

Join the Journey: Every Step Matters

Remarks from Achieve Twin Cities Board Vice Chair Elizabeth Betzler

Tonight's theme is "Join the Journey." I'd like you to take a moment and think about the path that brought you here – the twists and turns, the joys and the challenges. Now think about who was there for you along the way – and how much it mattered.

Tonight is about making sure every student has that kind of support as they start their journey.

When I think back to high school, I'm right there with these students. I had so many questions: Who am I? What do I want to do with my life? How will I ever get there? What time does the mall open?

But in all seriousness – at the time, I didn't have all the answers, but I did have adults in my corner who helped me see possibilities and encouraged me to keep going. They handed me a compass and said, "Try the next step."

That's why Achieve is here: to put a compass in every student's hands, with the resources, support and connections to find their way.

Over the past 24 years, Achieve has helped more than 99,000 students plan life after high school. And Step Up has provided over 36,000 paid internships for Minneapolis youth.

Behind every one of those numbers is a young person who took their first step on their journey.

That's what makes Achieve's work so meaningful to me. Students have so much potential – and having someone who listens, believes in them and helps them navigate what comes next can make all the difference.

And here's what that difference can look like:

At the start of the last school year, only 60% of seniors working with Achieve said they felt confident about their future. By graduation – in just one academic year – that number climbed to 83% – that's a 23-point jump in confidence.

And 95% of seniors who worked with Achieve staff finished high school with a clear, documented plan for their future – that's an incredible number!

At Achieve Twin Cities, this isn't about pointing students to some finish line. It's about walking a stretch alongside them as they chart their own journeys.

