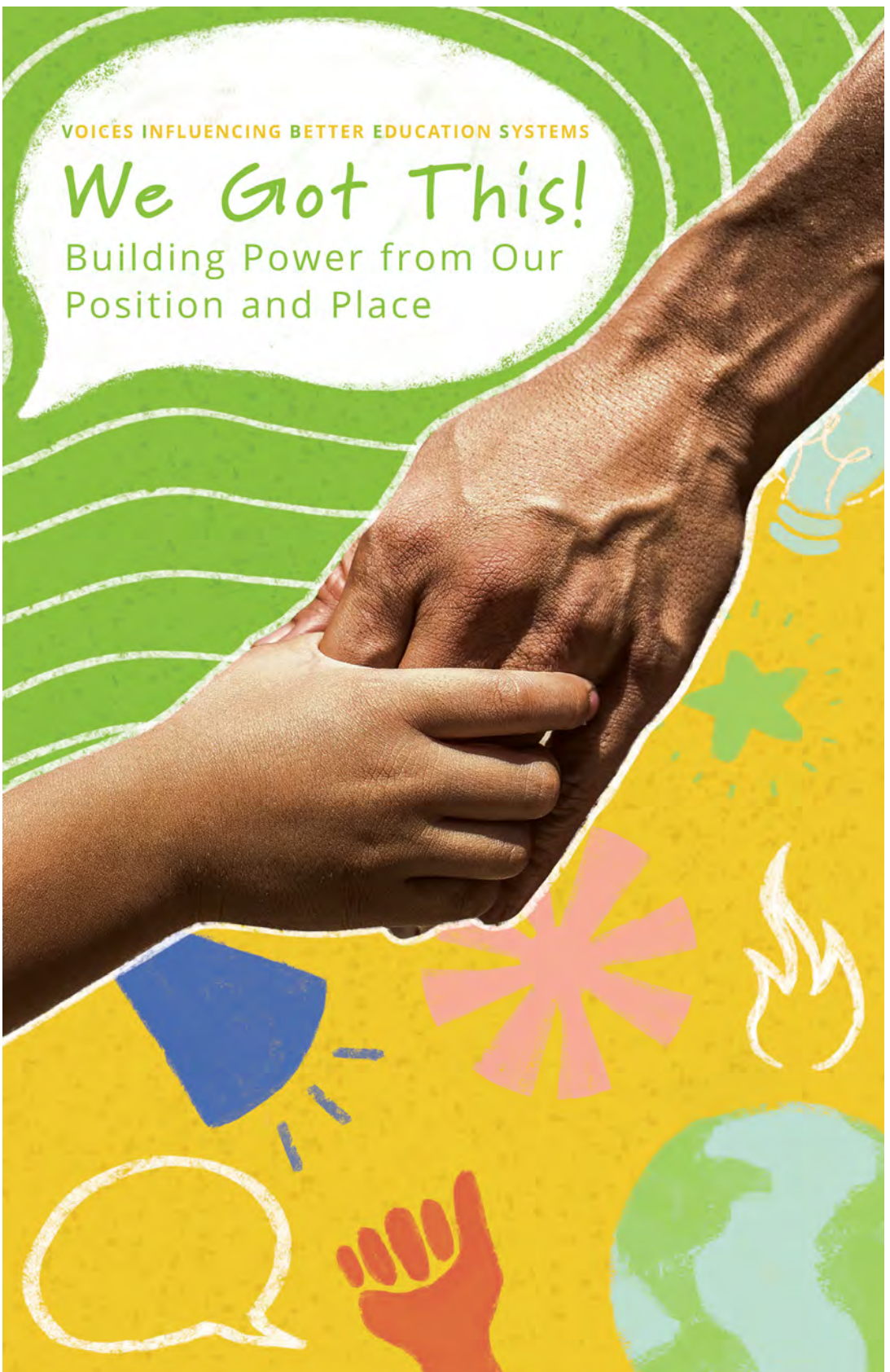



VOICES INFLUENCING BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

We Got This!

