

Target and General Mills Pledge \$6 Million to Combat Workforce Gap

Tap Northside Achievement Zone for their Innovation

Target and General Mills will each announce \$3 million pledges to support the gains made by the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ) in combating the looming workforce readiness gap. CEOs of the respective companies made a joint October 8 at the Minnesota Business Partnership's annual dinner, where NAZ will receive the Minnesota's Future award.

NAZ is a collaboration of local nonprofits that has emerged as a national leader in developing workforce readiness among communities of color, using education. NAZ's work in North Minneapolis is making significant gains in closing the academic achievement gap.

"Closing the academic achievement gap is not just about what's fair, it's essential to our future workforce and ensuring the economic health of our region," said General Mills CEO, Ken Powell. "NAZ's strong return on investment demonstrates that it has the potential to make a game-changing difference in reshaping outcomes on the north side of Minneapolis."

"Investing in results-driven education programs and initiatives that enable all students to thrive academically is part of General Mills' commitment to reduce the opportunity gap, particularly in Minneapolis," added Powell.

Minnesota's gap in academic performance between students of color and white students is second worst in the nation. This issue has significant ramifications, as the number of people of color will grow from 24 percent of the region's population in 2010 to 41 percent by 2040.^x In addition, an estimated 70 percent of Minnesota jobs will require some level of postsecondary education by 2018.^{xx}

"NAZ is making great strides to close the achievement gap in Minneapolis through an innovative model that emphasizes a holistic approach to education and a growing focus on wellness, areas that play a critical role in Target's community efforts. We're proud to support the inspiring work by Sondra and NAZ partners to ensure children and families are prepared for the workforce and to reach their full potential," said Brian Cornell, Target's chairman and chief executive officer.

NAZ is a public-private partnership that started in 2010 with less than 150 low-income families of color from North Minneapolis. The investments represent \$1 million per year, over three years from the Target Corporation and the General Mills Foundation. It will partially fund the organization to reach their goal of enrolling 1,000 families with 2,500 children and support each child to graduate from high school ready for college. The investment bolsters coordinated services across NAZ network of 33 nonprofits and 10 schools that include education, housing, health, and career training.

NAZ President & CEO Sondra Samuels said, "Our state is known across the country for innovation. It's gratifying to see visionary business leaders promoting this same level of

problem solving on behalf of our children, who face egregious disparities. Minnesota once more has an opportunity to lead the nation and create the world's best workforce.”

Children enrolled in NAZ are more ready for kindergarten, their learning accelerates faster than their peers, and they do better on their standardized tests the longer they are with NAZ. Detailed data is available at the-naz.org/results.

NAZ Return on Investment

A recent [Wilder Research study](#) projects a societal gain of \$6.12 for every dollar invested in NAZ. Key factors driving the projected rate of return include increased lifetime earnings from higher educational attainment, improved health, reduced mortality, and increased tax revenues, in addition to savings to the justice system, the K-12 education system, and the public assistance and child welfare systems. The results of the Wilder study underscore how Minnesota's achievement gap impacts the economic vitality of the region.

About NAZ

NAZ is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and a collaboration of 43 organizations and schools dedicated to closing the academic achievement gap. Together they are working with 870 north Minneapolis families with 1,870 children as they lift themselves out of multigenerational poverty, using education as a lever. The collaborative approach drives more effective use of public and private resources, which further supports a net cost savings to society. NAZ is working to enroll a total of 1,000 families with 2,500 children in the next year.

In addition to the Minnesota Business Partnership's Minnesota's Future award, NAZ was awarded the 2015 Best Nonprofit Award by the Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce.

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Data Sources

x “The state of Minnesota public education 2011,” Minnesota Children's Action Network, 2011, https://minncan.org/sites/minncan.org/files/research/attachment/StateOfMinnPubEd2011_web%5Bsmallpdf.com%5D.pdf

xx “Higher Education Partnerships for Prosperity: A Vision For a New Skills and Innovation Economy Through Collaborations Among Higher Education Institutions, Employers, and Regional Communities,” Itasca Project, 2012, <http://www.theitascaproject.com/Itasca%20Project%20-%20Higher%20Ed%20Whitepaper%20FINAL2pdf.pdf>

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