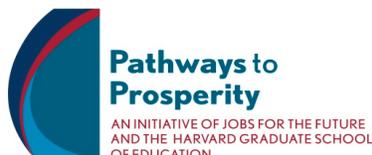


EAST ST. LOUIS ASSET MAPPING PROJECT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY NETWORK REPORT
DECEMBER 2014



A team from Jobs for the Future (JFF) visited East St. Louis, Illinois in July 2014 to carry out the asset-mapping work that will serve as the basis for the development of grades 9-14 pathways aligned with the Pathways to Prosperity framework. The Pathways to Prosperity Network – a collaboration of states, JFF, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) – seeks to ensure that many more youth complete high school, attain a postsecondary credential with currency in the labor market, and get launched into a career while leaving open the prospect of further education. State and regional stakeholders from across education, business, and government lead the work in each Pathways to Prosperity state, with the long-term goal of creating statewide systems of grade 9-14 career pathways that serve most students. Key sectors for building pathways aligned with labor-market demand include STEM fields such as information technology, health care, and advanced manufacturing. Overall, East St. Louis is well positioned for success in building grades 9-14 pathways linked to local labor market needs. The city is home to numerous organizations and institutions that are actively involved in developing economic and educational initiatives, and the building blocks for the Pathways work, including engaged and supportive stakeholders, coordination around collective impact, eager industry partners, and committed community and faith-based organizations, are already in place. However, substantial work remains to be done in order to develop greater alignment along the full length of the education and workforce pipeline, from the middle grades and high school, to and through postsecondary education, and into employment. This work will help to ensure that all young people in East St. Louis are prepared for college and careers.

ILLINOIS AND PATHWAYS TO PROSPERITY

State-level leadership and the policy environment in Illinois are important assets that East St. Louis can leverage as it moves forward with building 9-14 pathways. In Illinois, the Pathways to Prosperity efforts have been implemented both alongside and in collaboration with the Illinois Pathways state initiative, a cross-sector effort that brings together state agencies and influential business leaders to support pathways development. This work is aligned with the state's broader economic development plan, which emphasizes the importance of career pathways that have regional relevance and sustain job growth.

Illinois is scaling up career pathway systems through eight STEM Learning Exchanges organized around career clusters. The STEM Learning Exchanges serve as state-level networks of public and private partners who coordinate investments, resources, and planning around industry and student needs in a particular industry sector. Each Exchange is delivering resources for career pathway system implementation in the Exchange's sector of focus, including technical

assistance for local career pathway system design, high-quality instructional resources vetted by industry, and supports for work-based learning experiences and problem-based learning. Career pathway system models supported by the Exchanges include industry-recognized stackable credentials and early college opportunities. Intended outcomes are improved academic achievement, increased graduation rates, and improved transition rates to postsecondary education and employment.

Illinois' membership in the Pathways to Prosperity Network provides a foundation for pathways development in East St. Louis. In each Pathways to Prosperity state, state and regional stakeholders from across education, business, and government lead the work with the long-term goal of creating statewide systems of grade 9-14 career pathways that serve most students. The Pathways framework identifies 5 key levers for implementation within a systemic Pathways initiative:

1. **Career pathways** with clear structures, timelines, costs, and requirements linking and integrating high school and community college

curricula and aligning both with labor market needs;

2. An early and sustained **career information and advising system** strong enough to help students and families make informed choices about education and career pathways;
3. **Employer engagement** that leads to learning opportunities at the workplace and support for the transition of young people into the labor market;
4. Local or regional **intermediary organizations** to provide the infrastructure and support for the development of such pathways; and
5. **Enabling state policies** (e.g., dual enrollment policies, sustainable funding, and financial incentives) and a high-visibility, state-level stakeholder group whose members support the regional work as public spokespeople and champions.

ECONOMIC AND LABOR MARKET OVERVIEW

The need in East St. Louis for secondary and postsecondary programs of study that are aligned with labor-market demand is clear. State-level agencies leading the Illinois Pathways work demonstrate a shared vision for Pathways to function as an engine powering economic development. Educational programs that respond to employer demand by preparing East St. Louis residents for available jobs are an important means of promoting economic development and combating the city's high rates of poverty and unemployment.

Labor-market data from Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that key emerging industries in St. Clair County include finance and insurance, health care, information technology (IT), and transportation and warehousing. These industries are aligned with the economic development strategies focused on transportation, IT, and health care that are being pursued by Mayor Alvin Parks and the City of East St. Louis. The St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area's (MSA) large labor market offers additional career opportunities for residents of East St. Louis. Several large industries with high rates of projected growth in the St. Louis MSA parallel those in St. Clair County. These include finance and insurance, health care and social assistance, and transportation and warehousing.

A challenge in identifying promising industries in which to develop career pathways is that the average wages in many industries in the region, including many of the largest and fastest-growing industries, do not represent family-sustaining wages. According to MIT's living wage calculator, a living wage for a single adult in St. Clair County is \$8.88 per hour, or \$18,472 annually. For one adult supporting one child, that figure climbs to \$19.06 per hour, or \$39,650 per year. In order to provide young people with opportunities to move into careers in which

they can expect to earn family-sustaining wages, it will be important to carefully consider which industry sectors, or occupations within an industry, offer the best chances for young people seeking to build careers and support families.