Building Power from Our
Position and Place





We live on Dakota land so it is only right that in this zine we spell "Minnesota" as "Mni Sota Makoce" or abbreviate as "MN".

Thank you Dakota people, the first nurturers of this "land where the water reflects the clouds".

Love Note



Hau Hola Hello Chao Nyob Zoo مُمُكِّي كَلِّعْ مُمُالَسْ لِمَا

Thank you for making the time to thumb through this humble little zine. We put this zine together to share that there is a network of parents/caregivers across the state (Austin, Northfield, North Minneapolis, Red Wing, Rochester, St. Cloud, and St Paul) who organize towards a common vision that another MN education and economic system is both possible and necessary. We hope this small offering fills you with relief, curiosity, and desire to join us or learn more.

—Voices Influencing Better Education Systems (VIBES)



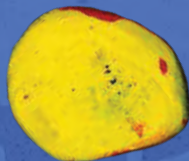
We Are

VOICES INFLUENCING BETTER EDUCATION SYSTEM (VIBES).

We are a network of parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, elders, and neighbors who are committed to shaping our local and state educational landscapes through policy advocacy. In this zine, we call ourselves core caregivers, to honor the different compositions of people who care for our children's whole development.

For too long, public decision-making bodies have prioritized professional voices paid to speak on behalf of impacted populations around our children's education.

Together, we strive to weave local families with community knowledge, authority, and leadership in these state-level conversations.



Community Ownership, Collective Impact

We do collective impact work.

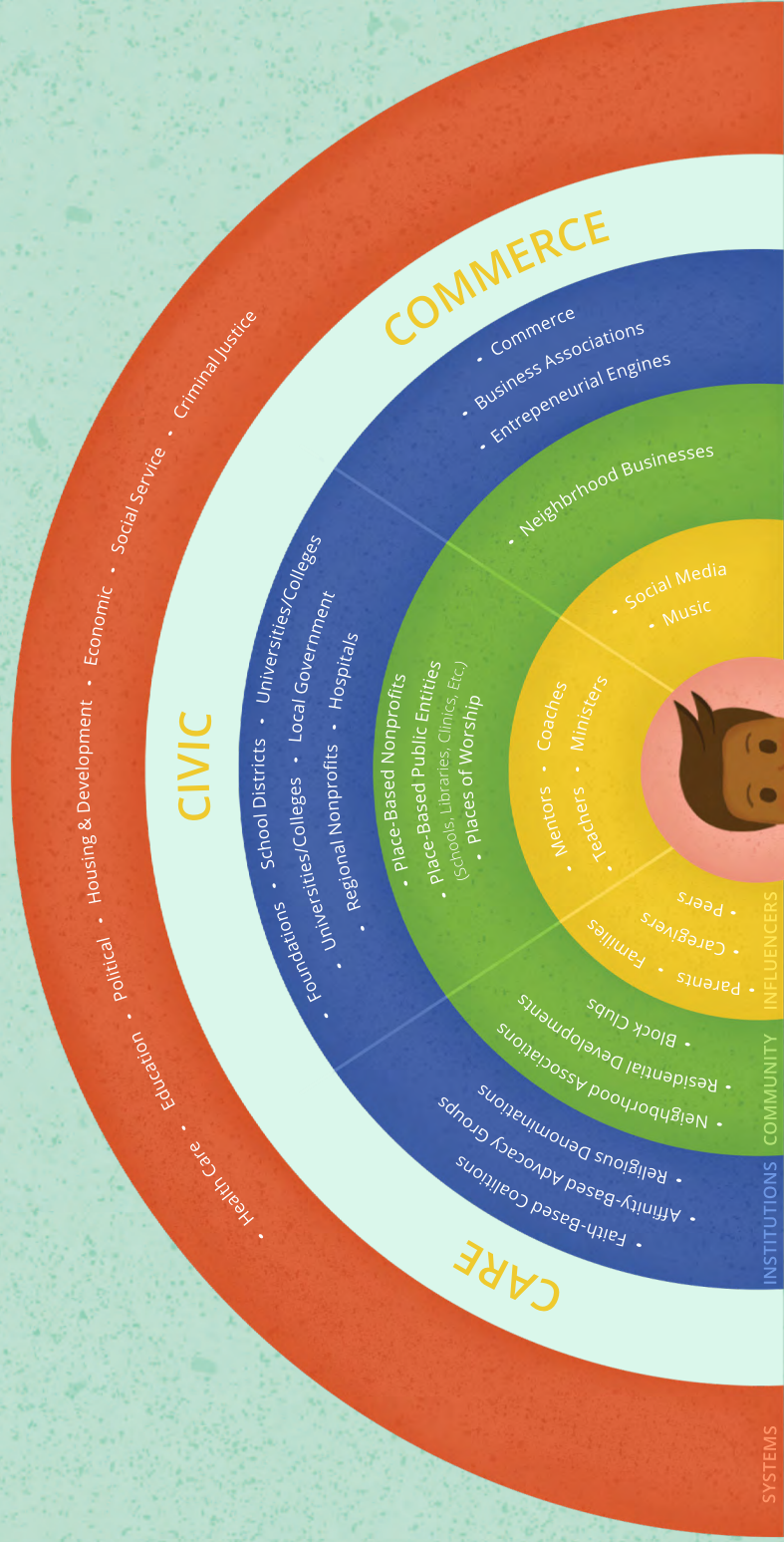
We believe everyone has a role in the movement towards creating a new education system in MN. We also know that not every role is for everybody. Our core work is to make sure community knows that they play critical and multifaceted roles in leading systems towards change. Starting from the place of community, we align people from all levels of public decision-making to get it right and tight for the betterment of our children's education and economic future.

