

Building The Will

Pro Tips for Strategic CaseMakers™



Defining a Strong Theory of Change to Get the Right People on Your Bridge of Understanding

Q:

We've done a lot of listening and trust-building in our community lately so that we can redesign our school system to work for all our kids and to prioritize equity as an outcome. Now that we have a better sense of the future the community wants to work toward, what's our next step?

A:

The work you've done so far is so important! As we've said before, the road to justice starts by helping people see the bigger-picture adaptive challenges on the horizon and listening differently to how the whole community wants to solve them. (See *Building The Will* volumes 4, 5, and 6.)

The next step for changemakers is thinking carefully about our plan for getting there, what makes our work critical or game changing, and who we need as partners for getting the work done. Some folks call that a theory of change, and others call it a theory of action. Whatever you call it, you need it to:

1

Help you think through exactly HOW you are going to achieve your justice-oriented goal.

2

Show your current and future partners you mean business.

3

Define exactly what audiences you need most on your [bridge of understanding](#).

Having a theory of change is one of the hallmarks of **Strategic CaseMaking™!**

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Here's a simple way of thinking about it:



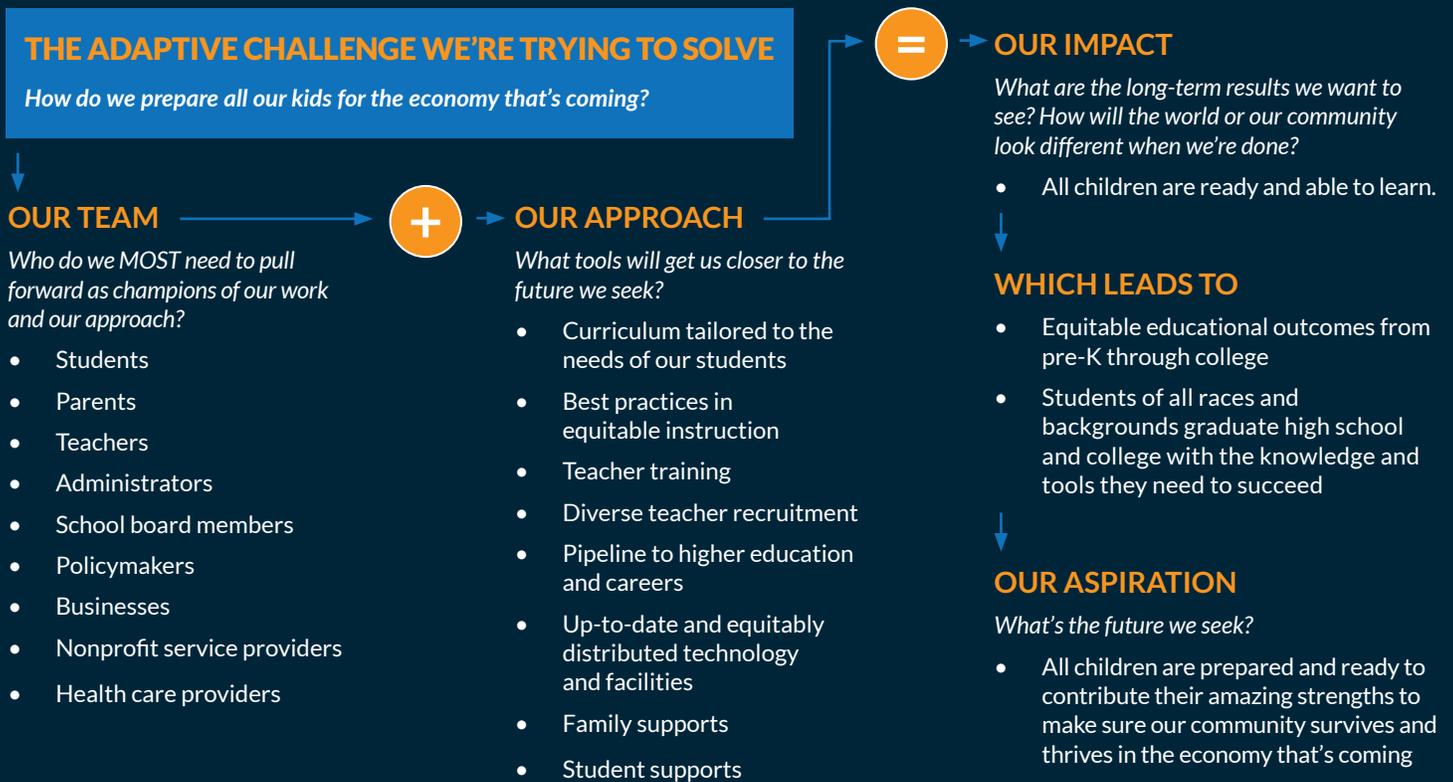
In this scenario, "we" refers to a coalition of folks in your community who have a shared goal, such as educational equity or housing justice, and have agreed on a mission, vision, and values that build trust.

ONLINE THEORY OF CHANGE RESOURCES WE LIKE:

- "DEVELOPING A THEORY OF CHANGE," ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION
- "CREATING A THEORY OF ACTION," CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here's an example of how a school board might fill in the blanks to create a theory of change that equitably prepares all children for the coming economy:



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