



# ALIGNED

Investing in the *Workforce of Tomorrow*

**2020**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Letter from the President</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Impact Summary</b>	<b>4 - 5</b>
Our Impact in 2020	
2020 Highlights	
<b>Earned Media</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Coalition Building and Business Engagement</b>	<b>7 - 9</b>
Legislative Outreach	
Executive Branch Outreach	
Lunch & Learns	
Stakeholder Outreach	
<b>Public Policy Priorities for 2021</b>	<b>10</b>
Advocacy Positions	
<b>Vision</b>	<b>11</b>
Early Childhood Education	
Quality Schools	
Work-based Learning	



## Letter from the President

Aligned Members:

It was hard to look back on 2020 and summarize our year because, in many ways, it feels as if we are living in a 2020 extension. Assessing the pandemic's impact on education policy may not be possible for months and years to come. Nevertheless, we will press pause for a moment to reflect on our work and use this annual report as a way to describe where we found ourselves as we flipped the calendar page into 2021.

With the regular legislative sessions in both Kansas and Missouri cut short, we received a gift of time that allowed us to nurture and grow the relationships that sustain our organization, which is our members. We strengthened vital partnerships that will shape our work in the years to come. And we invested in programs to develop and expand our expertise.

In 2020 we achieved the following:

- » Increased our business leader membership by 50 percent
- » Established a St. Louis Advisory Board
- » Retooled our vision and mission
- » Completed a new strategic plan
- » Delivered 15 presentations
- » Published 21 weekly and 13 special reports
- » Earned certificates in education finance from Georgetown University's Edunomics

This past year we also witnessed how COVID-19 upended learning for millions of students nationwide and shined a spotlight on educational inequity. Teacher, parent, and student frustrations have inspired the beginnings of an educational overhaul. As windows open for bold ideas and new reforms, we must guard against those that fail to place students at the center. In our role as "honest broker" we will continue to examine all policies through an unbiased lens. Still, we must maintain even greater vigilance in a time when opportunists can exploit pandemic-related frustrations.

Our vision, Every Student Prepared, is one where students in Kansas and Missouri receive an education that prepares them for the future of their choice. And with your continued support, we can fulfill our mission to amplify the business voice to drive student achievement and workforce readiness.

Here's to better days and brighter futures.

All the best,

*Torree Pederson*

Torree Pederson  
President, Aligned



## Impact Summary

### Our Impact in 2020

When the start of a new decade kicked off in January of 2020, we prepared for another active year of advocacy in Kansas and Missouri. Our agenda included working with lawmakers to reform the governance structure for early childhood, expand dual credit and competency-based education, and look for innovative ways to address teacher shortages.

We always approach our work through the lens of agility to create conditions where:

- » Workers can acquire the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to an ever-evolving world.
- » Students can receive an education based on gaining knowledge and competency-based outcomes.
- » Educators can be effective regardless of where they are in their careers.

Agility took on a new meaning last year. Workers found themselves either on the front lines battling the effects of COVID-19, setting up makeshift home offices, or suddenly without jobs. Many students shifted to isolated environments, learning online and often falling behind. And school leaders faced the challenges of how to deliver education when the data and disease changed daily.

We started the year with a minimal understanding of epidemiology. Now we live in a world where preschoolers willingly wear masks, teenagers find new ways to socialize, and most parents now can add “teacher” to their resumes.

As advocates, our work centers on studying the successes and failures of education through the lens of a worldwide pandemic. What is clear is that we can no longer cling to the status quo for fear of upsetting individual constituencies. That is why Aligned has always put students at the center of our work.

As we begin 2021, we stand ready to jump on the opportunity before us to help change a system that needs more agility. Our duty as a business leader-led organization is to fight for policies that set our students up for success, pursuing the futures of their choice.

Aligned will continue to amplify the business voice to ensure that our students and schools are agile, and the policy agenda is ambitious.