- **We come** together to name the barriers we see to our children getting the best education they can and we create a shared space to remove these barriers.
- **We agree** on what barriers we want to remove and how we want to track our progress.
- **We coordinate** our shared work to maximize the end result for our children.
- **We center** trust and relationship-building. It is difficult work to shape change for good. While we can't foresee the future, we know we will survive it if we have each other's back .
- **We form** teams of people who can pay close attention to our shared work and will keep us focused, no matter how long it takes for us to get to our shared vision.



You have a special
role in this.





It Takes an Entire Village

Everyone has a role in the ecosystem. Not every role is for everyone. Respect your role. Respect the role of others.

You can make an impact in the world.



How We Do It

1. Relationship Building

- In building relationships, we secure commitment from our communities and grow and sustain a constituency.
- Relationships are the glue that bind effective teams together and we structure teams so that we can work together in a sustainable and empowering way.

2. Storytelling

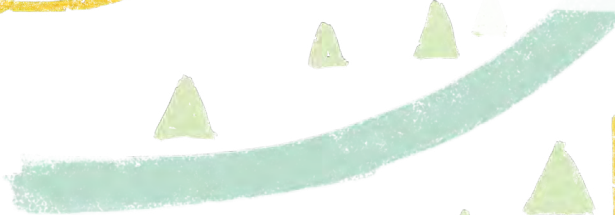
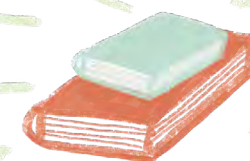
- Telling stories communicates our shared values and motivates others to take action.
- Telling stories also connects us to one another and is key in building strong relationships.

3. Strategy

- We strategize and act to wield power in organizing.
- We devise strategy in response to an intolerable circumstance our community faces, and our strategy becomes our blueprint for making change.
- We implement strategy through acting via tactics and subsequently, deepen our relationships, strengthen our teams, and develop shared stories in the process.

4. Action

- Speak at the Legislature.
- Talk to policy makers.
- Talk to school staff and other parents.
- Participate in School Board meetings, City Council meetings, Legislative Committee Meetings, County Committee Meetings, etc.
- Write Letters of support.



