



KnowledgeWorks Proposal
Collaborative Policy Research and Action Planning Project
Updated May 18, 2023

KnowledgeWorks proposes a collaborative project to support Minnesota stakeholders in identifying some of the key policy changes needed to advance student-centered learning in communities across the state and developing a plan to spur that change. This project would utilize existing resources, including AMSD's Reimagine Minnesota framework and KnowledgeWorks State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning, to ensure alignment to trusted student-centered learning practices.

Introduction

In 2016, metro area superintendents at AMSD initiated creation of the Reimagine Minnesota framework to create lasting equity and excellence in education for all Minnesota students. This work quickly expanded to include a broader group of stakeholders, including local school board members and district-level staff, foundations, and the University of Minnesota, among others. The final co-created document included core strategies like shared understanding, personalized education, and student voice to help achieve the framework's goals.

Simultaneously, school districts and other education advocacy organizations in the state have begun to dive deeply into the transformative possibilities that student-centered learning can provide for learning communities. Groups like Education Evolving and the Minnesota School Boards Association have worked with local advocates to advance student-centered policies and practices.

To continue moving these visions forward, stakeholders from both the metro-area and greater Minnesota have expressed interest in undertaking a collaborative deep dive into the state-level policy structures that can impact this work for the purposes of identifying necessary policy changes. Additionally, stakeholders in the state have indicated interest in collectively creating an advocacy action plan to support both a policy agenda development and adoption of any needed policy changes.

KnowledgeWorks is well positioned to support Minnesota stakeholders to accomplish these objectives. The organization has extensive experience facilitating groups of stakeholders in these types of strategic discussions and in conducting the accompanying policy research to identify state-specific opportunities for policy change. For example, KnowledgeWorks has conducted similar processes in no less than six states to date. Additionally, KnowledgeWorks is dedicated to working alongside stakeholders to help them accomplish their goals and purposefully co-develops research and coalition-building processes. KnowledgeWorks has already demonstrated its commitment to this priority in Minnesota through the organization's current and prior partnerships with MSBA, AMSD, St. Thomas University, Education Evolving and multiple school districts in the state.

About KnowledgeWorks

KnowledgeWorks is a national nonprofit based in Cincinnati, Ohio that has been "creating the future of learning" for more than 20 years. In addition to the organization's history of transforming schools through a number of initiatives, KnowledgeWorks' investments have yielded the birth of collective impact and the growth of project-based learning.

KnowledgeWorks believes that transforming learning at a systems level is the best way to reduce the equity gaps that exist on the basis of race, gender, class and geography. Committed to a systems approach to the future of learning, KnowledgeWorks is currently engaged in partnerships with school

districts, state departments of education, nonprofits and education service agencies in Arizona, North Dakota, Ohio and South Carolina. Additionally, the organization is working to align systems in Michigan, Minnesota and Utah, among others. KnowledgeWorks invests human and thought capital in advocacy, policy, strategic foresight, research and practice and multiply those investments through work with partners to ensure that the future of teaching and learning reflects the hopes of every learner in every learning community.

Proposed Project

This proposal outlines a strategic sequence of activities to help Minnesota stakeholders build the capacity of organizational and practitioner advocates to create the policy change that they seek. Completion of this project would provide advocates with a deep set of possible policy changes and potential next steps for collective advocacy action.

KnowledgeWorks envisions the following four phases of work:

Phase One: Discovery (tentatively May-June 2023)

Prior to beginning a research process, KnowledgeWorks would engage with stakeholders to identify the types of policy areas Minnesotans believe have the greatest impact on educators' ability to make education more student-centered. KnowledgeWorks suggests beginning with a written survey, sent to a diverse and wide-ranging group of education stakeholders to gather initial data related to this question. This survey would be aligned to the 12 policy conditions set forth in KnowledgeWorks' [State Policy Framework for Personalized Learning](#). Any data gleaned from a phase one survey would serve to support organizations and districts in establishing legislative priorities for the legislative policy session in 2024.