In light of its projected growth and relatively high wages, health care is an especially promising sector in which to develop career pathways. Projections indicate that, by 2023, health care, which is the second-largest industry in St. Clair County, will grow by 9%, adding 1500 jobs. Projections indicate that the top five (as measured by number of jobs in 2023) health care occupations in 2023 will require sub-B.A. credentials. The health care and social assistance industry is the largest in the St. Louis MSA and will grow by 15% and add nearly 32,000 jobs over the next decade.

Projections indicate that there will be growth in the number of jobs in information technology (IT) over the next decade, but the total number of IT jobs is relatively low compared to the numbers of jobs in top industries in the region. However, it is important to note that the data for IT are for a set of occupations rather than for an industry. Industries such as manufacturing, health care, and government share important crosscutting IT functions that will likely make IT skills increasingly important across a variety of occupations and industries.

9-14 CAREER PATHWAYS

Grades 9-14 career pathways expand the range of options available to young people by preparing them for success in both college and careers. Pathways through associate's degrees represent a first step on students' career ladders. Students who complete associate's degrees may choose to enter to the labor market and/or to pursue further education, including bachelor's and graduate degrees. In order to optimize these benefits of 9-14 pathways, it will be important for regional leads in East St. Louis to create better alignment between secondary and postsecondary institutions and stronger connections between programs of study and labor-market demand.

District 189's CTE program has the potential to serve as the hub for building career pathways that align middle school, high school, and postsecondary programs with one another and with growing industries and occupations. Under new leadership, the CTE program seems to be in a good position to address enrollment issues and student engagement by strengthening outreach with employers, integrating mentoring and industry-recognized certifications into the curriculum, and supporting targeted career programs. More widespread efforts to focus on and make visible programs in IT and Health Science will strengthen current CTE offerings. Alongside the development of these career-focused learning opportunities, the district will need to bolster efforts to improve student proficiency in reading and math. There was broad agreement among the stakeholders we interviewed regarding

students' low levels of academic preparation and basic education.

Some challenges exist in terms of increasing students' access to postsecondary educational opportunities within pathways. The East St. Louis Community College Center (ESLCCC) functions as a satellite location for several colleges in the area. With multiple postsecondary institutions offering classes and programs at ESLCCC, it is a challenge to ensure that a range of programs tailored to the needs of learners – both youth and adults – is available in East St. Louis. In addition, there are currently some barriers that prevent students in District 189 from taking advantage of dual credit and dual enrollment opportunities.

CAREER INFORMATION AND ADVISING

Middle- and high-school students often have little access to information about the world of work, even though they are at an age where their choices may affect their future opportunities. Earlier and more systematic career information sharing with youth and their parents will be necessary to help expand 9-14 career pathways and to promote attendance in those programs. A strong career information and advising system should provide students with a continuum of experiences—from awareness to exploration to immersion—that familiarize students with the world of work and the range of career possibilities available to them. East St. Louis is fortunate to have several enrichment programs and activities targeted at students in elementary and middle school. Additionally, there was a general consensus among stakeholders about the importance of exposing students early to career exploration opportunities. The Pathways initiative presents an opportunity to undertake the critical work of ensuring that career awareness and exploration programs offered at the middle school are aligned with programs available once students transition to high school in order to sustain student interest and build momentum toward educational and career goals throughout high school.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT & WORK-BASED LEARNING

Employer engagement in the Pathways work includes collaborating with educators, providing work-based learning opportunities to students, and supporting young people's transitions into the labor market. Employers in both East St. Louis and the larger St. Louis area are enthusiastic about initiating formal avenues for communication and relationships with District 189 and are eager to develop a talent pipeline, but recognize that greater coordination in terms of identifying point people on both the district side and the employer side may be needed to make partnerships truly effective. It will also be critical to find ways of overcoming the challenges in providing young people with work-based learning opportunities. The Pathways work represents an opportunity to engage employers in the design of a clear sequence of work-based learning opportunities that are integrated with programs of study.

Scaling up work-based learning will require stakeholders to address two significant needs: the need to ensure that students are academically prepared to enter workplaces and the need to compensate young people for their work. Funding issues related to work-based learning are a challenge. The Pathways to Prosperity framework advocates for paid work-based learning experiences for students, in part because students may need to be earning money for their own expenses or to contribute to their families. These students may choose to take entry-level jobs in industries such as food services or retail rather than participate in unpaid work-based learning opportunities. The issue of funding for work-based learning is therefore especially important in District 189, where a majority of students are from low-income families.

INTERMEDIARIES

Intermediaries play a key role in regional Pathways to Prosperity strategies by facilitating collaboration among employers, educators, community-based organizations, and labor to sustain career pathways for young people. By focusing efforts and lessening the burden of participation for each partner, intermediaries increase all partners' return on their investments. The work of intermediaries includes two broad sets of functions. First, intermediaries hold the vision for the pathways work and convene key stakeholders. Second, intermediaries support the development of work-based learning opportunities by establishing a role for employers that ensures they see a return on their investment in the education of young people and by supporting high schools and colleges in securing, developing, and sustaining sequenced, systemic work-based learning opportunities. A single organization may take on the entire intermediary role, or the intermediary functions may be spread across multiple organizations. Identifying organizations in East St. Louis that are able to play an intermediary role will be key to advancing pathways work in the region.

