

Collective Impact

What we REALLY know.



What do scholars and thought leaders agree on?

Collective Impact approaches to education utilize some best practices based on academic research. However, some elements of the model have yet to be tested, and others raise questions as to when (and if) collective impact is the best approach to solving problems in education



1 What is collective impact?

The term “collective impact” first appeared in a Stanford Social Innovation Review article by John Kania and Mark Kramer of FSG in 2011.

It's a model for how organizations should work together to achieve a common goal. Distinctive features include:

1. A backbone organization to coordinate activity.
2. The use of data to drive continuous quality improvement.
3. The involvement of high-level decision makers in regular meetings.

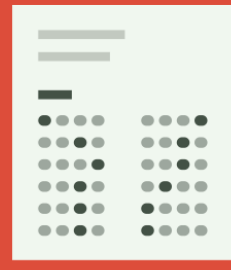
2 What we did



Invited academic researchers and collective impact thought leaders to the Collective Impact Summit, held at Northwestern University.



Reviewed what we know from the study of collaboration, education reform, community development, and coalition building



Synthesized this information to create a definitive understanding of what we KNOW and what we THINK might be true.



This process separated CLAIMS of collective impact from what we KNOW about the model.

3 What we REALLY know



Evidence-based

Backbone organizations are effective for governing organizations under stable circumstances.

Collaboration among businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies works best when they build a common agenda.



Unproven idea

Education data can be used to perform continuous quality improvement without appropriate research designs and statistical controls.

Collective impact initiatives that prioritize the decision making of high-level organizational leaders will perform better than community development approaches.

4 Use Caution



Collective impact uses effective organizational processes to catalyze the efforts of large groups of organizations. However, the model is largely experimental, and communities should consider case studies as examples of successes rather than evidence that the collective impact approach works in every context.

Read the Report