



**ALIGNED**

# Annual Report

**2022**

# Focus on the student and success will follow.

As Aligned reached an organizational milestone this year, celebrating its tenth anniversary, we accomplished many of our legislative goals and scored numerous “wins.” Yet, ironically, this also was a year when test scores revealed the devastating toll on student achievement that resulted from pandemic-related school closures. A return to normalcy revealed a harsh reality that, for many students, whether they catch up relies on the availability of time and resources. Therefore, learning environments must be flexible, innovative, high-quality, and, most importantly, student focused.



We **collaborated** with other early childhood advocates to design an investment blueprint for early care and education.



We **expanded** an innovative teacher licensing pathway to make it available to all districts.



We **moved** an early childhood quality improvement program from pilot to permanent status.



We **supported** the creation of a personalized learning tract that rewards students based on mastery rather than seat time.

***Our decade-long focus on education policy that places students at the center resulted in a year where most of our priorities passed in the Kansas and Missouri state legislatures.***

These achievements are a result of research, relationships, and tenacity. We analyze data through a non-partisan lens and strive to be an honest broker in policymaking. Our approach allows us to build trust and deliver value to our partners and allies. But, most importantly, even in adversity, we never give up. As we look to the next ten years, we will study the policies we have championed to measure outcomes and demonstrate the return on investment to our supporters.



***With focus and intensity, we push policies that deliver value to all students.***

As I reflected on 2022, the one word that came to mind was “fast.” I suppose the adage that time flies when you are having fun is to blame in 2022. We feel blessed to have such a fantastic team and board to guide our work as the business voice for education. Our focus on putting students first and partisan politics last continue to lift Aligned’s work. Many often ask us how we decide what to focus on as an organization, and the answer is pretty simple: policies that offer the most significant ROI for all students.

Yes, we get to lean on transparency, accountability, and innovation/choice for ideas too, but at the end of the day, we want to see that every student is prepared; prepared for school, work and life.

We benefit from strict adherence to promoting ideas that stem from at least one of our six core values: student-focused/equity, accountability, innovation, transparency, return on investment, and choice.

We attribute our growth to our supporters who value a commitment to systemic change that moves the needle for all students, not just a few.

We thank you all and vow to continue with the intensity and focus we have maintained for the past ten years.

***Torree Pederson***  
*President/CEO*

A photograph of two young women, one with long blonde hair and one with dark hair, working together on a project. They are looking down at a small electronic device on a breadboard. The woman on the left is holding a blue component, and the woman on the right is holding a red wire. The background is a plain wall. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

## *A decade built on trust and teamwork*

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.



### ***Early Care and Education: Quality improvements and strategic investment***

In 2016, Aligned fought to remove the ban on early care and education quality improvement programs and established a voluntary pilot benchmarking program called the Quality Assurance Report (QAR). After working to pass sunset extensions and securing funding, we are thrilled the Missouri General Assembly approved a statutory change to remove the pilot designation this year. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has made QAR expansion a vital component of the Office of Childhood's strategic plan.

This year we helped launch the Champion of Children coalition and are serving on the Early Childhood Investment Blueprint Steering Committee. The goal is to advocate for a funding package to eliminate gaps in early care and education access for Missouri families over several years.

### ***Teacher Recruitment and Retention: Alternative certifications***

In 2018, Aligned worked to pass the Visiting Scholars alternative licensing pathway, allowing school districts to employ subject-matter experts in business education programs. This year, we advocated for the expansion of Visiting Scholars to enable subject-matter experts to teach in hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-fill subject areas.

### ***Personalized Learning: Competency-based credits***

This year we worked to help pass language that allows districts and charter schools to issue course credits based on mastery rather than seat time. The pandemic taught us that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient in traditional education settings. Instead, a competency-based education offers an opportunity to serve students individually and complement diverse learning styles.

### ***Real-World Learning: Removing barriers and building bridges***

Improving education often requires the removal of barriers. This year we supported legislation allowing districts to utilize innovative options by removing the requirement for school bus-based student transportation. Ride-sharing options will make it easier for students to access real-world learning opportunities off-campus.

We also championed the passage of language to require schools to provide liability coverage for business-based internship programs. By clarifying the assignment of liability, more businesses will be willing to host students responsibly.



## **Board of Trustees**

J. Michael Stradinger · *Holland 1916*

Kate Ferrell Banks · *Ferrell Capital*

H. Tyler Nottberg · *U.S. Engineering*

Jay Felton · *Lathrop GPM*

Neal Sharma · *DEG*

## **Board of Directors**

J. Michael Stradinger · *Holland 1916*  
*Chairman*

H. Tyler Nottberg · *U.S. Engineering*  
*Vice Chairman*

Kate Ferrell Banks · *Ferrell Capital*  
*Treasurer*

David Oliver · *Berkowitz Oliver*  
*Secretary*

Kelly Dreyer · *MultiStudio*

Don Guenther · *Technology Partners Inc*

Brett Leopold · *ITC Holdings*

Andrea Seller · *GKCCF*

Patrick Woods · *ITC Holdings*

## **Advisory Board**

Shonda Ambers-Phillips · *Maplewood-Richmond*  
*Heights School District*

Amanda Bohnert · *S.M. Wilson & Company*

Maxine Clark · *Clark Fox Foundation*

Matt Glenn · *McCown Gordon*

Dan Lauer · *Lauer Toys*

Teresa Maledy · *Commerce (Retired)*

Drew McCallister · *Parkway School District*

Cindy Mebruer · *St. Louis University*

Bridget Romero · *Lathrop GPM*

Danielle Twait · *Lathrop Gage*

Joe Valenciano · *CoreFirst Bank*



*Aligned team and board members attending annual EarlyStart luncheon*

## **Funding Partners**

*CoreFirst Bank*

*Francis Family Foundation*

*Hall Family Foundation*

*ITC Holdings*

*Kate & David Banks*

*Kauffman Family Foundation*

*KC Action Fund*

*Kids Win Missouri*

*Lathrop GPM*

*Lockton*

*Lumen Touch*

*Mike & Jennifer Stradinger (Holland 1916)*

*MultiStudio*

*Sheet Metal Union*

*Sherman Family Foundation*

*Technology Partners*

*U.S. Engineering Company Inc.*

*Walton Family Foundation*

# *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.

## **Contact**

**Torree Pederson**  
**[torree@wearealigned.org](mailto:torree@wearealigned.org)**  
**913-484-4202**

**22052 W. 66th St., Suite 200**  
**Shawnee, KS 66226**  
**[wearealigned.org](http://wearealigned.org)**



**ALIGNED**