5. Leadership and Teamwork

We use "Lessons from Geese", a story that presents five principles that inspires us to practice good leadership and teamwork skills, as we all struggle to find ways to do more and more with less resources.

Fact 1 As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the birds that follow. By flying in V formation, the whole flock adds greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.



Lesson Aligning towards common goals, sharing common direction, holding clear formation, and having a strong sense of community can help us get closer to our destination and with less effort because we build upon the trust and momentum of each other.

Fact 2 When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.



Lesson If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept help, and we give aid to others.

Fact 3 When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position.



Lesson We take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. We know that we are interdependent on each other's skills, capabilities, and unique combination of gifts, talents, and resources.

Fact 4 The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those in front to keep up their speed.



Lesson We know the system puts a lot of barriers that make our lives and work difficult. We make sure our "honking" is full of love, grace, accountability, and encouragement towards one another.

Fact 5 When a goose gets sick or hurt, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help protect it. Then they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.



Lesson We strive to stand by each other in difficult times as well as in the moments when we feel strongest. We strive to stand by each other at both the easiest and hardest times.



We want the adults in front of our children to have the best interest at heart. We all have a role to play in creating the right conditions for our children to graduate, find living wage jobs, own a home, and live safe and healthy lives.

We need a village of people who are willing to love our children like their own. We know that historical trauma has impacted the way we all parent. We want to create more space for adults to address our trauma and stop the cycle of letting adult people's problems get in the way of our children's future.

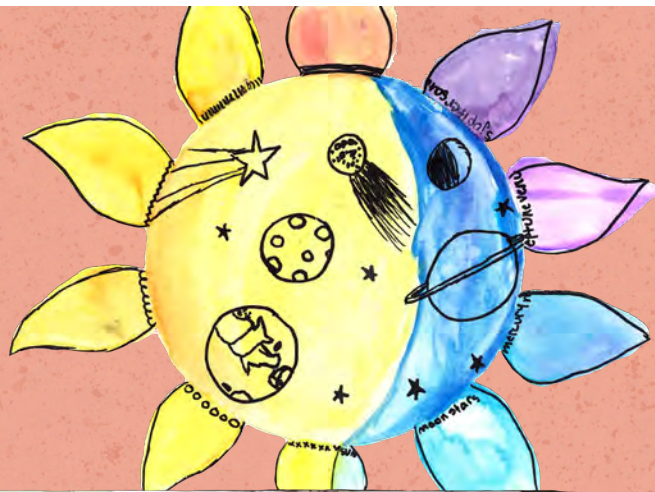
We want to stop policy makers from making bad policy from bad information. This means we need to control stories that get told about us. We want our schools to teach our children about their history.

Above all, we want academic proficiency and school ecosystems to be centered on growing our children's sense of belonging and to see this entire planet as their home. We want our young people to know where they came from, know how to read the present world, and know how they want to shape their lives to respond to it.

We want the restoration of our recreation centers. Lastly, we want to take inventory of current community resources. We want policy makers to stop stereotyping our young people and start creating spaces where young people can self-define.



Why We Do It



WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GROW?



Questions We're Learning Into

What is my role in my kids' education system? How am I going to communicate with my kids' teachers? How do I connect with school staff to help my child?

Why don't teachers look like my kids?

Are my kids ready for kindergarten?



Will my kids know how to read well by 3rd grade?



Will my kids get their needs met? How will my kids get good education when budget is so tight?

What power do I have to shape public decisions that impact my kids' future?

How can I support my kids mental health? How do I help empower my child to be comfortable in their own body?

THERE IS
NO ONE
EXPERT
WITHOUT
THE MANY

JOIN THE BELOVED COMMUNITY:
EPC-MN.ORG



Make phone call or write a letter to decision-makers.

Make calls to potential supporters and help out at an event.

Talk to policy makers and Speak at committee hearings at the Legislature.

