated in 2006, when more than 300 local organizations in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky teamed up to improve education. Catalyzed by the vision of a host of cross-sector partners that had not worked well together historically, this regional effort, known as StrivePartnership, pursued a shared agenda for the community with a specific set of measurable outcomes and a

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commitment to relentless use of data to get better results. Sustained successes in improving a core set of outcomes such as kindergarten readiness and college enrollment fostered interest from other communities looking to do more with their existing assets and get a better return on investment for the community's time, talent and resources.

Thus was born the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network in 2010.

Today, **StriveTogether** is a national network of more than 70 community partnerships in 32 states and the District of Columbia. In turn, the network partners — the backbone organizations — engage more than 10,800 local entities to ensure the success of every child, regardless of race, zip code or family income.

StriveTogether communities have experienced significant progress against locally established goals while following an approach the members of the Network have consistently refined with the support of the StriveTogether staff. This approach is founded on four core principles:



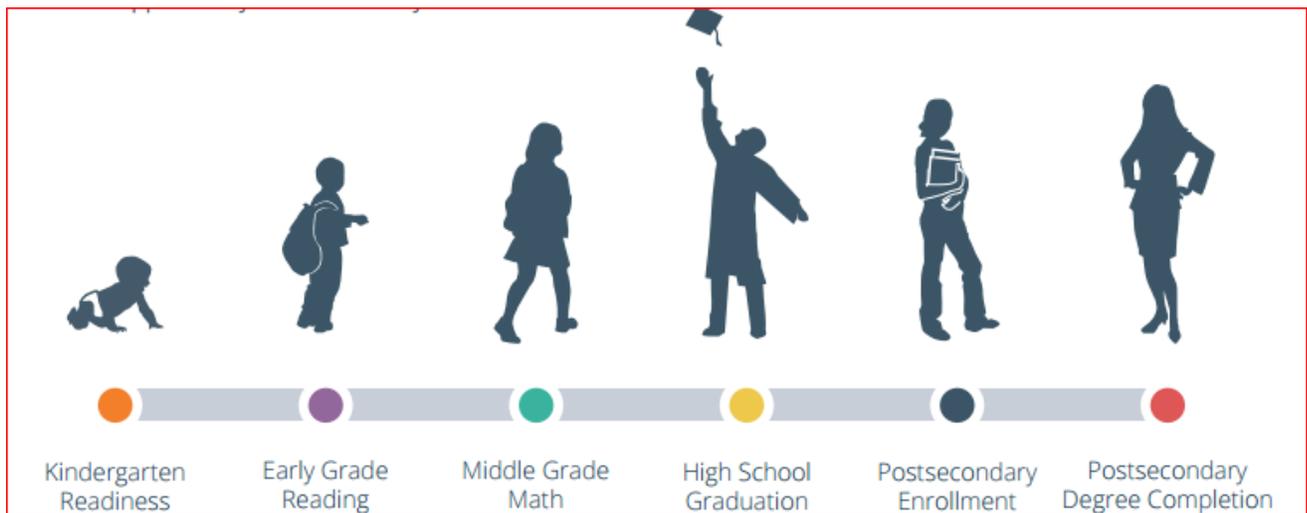
Since inception, the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network has been consistent in its dedication to continuous learning, results-based leadership and the power of data to support community partners with the insight and information needed to make smarter investments for student success. More than just collaboration writ large, StriveTogether's approach is distinguished in several ways, among them:

- A shared commitment to six [core outcomes](#), against which communities measure — and report — their progress, consistent with locally set strategies and priorities, as illustrated in the accompanying graphic<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed explanation of the six core outcomes, click [here](#)

- A rigorous but customizable framework — the [Theory of Action](#) — designed to help communities define and measure progress as they build the civic infrastructure necessary to realize lasting systems change in support of transformational improvement in student success.
- The robust use of data to support collaborative continuous improvement so communities can first target the unique needs of individual children and, ultimately, change fundamentally how all aspects of the community ecosystem operate to improve educational outcomes.



Through data use, shared goals and a focus on pushing people to change behavior to create lasting change, the cross-sector partners in the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network are driving significant progress, learning while doing in a self-reinforcing cycle of continuous improvement and sharing experiences across their communities and the Network.

The appetite for collective efforts to achieve better outcomes for every child is strong and growing. The work is daunting, to be sure, but local successes have been both tangible and compelling, which is why communities representing some 8.5 million students are employing StriveTogether’s proven framework for collective impact.<sup>2</sup>

The national organization has been led since inception by Managing Director Jeff Edmondson, a highly regarded champion and seminal proponent of the power of collective impact.