Our vision for education is that one day... **We Are Aligned.**

- ◀ **Representative Doug Richey inquires during budget hearings. Richey is an advocate of Aligned’s competency-based education priorities.**



## Impact Summary

### 2020 Highlights

- » Recruited eight new board and advisory board members
- » Delivered legislative action summaries and education news to more than 1,700 stakeholders and partners each week
- » Moderated panels and delivered online presentations on Pre-K, education advocacy and data, flexibility, and accountability
- » Worked with Kansas State Department of Education to promote equitable dual credit access
- » Served on a statewide team to recommend a new governance structure for early care and education in Missouri
- » Served on the Kansas Department of Education's ReDesign Advisory Committee
- » Added Dr. Stacey Preis as a part-time consultant and built out our statewide advocacy team



◀ **Aligned Board Member and Hallmark Cards Executive Erin Brower visits the Missouri Capitol to meet with Senator Tony Luetkemeyer and his dog Truman.**



◀ **In 2020, the State Board of Education approved new policies to increase the supply of substitute teachers aimed at shoring up staffing shortages related to COVID-19. Pictured left to right: Board Member Vic Lenz, Board President Charlie Shields, and Education Commissioner Margie Vandeven.**



"Everyone is turning inward to protect ourselves. And now is precisely the time when the community needs leadership to address gaps that won't be addressed by governments and healthcare systems because they are so involved on the front line."

**Tyler Nottberg**  
U.S. Engineering & Aligned Co-Founder

## New Aligned Board Members



Andrea Sellers,  
Stinson, LLP



Kelly Dreyer,  
GouldEvans



Patrick Woods,  
ITC



Brett Leopold,  
ITC



Kristen Newbern,  
SM Wilson



Jennifer Bardot,  
Enterprise Bank & Trust



Danielle Twait,  
Lathrop GPM



Cindy Mebruer,  
St. Louis University  
Chaifetz School  
of Business

## Earned Media

Tyler Nottberg Guest Column: Pandemic aid must target at risk kids

Featured in The Kansas City Business Journal

<https://www.bizjournals.com/kansascity/news/2020/07/03/guest-column-pandemic-at-risk-children-nottberg.html>

Linda Rallo: Teachers work two jobs for the price of one

Featured in Missouri Independent, St. Louis American

Linda Rallo: As they navigate a pandemic, grant some school officials some grace

Featured in Missouri Independent



## Coalition Building and Business Engagement

### Legislative Outreach

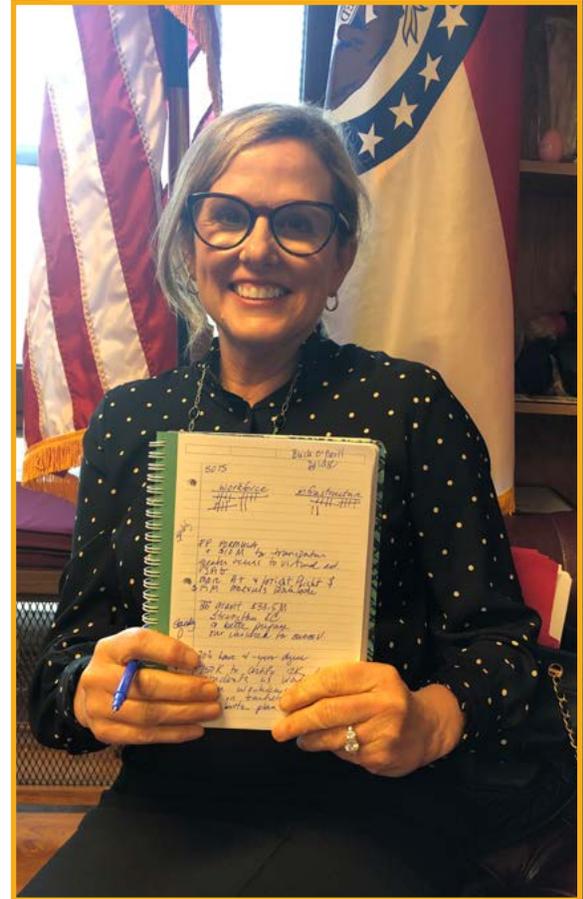
Aligned attends events and holds individual meetings with legislators in both Kansas and Missouri to learn about interests, share perspectives from the business community and identify ways to align goals. Aligned also attends weekly education-related committee meetings during the legislative sessions in both states.



