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# Editorial: Marin partnership a good sign for local youth

By [MARIN IJ EDITORIAL BOARD](#) |

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A coalition of community leaders and educators has joined forces to help fulfill the promise of public education for every student.

The organization, the Marin Promise Partnership, has already received two grants totaling \$300,000 to advance its goal.

The goal is not new. Concern about the “opportunity gap” that exists for Marin youth has been part of a community discussion for several years. Most often, it has centered on a proposal for a tax to provide preschool and day care for every youngster in Marin.

Early childhood education has been found to be one of the most important building blocks for not only helping children on a path toward college and careers, but in helping avoid problems such as dropping out of high school and juvenile criminal activity.

The goal is that every child deserves a strong start. In Marin, the partnership,

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Their objective is clear: Every student should be prepared to begin kindergarten. All third-graders should be meeting grade-level reading skills, and every ninth-grader should be able to master critical math concepts.

In short, all Marin students should have equal educational opportunities.

Unfortunately, that's not the case.

Per-student funding varies widely across Marin's public school systems. So does the number of minority children and their preparedness for the start of school.

The coalition is hoping to turn its goals into reality by 2028.

The grants are a good start, providing funding for oversight and studies needed to reach those objectives. Coalition leaders will assess progress and promote public awareness of the challenges. Our public school districts simply don't have the resources or focus to do that.

The equation is simple: A strong start for every child means a strong start for all. Having youngsters starting out playing catch-up is hard for them, their teachers and their classmates. The opportunities can feel so far out of reach, they give up trying.

Marin public schools and the support they receive should be leading the way toward closing this opportunity gap. The partnership has been formed to help make it happen.

"Despite being one of the wealthiest, healthiest and best-educated counties in California, Marin continues to have the greatest educational achievement gap in the state," said Marin Superintendent of Schools Mary Jane Burke. "This is simply unacceptable. The status quo is not working for over 7,000 children in our county."

Formation of this 40-member coalition is a sign there is a strong commitment to making sure every youngster, regardless of his or her race or where he or she lives, has a strong start.

The size and breadth of the partnership's membership is an indication of the solid support for this effort and how it can benefit the entire Marin community.