In late April 2017, Jeff was named managing director of the Ballmer Group, the Seattle-based organization created by Steve and Connie Ballmer to direct their

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<sup>2</sup> A summary profile of StriveTogether’s approach and a list of communities in the Network is available [here](#).

philanthropic efforts. Simultaneously, the Ballmer Group, already a key supporter, announced its commitment to a significant additional investment in StriveTogether's emerging strategy for even greater impact on student outcomes. Accordingly, the board of StriveTogether has launched a national search for a CEO to build on the exceptional work to date.

StriveTogether's commitment to communities in which all children flourish is unwavering, and the ambitions for even greater impact are widely embraced, even as alternative strategies to maximize that impact are being explored. Working with an "awesomely talented" and respected staff, the CEO has the opportunity to take the work of this Network, grounded in the real-world experience of the Network member communities, to expand capacity locally and nationally to further accelerate the progress of local communities and achieve unprecedented scale in the improvement of educational outcomes across the nation.

For more information on StriveTogether, its approach to collective impact and the progress noted by its growing list of partner communities, please visit the organization's [website](#).



## THE MANDATE

The incoming CEO of StriveTogether will inherit an organization with great momentum:

- *Programmatically*, the organization is on fire, and increasing numbers of people and communities are eager to adopt StriveTogether's Theory of Action and commitment to a collaborative results-based process to drive better and more equitable educational outcomes. *A key challenge*: Maintaining the bandwidth necessary to support the more than 70 existing partnerships

while anticipating the operating capacity required to meet the needs of population centers not yet served by the Network.

- *Strategically*, the Network members across the country are developing a five-year plan that represents growth from a focus on achieving outcomes in the aggregate to focusing more explicitly on disparities that could be masked by improvements in overall population results. This will require focusing even

more deeply on how to change the structures of broader systems that are not effectively designed to serve the most vulnerable children. *A key challenge:* How can the Network maintain focus



on building the capabilities of partners to use data every day to improve services while simultaneously focusing on changing legislative and organizational policies and addressing other systemic barriers to achieving success at scale?

- *Financially*, the organization has been blessed with generous support from an enviable array of funders, several of which have given clear indications of their willingness to expand current commitments. *A key challenge:* The shift to working even more deeply in communities on simultaneously changing systems and practices will require significant resources at the local and national levels, so breakthrough funding will be required if StriveTogether and its partners are to achieve full potential.
- *Organizationally*, the nonprofit StriveTogether (as distinct from the StriveTogether Cradle to Career Network) is in effect a start-up. Just 18 months ago, StriveTogether was a program housed within a foundation and led by the only Managing Director the network had known; today, it is a free-standing nonprofit operating from a new physical headquarters, led by a highly-respected interim head who reports to a board still in formation. Each of these changes resulted from truly positive and strategically sound developments, but collectively they represent significant stress for a young team determined to be of maximum help to others. *A key challenge:* Ensuring a stable environment for its own employees that is as nurturing, supportive and yet challenging as that provided to its network partners.

In sum, StriveTogether's programs and processes are highly evolved, while the operating entity based in Cincinnati is in its adolescence with significant potential to grow to meet the evolving needs of the Network communities. The highly-

accomplished staff is totally focused on supporting the network, its local partners and the outcomes they are pursuing, but relatively less attention has been paid to the organizational needs of the team itself. As the departing Managing Director has noted, “We have a team and a Network that has the potential and is ready to get to the next level of deep systems change. It could not be a more exciting time!”

The incoming CEO of StriveTogether will join a team that is proud to serve such a critical mission and

fully committed to implementing the vision of the Network

members — not their own — as they seek to improve educational outcomes at scale.

From interviews with the board, key staff

members, representative funders and heads of partnerships within the network, there are several overlapping priorities which the new CEO will be expected to address:



- 1. Strategy.** The organization is in the midst of a strategic review, and a number of central tenets is emerging. A key component is the pervasive agreement on *equity* as a central priority, and there is a strong desire for more specific focus on eliminating disparities in educational outcomes by changing systems and opportunity structures. *Note:* Capitalizing on existing strengths in the organization, the CEO will help develop and refine the plan over time and serve as its chief champion, while implementation will be the responsibility of the Chief Operating Officer, freeing the CEO to focus more fully on external opportunities.
- 2. Advocacy.** As the primary public face for StriveTogether, the CEO must be both advocate and ambassador for mission, carrying the message with zeal and authenticity to all relevant audiences, including partner communities, investors and policymakers. The CEO must be able to convey hope, urgency and possibility, even though the work is admittedly complex and the inequities to be addressed are seemingly entrenched.
- 3. Resource Development.** The CEO should be a magnet for resources, whether they be resources of money, talent or strategic relationships. The systems change that StriveTogether promotes requires a long view, and the CEO must cultivate the human, financial and institutional resources to support the sustained effort the mission requires. One key resource still in

formation is the Board of Directors, which has the potential to be a truly consequential asset to the mission.