This can be as easy as signing a petition.

Show up at an event.

Participate in school board meetings, city council meetings, legislative committee meetings, county committee meetings, etc.

Make a commitment to do more.

Recruit, engage and play active role in meetings (facilitate, takes notes, interpret, etc).

Fundraise for the organization (At minimum makes 1 "ask" each year)

Know core issues and articulate's EPC vision and mission and proactively keep up to date with EPC-VIBES activities.

Spreading Good Vibes

We believe everyone has a role in the movement towards creating a new education system in MN. We also know that not every role is for everyone.

Glossary

ADVOCACY

When people take action to speak in favor of, recommend, argue for a cause, support or defend, or plead on behalf of others.



BELOVED COMMUNITY

A formation of people who affirm differences and claim shared identities and cultural legacies that shape who they are and how they live in the world.



COLLECTIVE IMPACT

The commitment of a group of people from different sectors and organizations towards a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. The concept of collective impact is founded on the idea that in order for organizations to create lasting solutions to social problems on a large scale, we need to coordinate efforts and work together around clear goals, strategy, and measurements.



GRASSROOTS

When a collective effort is initiated by people operating at the deepest local level.



LEADERSHIP

When people accept responsibility for enabling others to achieve purpose in the face of uncertainty.



MNI SOTA

Original Dakota name for what is most commonly known and spelled as Minnesota, describing "land where the water reflects the clouds."



ORGANIZING

When people come together to turn resources they have into power they need to make the change they want.



STRATEGY

A practical plan for turning what people have (people, time, skills, money, experiences, relationships, credibility, creativity, allies, supporters, leadership) into the power they need, to achieve a clear and measurable outcome or goal (justice, change, transformation).



VALUES

Lasting beliefs that guide people's thought patterns, behaviors, and attitudes.



Gratitude

WE THANK THE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE THAT WE DRAW UPON FOR THIS HUMBLE LITTLE ZINE:

- Alliance for Justice
- bell hooks
- *Emergent Strategy*, adrienne maree brown
- "Lessons from Geese," Kirk Weisler
- Minnesota Historical Society
- *Mni Sota Mackoce: The Land of the Dakota*, Gwen Westerman & Bruce White
- *Organizer's Handbook*, Dr. Marshall Ganz of Harvard University & Leading Change Network and the New Organizing Institute
- "Urban Ecosystem," Strive Partnership



Your Thought Space



What is going on through your mind?



How do you feel?



What steps have you taken
and will you take?



Shout Outs

4 years ago, a group of leaders from collective impact initiatives across MN united under a common vision of seeing our children succeed in school and in life, our communities thriving, and our state being equitable and prosperous for all. Our mission is to use a collective impact approach, deliver measurable results for our children across all races and income, and build civic infrastructure in local communities needed to drive meaningful change.

Our network formed through an invitation by institutional leaders from the Education Partnerships Coalition (EPC), a group of collective impact initiatives from Austin, Northfield, North Minneapolis, Rochester, Red Wing, Rochester and Saint Paul. We are leaning into opportunities for EPC to introduce new ways of influencing public policy that are rooted in community. We are all learning how critical family and community voices are in advocacy.

While each EPC partner is at different places in organizing work, we are all committed to growing the number of caregivers who are able to be heard in public decision-making processes.

EPC Members



NORTHFIELD PROMISE
Northfield, MN



AUSTIN ASPIRES
Austin, MN



NORTHSIDE ACHIEVEMENT ZONE
Minneapolis, MN



CRADLE 2 CAREER
Rochester, Minnesota



SAINT PAUL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD
Saint Paul, MN



UNITED WAY PARTNER FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
Saint Cloud, MN



GENERATION NEXT
Minneapolis, MN



EVERY HAND JOINED: THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT
Redwing, MN

Youth Artists

- Annabelle Trombley, 10
- Lilah Trombley, 7

Funders

THE MCKNIGHT FOUNDATION

StriveTogether
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