In East St. Louis, substantial efforts based on the Forum for Youth Investment's Ready By 21 framework for collective impact are underway. As the "backbone organization" for the collective impact initiative, the United Way of Greater St. Louis appears to be prepared to take on some of the intermediary functions related to brokering and convening. However, there is a clear need in East St. Louis for an additional organization or individual with the capacity to carry out the intermediary functions that involve the coordination of work-based learning. In order to successfully scale up work-based learning, an intermediary with at least one dedicated staff person focused on creating and sustaining work-based learning opportunities for youth is needed.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The energetic leadership of stakeholders in East St. Louis, as well as the wide community and employer support for this work, indicate strong potential for implementing an exemplary pathways model. Pathways

in East St. Louis will also benefit from a strong foundation of state-level policies that support the work. While there is work to be done in terms of aligning and building on existing programs, it is likely that this can be done, given the strong community support for the work and the widespread recognition that a pathways system will both ensure that young people in East St. Louis are

prepared for college and careers and promote economic development and strengthen business and industry in the region. In order to make the most of this potential, the asset-mapping team has developed a series of key recommendations for stakeholders to address as they develop a Pathways work plan.

Recommendations for East St. Louis Pathways to Prosperity	
Focus and Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Determine priorities for the Pathways work in East St. Louis and a realistic timeline for short-term and long-term goals that incorporate “quick wins” that will help jumpstart the work and ensure that pathways development in East St. Louis builds on strengths and established resources in the community. ➤ Create an inventory of state and regional resources that are available to support pathways development; delegate tasks related to research and coordination of these resources to members of the steering committee.
Leadership and Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify and convene key stakeholders to form a Pathways steering committee that will drive the work in East St. Louis. This may be the Pathways Team established as part of the East St. Louis collective impact effort. ➤ Designate specific community leaders to play roles in changing public perceptions of regional career opportunities and the value of postsecondary education. ➤ Create a work plan that includes roles for public-sector leaders in building employer engagement and integrating the pathways work into regional economic development strategies. ➤ Determine metrics for assessing and evaluating the Pathways work. Crosswalk data collection processes for collective impact work in East St. Louis with efforts related to building grades 9-14 career pathways in identified industry sectors.
Pathways Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify priority sectors for pathways development that are aligned with labor-market demand. Based on labor market information for St. Clair County, strong consideration should be given to finance and insurance, health care, information technology, and transportation and warehousing. ➤ Form a curriculum committee that includes representatives from educational institutions at the middle school, high school, and postsecondary levels to ensure curricular alignment within pathways for the prioritized sectors. ➤ Educate students and their families about the value of dual credit and encourage student interest in dual credit opportunities. ➤ Create a prioritized list of resources needed to support greater alignment of middle school, high school, and postsecondary curricula and the expansion of dual credit opportunities. ➤ Ensure that popular existing CTE programs, such as cosmetology, now offered at East St. Louis High School incorporate opportunities for students to learn skills, such as entrepreneurship (so as to run their own businesses) and STEM skills, applicable in a variety of growing industries. ➤ Identify and implement the flexible scheduling policies and transportation options necessary to enable students to enroll in postsecondary courses. ➤ Build on the partnerships among SWIC, East St. Louis Community College Center, and District 189 in order to introduce young people to college-going culture and experiences before they graduate from high school. (One idea to test is, given its proximity to the high school, whether ESLCCC might make classes more accessible to high school students by using the high school building as an auxiliary site and providing college courses there for high school students and adults.)
Career Exploration and Advising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify ways to expand the robust STEM career exploration programs already available in middle schools. ➤ Outline processes that District 189 could develop to ensure alignment between middle-school career exploration activities and the programs of study available at the high-school level. ➤ Inventory existing college and career advising resources and work-based learning programs and the resources needed to ensure that they are able to reach larger numbers of young people. One promising idea is to provide these programs with a central location within the high school from which to operate.
Employer Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Build on the already strong relationships between District 189 and employers to scale up work-based learning opportunities and provide more in-depth experiences, including embedding job shadows, mock interviews, and after-school internships into the academic calendar. ➤ Identify employer partners, in industries such as health care and utilities, that house significant IT functions and could provide work-based learning opportunities within an IT pathway, as well as illustrate to students the versatility of an IT pathway.
Intermediary Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clearly articulate the relationship between the Pathways work and collective impact efforts in East St. Louis and define how the Pathways intermediary functions are to be allocated across the Alignment Council, the Pathways Team, and potentially other organizations. ➤ Recruit individuals to take a leadership role on the Pathways Team who will be particularly effective in building public support for the Pathways vision. ➤ Identify an organization that has – or could build – strong relationships with employers and the capacity to take on the work of aggregating and brokering work-based learning opportunities in close coordination with the Pathways Team and District 189.