

Case Study: Eastern Senior High School



companies
for causes



This case study accompanies a [video interview](#) with Rachel Skerritt, Principal of Eastern Senior High School, Washington, DC.

Summary

Imagine a world where CEOs of closely held businesses partnered across industries and worked collaboratively to invest strategically to solve community problems. Concerned about ever-growing needs and shrinking resources in our communities, and frustrated by the lack of coordination and strategic focus around corporate giving, Tom Raffa designed an innovative collective impact solution to promote results-oriented corporate philanthropy and volunteerism.¹ Institutionalized through Companies for Causes (CforC), the model stimulates increased responsibility around corporate investment and facilitates cross sector collaboration to move the needle on pressing societal issues.

Problem

Too often, the business sector engages in isolated and disconnected philanthropic activities without a concrete understanding of how their efforts will impact an issue - if their contributions have an impact at all. Additionally, the non-profit and community organizations, with whom businesses work with to address societal problems, often lack the resources and expertise to facilitate a comprehensive and responsible approach. The result is far too often a minimal impact.

The business sector can and must do more to address pressing challenges in our communities. However, how the “more” is defined and how contributions are provided is critical to determining whether the business community provides meaningful value. To create lasting solutions to social problems organizations — including those in government, civil society, and the business sector — need to coordinate efforts and work in a deliberate and meaningful way towards clearly defined goals. Organizations must align their efforts, focus on their areas of expertise, and utilize common measures of success.

Getting Started

At CforC, we strive to impact the most pressing issues in our community. Our CEO partners identify a critical issue and a community partner. We then embark on a comprehensive needs analysis, driven by community stakeholders. We then, jointly, set measurable goals and work with an array of stakeholders to develop a comprehensive program to address the identified needs.

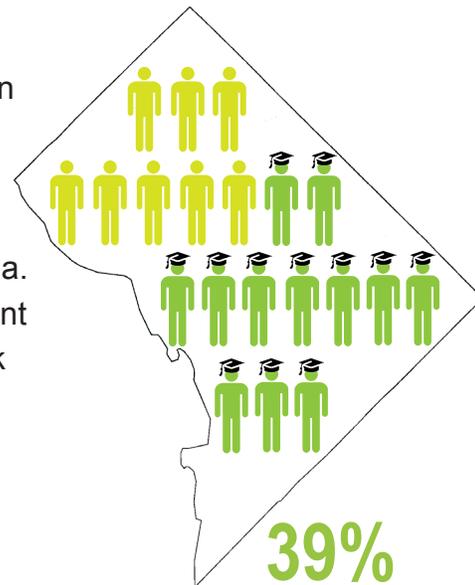
¹ Tom Raffa is the President and CEO of [Raffa, P.C.](#), an accounting, consulting and technology firm, based in Washington, DC, dedicated to service and community.



One Example - Education and Workforce Readiness

Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that by 2018, the U.S. economy will create 47 million job openings – nearly two-thirds of which will require workers with at least some post-secondary education, with nearly 14 million being filled by those with an associate's degree or occupational certificate.¹ Yet, while many stakeholders across public, private, nonprofit and philanthropic sectors work long hours to address complex challenges related to education, more than 5,000 schools in the United States are chronically failing.

Nearly one in three U.S. high school students fail to graduate with a diploma, and approximately 1.2 million students drop out each year – averaging 7,000 every school day or one every 26 seconds. In the District of Columbia, only 61% of high school students in the class of 2014 graduated on time with a regular diploma. Even among DC high school graduates, unemployment rates hover near 20%, indicating many graduates lack the skills they need to succeed in the District's job market.



39%
of DC high school students did not graduate on time with a regular diploma in 2014.

The first group of CforC CEO partners focused their efforts to improve educational outcomes to better prepare our nation's workforce and partnered with Eastern Senior High School in DC. CforC has worked with the leaders at Eastern since the school's reopening for the 2011-12 school year.

Structure

CforC is a tax-exempt IRC 501(c)(3) public charity. Our CEOs Partners have committed financial and pro-bono support of our work. Additional CEOs and representatives from the community work to set and accomplish goals related to our individual projects. The initiative is funded by corporate members and foundation grants. Opportunities exist to support the mission of CforC and its programs overall and/or to provide contributions restricted to distinct projects and/or initiatives.

¹ "Establishing a Successful Roadmap," Raise DC: Prepared Youth. Productive Residents. Thriving Communities: A Collective Call to Action (2012).



Our Successes

Since Eastern's relaunch in 2011, CforC CEOs' hands-on efforts and financial support have contributed to measurable successes in support of Eastern's Class of 2015.



Reading and Literacy. The percentage of 8th grade students in DC who performed at or above the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient level was 18% in 2013. To promote reading and literacy, CforC purchased books to enable Eastern's 'Drop Everything and Read' (DEAR) Program and has supported non-profit partners to support the reading and writing needs of students. As a result, Eastern's 2013 District of Columbia Comprehensive Assessment System (DC CAS) results in reading ranked 7th among DC public high schools while its composition scores were 6th best among all DC public schools.



Envision @Eastern. Many students enter high school unprepared and fall behind in their studies. To combat this, CforC supported the launch and development of the Envision @Eastern program, Eastern's twilight program designed to help students recover the credits they need to move towards graduation. In its flagship year of 2012/13, 58 students enrolled in Envision, the program had the highest attendance rate (72%) of similar programs in the District of Columbia and a majority of students were passing a majority of their courses. All of the students who were eligible for grade promotion during Envision's first term were promoted to the appropriate grade level.



College and Career Readiness. All students should have a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that lead to success in college and the 21st Century workplace. CforC has sponsored college trips for Eastern students, brought college admissions and financial aid officers to Eastern's campus, and hosted Eastern students in our companies through our innovative "Easternship" program. To date, all students who have completed Easternships and remained enrolled at Eastern are on track to graduate. For the Class of 2015, all 239 Eastern seniors who have the ability to graduate have applied to at least one college, producing 1,442 total applications.



Graduation. In the District of Columbia, only 61% of high school students in the class of 2014 graduated on time with a regular diploma. CforC member companies have supported Honor Roll Assemblies, sponsored students for Youth Leadership programs, and funded staff positions to build a strong culture of achievement at Eastern. Overall, 239 seniors will be a part of the Eastern Senior High School Class of 2015.



Lessons Learned and Next Steps

CforC CEOs have seen the true scope of the problems facing the educational systems of the District of Columbia. Despite the District's investment in students at all grade levels, a majority of students enter high school unprepared.¹ Additionally, we have come to understand that students face many barriers outside of the school environment that we must confront to increase student success.

In response, CforC expanded the scope of our project to the elementary and middle school communities that support Eastern Senior High School. Through our All Roads Lead to Graduation project, we seek to:



Ensure students meet key academic benchmarks on the road to graduation from kindergarten through high school.



Identify and support opportunities to expand engaging, hands-on learning opportunities for students at all grade levels.



Expose more students, earlier, to college and career options.



Eliminate non-academic barriers to success in school.



¹ Up to 70% of students enter Eastern unable to complete Algebra, the required math course for freshman. According to results from the 2013 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 18% of students in DC performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level in reading and 17% in math.



For questions or comments on this report, please contact:

Joe Weedon

Executive Director, Companies for Causes

jweedon@companiesforcauses.org