Phase Two: Conditions Overview Workshops (June - August/September 2023)

KnowledgeWorks would hold a short series (no more than four) of virtual and/or in-person workshops in collaboration with AMSD and other partners, designed for stakeholders do the following:

1. Examine trends in the phase one survey data to discuss the conditions that rose to the top as priority to address in Minnesota's policy environment
2. Solidify three to four "priority conditions" based on the trends in phase one data
3. Build capacity on each of the priority conditions, including beginning to identify how individual policies within those conditions impact students, teachers, schools and districts seeking to implement student-centered learning
4. Vision together about how certain policy changes might affect learning environments for students in Minnesota

The workshop series will lay the groundwork for future phases of this project by offering an opportunity for participants to dive deeply into the specific policy conditions elevated from phase one, including understanding context from other states focused on similar policy change arenas. During this phase, KnowledgeWorks would also begin a research overview of current Minnesota laws, informing workshop content and preparing for any work in phases three and four (Phases one and two are designed to help understand what needs to be examined as a group in phase three). KnowledgeWorks also recommends including the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in conversation during this time. This could manifest in a number of ways, from participating as an observer in one or more workshops to receiving a preliminary presentation to staff on findings from the workshops.

Phase Three: Key Areas Policy Analysis (Fall/Winter 2023)

Following the workshops, KnowledgeWorks would undertake an aligned state policy analysis to identify state policies that would need to be addressed as the state, districts and school communities seek to advance equitable, student-centered learning practices within each of the priority conditions.

KnowledgeWorks would begin the process by conducting an extensive review of existing state policy. Staff will then engage stakeholders in focus groups to contextualize the insights that result from the review and translate the research and feedback into possible recommendations for policy change.

KnowledgeWorks would conclude this phase by generating and presenting policy change recommendations to stakeholders for feedback. Recommendations will ideally be split into short- and long-term recommendations, with short-term recommendations geared towards supporting a legislative agenda development for the upcoming 2024 session. If agreeable to AMSD leadership, KnowledgeWorks would be willing to present either the preliminary or final findings at the AMSD conference in the fall and facilitate a discussion around them, as well as to representatives from the state policy making community (e.g., MDE, friendly legislators, etc.).

Phase Four: Action Planning (Winter/Spring 2024)

Once stakeholders have the initial recommendations, phase four would focus on crafting an advocacy action plan for use by Minnesota stakeholders. This plan would build in part on the [Collective Education Roadmap for Action](#) released under Reimagine Minnesota in April 2018 and would identify key steps. KnowledgeWorks would co-create the final product along with Minnesota stakeholders. KnowledgeWorks staff would also be ready and willing to engage in additional conversations with Minnesota stakeholders around the analysis and action plan if and when AMSD feels it would be beneficial.

Budget

Thanks to an investment from the Bush Foundation, KnowledgeWorks has funding to execute on the work in phases one and two. The deadline for utilizing these funds is August 31, 2023. At present, KnowledgeWorks is actively seeking additional external funding for phases three and four of the work, though this is not guaranteed. Throughout phases one and two, KnowledgeWorks staff will continue to seek additional funding and will engage in regular dialogue with AMSD to identify how best to proceed with the proposed policy scan and action plan depending on the resources that are available.

The estimated cost to complete phases three and four is \$49,595. This amount covers KnowledgeWorks staff time, KnowledgeWorks staff travel costs, and any design costs.

Proposed Partners and Stakeholders

KnowledgeWorks proposes working in partnership with AMSD for this project. AMSD has the knowledge experience in both policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement in the metro region, as well as the historical experience from facilitating the creation of the Reimagine Minnesota roadmap.

KnowledgeWorks also proposes intentionally recruiting and engaging new stakeholder groups in each phase of the process to ensure equitable representation in the metro region and throughout greater Minnesota. Examples of potential partner organizations and stakeholder groups include the following: MASA, MREA, EdMN, Education Evolving, the Minnesota Learner Centered Network, Elevate Teaching, any youth-led organizations like Bridgemakers, and any parent organizations. Finally, KnowledgeWorks recommends bringing MDE and any key legislative offices into the conversation throughout the process as highlighted in the above sections of this proposal.