

Best Implementation Honorable Mentions

AlignED – Policy to Implementation: Supporting MO Districts on Pre-K Expansion

Aligned passed legislation in 2016 placing funding in the Missouri state funding formula for Pre-K expansion in school districts for up to 4% of their free/reduced lunch population. This legislation was gradually phased into all districts by 2019, adding \$42MM to the formula. Aligned actively monitored the usage of the pre-k funds available to school districts over a two-year period. In 2019/2020, districts claimed 6,388 students for pre-k funding. After recognizing that only half of the districts across the state were utilizing the funding, we commissioned a study with NIEER in 2022 to better understand why districts were not using it. The results were utilized to make changes to the policy, enhancing access to capital funds to build additional classrooms and increasing the percentage smaller districts were able to utilize for a full classroom. In 2023, Aligned worked with Governor Mike Parson as part of a state-wide coalition to increase the funding and flexibility available to smaller districts and center-based pre-k providers who were being contracted with as an extension to school districts. Roughly \$82MM was appropriated for increased access to pre-k slots in the state. Aligned is now contracted to complete a pre-k usage guide for districts and related contractors to ensure the funds are fully utilized.