



ALIGNED

Annual Report 2021 

In a year where schools across the nation faced turmoil over curriculums, pandemic-related learning hardships, and persistent teacher shortages, we will remember 2021 as one of the most challenging times for our students. COVID-19 turned our education system on its head, and schools may never be the same again.

***Through this adversity,
Aligned pushed big ideas in 2021:***



We scrutinized funding models in Kansas and Missouri, finding ways to rework formulas to bring more equity among districts and charters.



We played a crucial role in launching a bold new governance structure for early care and education.



We championed fresh ways to reward student achievement.



We proposed policies to attract more teachers to the profession.

These achievements directly resulted from conversations with our education, business, and community partners. As advocates, we spend a lot of time talking. This year, we listened.

Aligned learned that citizens want an education system focused on equity, agility, and relevancy. We also learned that students need flexible learning environments that will lead to valuable skills and useful competencies.



Through our new partnerships and coalitions, we can collectively impact lasting change.

As the business voice of education, we are well-positioned to leverage our resources, influence, and expertise to build and expand new partnerships that will meet the needs of students now and support long-term success by connecting them with future careers.

With business and education leaders working together, Aligned has a considerable opportunity to create a personalized and intentional education for all students, including real-world learning access, competency-based education, and innovative school environments.

Thank you for being a part of our efforts. When we come together to talk, listen, and lead, we can build an education system that works for everyone. The pandemic changed education forever. We will harness this momentum to make positive change.

Torree Pederson · *President/CEO*
Mike Stradinger · *Chairman of the Board*
Tyler Nottberg · *Vice Chairman of the Board*

FROM CRADLE TO CAREER

Connecting the dots along the continuum of learning

Early learning, K-12, and higher education have traditionally operated in siloed systems. Reforming our system requires a strategic approach that tasks business and community leaders, educators, and policymakers with improving education at every entry point.

Aligned understands that transformation takes time. Therefore, we approach our work with patience and persistence and embrace the fruits of incremental change. We share our successes and celebrate wins each year with our community. We are confident that our vision of 'Every. Student. Prepared.' is achievable with continued support from our community.



Pre-K research

We secured state-level funding for Pre-K through our advocacy efforts. However, as these new dollars began to flow to districts and charter schools, we uncovered an uneven usage pattern due to inadequate funding and utilization barriers.

This year, we conducted a statewide survey of district leaders to gather insights that would allow us to understand funding hardships better and to identify strategies to increase Pre-K funding usage.

Office of Childhood

Thanks to the work of Aligned and its partners, Missouri Governor Mike Parson formed the Office of Childhood (OOC) through executive order. The OOC increases investment and resources for children 0-5—a vital win for Missouri.

Aligned was a crucial partner in the launch of the OOC.

We helped craft strategies to educate legislators on the importance of this office, contributed to the development of a stakeholder engagement plan outlining how the OOC will communicate with the public, and served on the Zero- to-Three state-level policy and advocacy team.



Addressing teacher shortages

Teacher certification has not been keeping pace with demand. Aligned led research that highlighted disparities in teacher certifications and increasing demand for teachers in STEM-related fields. This work helped us design a policy framework to address shortages through alternative certifications and flexible salary structures.

Creating pathways to higher education

Throughout 2021, Aligned worked with partners to advance expanded opportunities for higher education—promoting the Kansas Promise Act, which provides service scholarships for students interested in postsecondary education programs, enabling access to ACT and WorkKeys assessments for nonpublic school students, and increasing dual enrollment opportunities for high school students at local colleges.

EXPANDED PARTNERSHIPS

We are thrilled to have five new business partners join our St. Louis Advisory Board.

Our founders created Aligned to bring business leaders into the conversation around education throughout Kansas and Missouri. As we expand our footprint outside the greater Kansas City area, we plan to establish advisory boards in:

Columbia, Missouri

Springfield, Missouri

Manhattan, Kansas

Wichita, Kansas

Southwest Kansas



Breaking barriers between business and education

Throughout 2021, we prioritized our Today for Tomorrow Road Show to meet with business leaders on the ground to understand their needs and goals for education in their community.

Many of our recent policy solutions have come directly from leaders who want to remove the roadblocks that prevent alignment between the education and business communities.

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EVERY. STUDENT.

 *Prepared.*

We are a non-profit,
non-partisan coalition of
businesses that believe
we can, and should, achieve
more for our students
by engaging in policy
advocacy and outreach to
advance education reform.

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