- ▲ **Supports of the Visiting Scholars Expansion legislation assemble after the hearing. Left to right: Linda Rallo, Aligned, Peter Stiepleman, Superintendent of Columbia Public Schools, Rep. Kathy Swan (bill sponsor) and (Tony Gragnani, Principal of Hickman High Schools)**



- ▲ **Aligned attended the annual State of St. Louis event. Pictured left to right: Linda Rallo, Aligned, Garrett Webb, Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and Cora Faith Walker, Director of Policy for St. Louis County.**



- ▲ **Aligned's Linda Rallo makes legislative visits to discuss the Missouri education budget.**



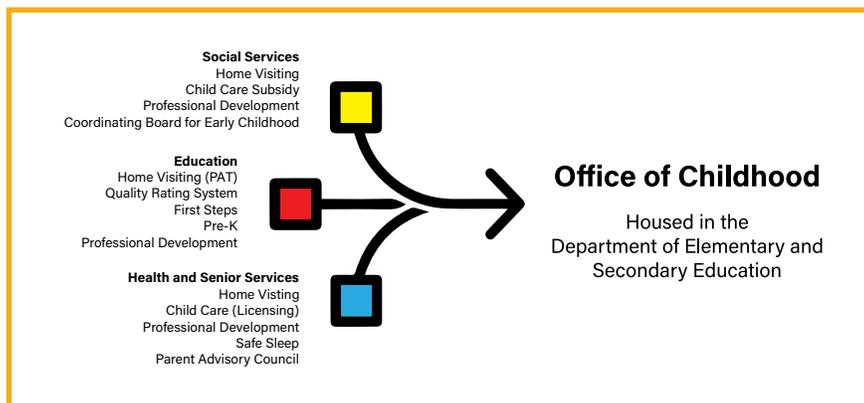
- ▲ **Representative Kathy Swan presents Visiting Scholars expansion language to the House Elementary and Secondary Committee. Swan worked tirelessly to champion many Aligned priorities.**

## Coalition Building and Business Engagement

### Executive Branch Outreach

Aligned serves as a co-lead, along with the Children's Trust Fund and Kids Win Missouri, to serve with stakeholders and the Office of the Governor to research and recommend a new governance structure for all early care and education programs in Missouri. After a year of planning and outreach, Governor Mike Parson signed Executive Order 21-01 in early 2021. This action will create an Office of Childhood within the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Aligned worked behind the scenes on the policy work to support this effort.

Aligned served on the Kansas State Department of Education's ReDesign advisory board to help inform the ReDesign work across the state. The purpose of ReDesign was to support the Kansas Can Vision: Kansas leads the world in the success of each student. A successful Kansas high school graduate has the academic preparation, cognitive preparation, technical skills, employability skills and civic engagement to be successful in postsecondary education, in attaining an industry recognized certification, or in the workforce, without the need for remediation.



Missouri advocates meet in Jefferson City to discuss early childhood governance recommendations. Pictured left to right: Brian Schmidt, executive director of Kids Win Missouri,

Linda Rallo, vice president and director of policy for Aligned, Emily Van Schenkhof, executive director of the Children's Trust Fund and Craig Stevenson, director of policy for Kids Win Missouri.



## Lunch & Learns

Aligned hosted the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) National Teacher of the Year, Tabatha Rosproy, for an online Townhall. More than 25 business leaders across Kansas and Missouri participated in the townhall event. Attendees were interested in hearing Rosproy's journey in the creation and execution of a pre-K classroom housed in the Cumbernauld Village retirement community in Winfield, Kansas. She's the first early childhood educator to receive top honors.

