Summary of Remarks by Ralph Smith

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**1. Philanthropy is part of the problem when it comes to assuring grade level reading by the end of third grade**

* There is, both with the field of philanthropy and from outside philanthropy, a deepening realization that philanthropy itself is part of the problem.
* The fragmentation in the early childhood/early learning/school reform field is, in part, a by-product of philanthropic practice that has individual foundations and donors developing and testing models and interventions targeting specific age groups and/or parts of larger problems.

* There are too few venues for the alignment, cooperation and coordination necessary to achieve any synergistic benefit from the hundreds of millions in annual grantmaking.

* Ineffective grantmaking is compounded by inconsistent use of philanthropy’s access, credibility and knowledge to influence important decisions toward what works.

* There is not enough sustained attention is paid to capacity building for the people and organizations whose citizen service, civic engagement and advocacy to support the reforms that will bring scalable, sustainable, systemic solutions.
* During its early stages, the Campaign is thus giving significant priority to developing an influence and leverage strategy designed to tip and tilt philanthropy toward three important changes:

1. More dollars spent more effectively—aligned, coordinated, data- and evidence- driven, results-accountable
2. A stronger voice and more influential role--marshalling of access, reputation and credibility
3. A more strategic and consistent investment in “big tent” advocacy--facilitating the development of high capacity, broadly diverse coalitions with unlikely allies and unusual champions for moving the needle on grade level reading by the end of third grade

**2. Themes that have emerged from the Campaign for Grade Level Reading listening tour**

The feedback includes critical advice that we’ve used to refine our messaging, including:

* Start with the consensus around high school graduation and the concern about high school dropouts.
* While everyone supports the idea of getting children to read, what crystallizes the need to act on behalf of grade level reading is the explicit connection to what this means for high school graduation and beyond.
* **Don’t let schools off the hook.** The enthusiasm for the decision to focus on the civic space around the schools and the commonsense understanding that “schools cannot do it alone” in no way dulls the conviction that schools must be made to work. At the very least, our messaging must affirm holding schools accountable for improved outcomes.
* **Don’t let parents off the hook.** There is a strong consensus that parents must share the responsibility for helping their children (especially young children) succeed in school. The Campaign should respond to the challenge of helping parents develop the will and skills to own and meet their responsibilities as first teacher, best coach, and strongest advocate.
* Clarify how the Campaign adds value. Especially in those places with ongoing related activities, we have been urged to emphasize the Campaign’s potential to focus these activities around a shared goal—grade-level reading—and, in doing so, provide an opportunity to braid the activities into a more powerful strategy and platform to achieve more impact.
* Help to build a sense of urgency. With so many things clamoring for attention and competing for limited resources, we need to help elected officials, private sector leaders, and civic groups explain how and why intergenerational poverty, competitiveness in the global economy, military readiness, and national security matter to local communities.
* 2020 still is a long way away, so set some interim milestones. This advice aligns with the earlier support for starting local. Targeting two-dozen localities for significant progress by 2015 responds to this advice.
* Be more specific about the “ask.” Once recruited, funders, advocates, executives, public officials, and civic leaders all ask the same question: “What, specifically, do you want me to do?” As the Campaign develops, we are generating concrete answers.

**3. Our inside/outside policy advocacy frame for a coherent birth through 3rd grade system of care, services and supports**

We seek local, state, and federal policy reforms to strengthen, scale, and sustain improved child outcomes and school success for children in low-income families.

We will combine effective advocacy and place-based investing to generate public support, political will, proof points, models, and momentum for systems of care, services, and supports for expectant parents and children from birth through third grade.

Why a “More seamless Birth to Third system?” Prior to the Campaing, the state of play was dominated by consensus that the existing systems are too fragmented with too little accountability to be effective.

The Campaign intends to bring three things of value to this arena:

* Install Birth to Third as a frame and a destination with key developmental milestones from healthy births to third grade reading.
* Renewed urgency regarding the need for alignment and integration (vertical to deal with transitions between developmental stages and settings; horizontal to promote a holistic, comprehensive and multi-systemic approach)
* A priority on promoting common sense consensus by providing tools and analyses to enable non-polarizing responses to emerging issues and opportunities.

The Campaign wants to play a supportive/catalytic role to achieve better alignment for a common birth to third policy agenda, working with Packard, the Birth to Five Policy Alliance, and the KIDS COUNT grantee network.