**4. Organizational Leadership.** StriveTogether is an unusual organization, facilitating the work of others rather than operating programs of its own. Nevertheless, the potential impact of work done well is truly enormous, and the CEO will set the tone not only for the StriveTogether staff but in many ways for the Network as a whole. Balancing vision with practical application, the CEO should model servant leadership in an environment of responsible opportunism.

The above list is not exhaustive, of course, and there are many other issues that will demand the CEO’s attention as the strategy gels. Material progress on the highlighted areas will help create the space for thoughtful consideration of the complex issues facing the network and the educational opportunities it was created to address.

## THE RELATIONSHIPS

<b>The CEO reports to:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The StriveTogether Board of Directors</li> </ul>
<b>Oversees a staff of about 20 in an evolving structure. Key leadership team members include:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Operating Officer (now serving as Interim CEO)</li> <li>• Director of Innovation</li> <li>• Director of Network Advancement</li> <li>• Director of Network Learning</li> <li>• Director of Finance and Operations</li> </ul>
<b>And stewards other important relationships, such as:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership leaders in the Network</li> <li>• Key investors, actual and potential</li> <li>• Relevant thought leaders and influencers</li> <li>• Policymakers</li> </ul>

## THE CANDIDATE

The Board of StriveTogether has few preconceptions about the precise career path it expects to attract and thus remains open to creative solutions. As one key advisor put it, “StriveTogether is the deepest, boldest effort I know of to change the way we take kids from cradle to career.” Such a challenge calls for a leader accustomed to tackling systemic issues in bold, creative ways.

Among the assets of interest are the following:

**Experience: The ideal candidate to become CEO of StriveTogether will offer...**

- Experience leading (or contributing significantly to) large-scale social change; experience with collective impact or results-based leadership would be a plus
- A galvanizing leader with the gravitas to enlist other leaders in service to the mission
- A record of considerable success leading and growing a significant, complex and multifaceted initiative or enterprise, preferably one that required working through a network of relationships and strategic partners to achieve a specific goal
- A strategic perspective, combined with clear respect for the power of data — both quantitative and qualitative
- An authentic leadership style, preferably born of a commitment to equity and inclusion; someone whose personal journey informs the commitment to our mission
- Superior communications skills, whatever the medium; genuine comfort in an external-facing role; the ease of a natural relationship-builder
- Experience as the driver or facilitator of work relevant to StriveTogether, its network or its partners' constituents
- A pervasive commitment to data-driven decision-making; a results-oriented leadership style

**Culture: Our CEO should be**

- A forward thinker genuinely passionate about results at scale
- A mission-driven proponent of continuous improvement
- Tenacious in the face of intractable challenges
- A true servant leader, ambitious for the mission rather than for oneself
- A discerning listener
- Experienced in managing ambiguity
- Respectful of the power of diversity and persuasive in eliminating disparities
- Respectful of team members' expertise and committed to their personal development
- A natural delegator who embraces transparency
- Comfortable embracing vulnerability — willing to “fail forward”
- A flexible boss who models appropriate work/life balance
- A financially literate executive
- A senior colleague people enjoy working with.

## THE LOCATION

StriveTogether is based in Cincinnati, Ohio, and most of the staff live in the vicinity. There are a handful of employees based elsewhere, but Cincinnati is strongly preferred as the CEO's home base, although significant travel can be expected.

Greater Cincinnati (population ~2.1mm) is home to major corporations that include Procter & Gamble, Kroger and Macy's. With a metro area that includes parts of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky, Cincinnati has a unique personality that crosses Midwestern industrial city with an east coast feel.



Cincinnati has a thriving arts scene and the downtown is in the middle of a renaissance that has led to national recognition by numerous national entities. There is also a significant sport franchise with major league baseball's oldest team, the Cincinnati Reds, which plays at the 42,000-seat Great American Ballpark downtown on the banks of the Ohio River. The NFL's Cincinnati Bengals play next door at the 65,600-seat Paul Brown Stadium. Last, Cincinnati Children's hospital is ranked in the top ten in all specialties nationally and is the largest employer. This is complemented by the University of Cincinnati that is on the rise in national rankings and includes a nationally recognized college in the arts and growing medical center and presence.

For further information on Cincinnati, including its demographics, arts and culture, academic institutions and so forth, please click [here](#).

**For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email [StriveTogether@BoardWalkConsulting.com](mailto:StriveTogether@BoardWalkConsulting.com) or call Sam Pettway or Patti Kish at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392)**