## Stakeholder Outreach

### Missouri Child Advocacy Day

Aligned supported Missouri's annual Child Advocacy Day by serving on planning committees, organizing a media campaign and creating an Advocacy 101 webinar that is shared across the entire Missouri child advocate network.

### Kids Win Missouri & Partners in Quality

As a member of Kids Win Missouri and Partners in Quality (PIQ), Aligned participates in quarterly meetings, serves on select committees and works alongside the organizations policy team to advance shared priorities and champion child well-being.

### Hunt Institute

Aligned presented an update on the state of early childhood in Missouri at the Greater St. Louis Town Hall hosted by the Hunt Institute.

### Early Learning in Wichita, KS

Aligned presented to a group of Business Leaders in Wichita to help gain support for a new early learning facility in downtown Wichita.

### ReDesign in Lane County, KS

Aligned presented to the Dighton, Kansas community in January as part of their ReDesign focus on engaging business with education.

### Other

Aligned hired Dr. Stacey Preis as a part-time consultant. Aligned sends weekly updates to over 1800 business leaders, lawmakers and education advocates during session to keep them updated on education policy as it plays out.



- ▶ **Torree Pederson discusses business/education partnerships to school and community leaders in Lane County, Kansas.**



- ▶ **Aligned participated in community-led initiatives for early childhood hosted at the Deaconess Foundation.**



- ▶ **Steve Zwolak, CEO of LUME Institute and Executive Director of University City Children's Center, meets with Aligned's Linda Rallo to discuss early childhood education policy.**

# Public Policy Priorities for 2021

## Advocacy Positions

### Kansas

#### Youth Development/Workforce

- » Support requirements for district liability protection for unpaid real-world learning experiences
- » Support implementation and funding for Academic Acceleration and Dual Credit Access
- » Support legislation that creates the Kansas Promise Scholarship to expand post-secondary education opportunities to working Kansans who otherwise may not be able to afford community college or technical college education
- » Support legislation that expands the provision of the ACT college entrance exam and WorkKeys assessments to students enrolled in nonpublic schools

#### Early Childhood Education

- » Support the defense of the Children's Initiative Fund
- » Support Expansion of Funding for At-Risk Pre-K
- » Support home visitation program expansion
- » Support funding the extension of the CAEDE

### Missouri

#### Youth Development/Workforce

- » Support implementation and funding for Academic Acceleration and Dual Credit Access
- » Support the expansion of Teacher Alternative Certification, Visiting Scholars Licensure and alternative teacher pay to include hard to fill positions and hard to staff schools
- » Support district liability protection for unpaid real-world learning experiences

#### Early Childhood Education

- » Support the Protection and Expansion of Pre-K Funding
- » Support Early Childhood Quality Assurance Report (funding and program renewal)
- » Support home visitation program expansion
- » Support the Creation of the Office of Childhood
- » Support legislation that allows local city/county municipalities to pursue voter approved tax measures to fund universal mixed delivery Pre-K

# Vision

## Early Childhood Education

- » Our vision – Kansas and Missouri have systems that provide enough high-quality early care and education programs to meet demand and children enjoy smooth transitions into elementary school, higher rates of school readiness and greater opportunities for social-emotional learning.
- » Our plan – Aligned will work to support the development of a mixed-delivery early childhood infrastructure for Kansas and Missouri and advocate for strategic investment of blended funding into high-quality programs that utilize evidence-based practices.

## Quality Schools

- » Our vision – Kansas and Missouri have a student-centered K-12 education model that provides choice to children and higher rates of college and career readiness.
- » Our plan – Aligned will champion policies that increase access to quality programs which personalize and enhance each student's education experience.

## Work-based Learning

- » Our vision – All Missouri and Kansas students graduate high-school with at least one work-based learning experience and receive opportunities to engage with innovative models for real-world learning.
- » Our plan – Aligned will identify barriers to greater participation in work-based learning and will advocate for greater funding and innovation.

## Thank You



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