

**Media Contact:**

Erika Watson  
Erika@intersectioncollective.com  
202-258-8081

**Intersection Collective Secures Local & National Funding to Reimagine Special Education Family Engagement in Cincinnati**

**Cincinnati, OH — October 15, 2024** The Intersection Collective has been awarded a combined total of \$250,000 by NewSchools Venture Fund and the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation to support Special Education Community Advocacy Network, benefiting families at the intersection of race and disability in their advocacy for educational equality. In partnership with Cincinnati Public Schools, we will introduce our culturally responsive family-centered special education advocacy training combined with community-organizing support to establish school based Village Networks guiding families with confidence and community through their special education advocacy journey. This funding will advance Intersection Collective's mission to collaborate with BIPOC disability communities and equity allies to close education and opportunity gaps working toward full acceptance, belonging, and equality.

The Intersection Collective is thrilled to receive these grants from NewSchools and the Haile Foundation which will enable us to launch a Village Network pilot bringing evidence based resources to CPS to improve educational outcomes for students with learning differences and disabilities. "The disability community is the most diverse community in the world and solving issues of inequality that disproportionately impact those at the intersection of race and disability requires a multi-cultural and culturally inclusive approach," said Erika Watson, Founder & CEO. "These foundational grants from both National and local organizations send a strong message that progress will be made in partnership with families by amplifying, learning from, and valuing the lived experiences of children and families at the intersection of race and disability."

Nationally, there are 7.3 million K-12 school-aged children with identified disabilities, comprising approximately 13% of the student population; Here in Cincinnati, that percentage is much higher. Identification rates vary by race and ethnicity, with Black, Indigenous, and children of color (BIPOC) often misdiagnosed and disproportionately identified with learning, emotional, and intellectual disabilities. Once identified, these students are often funnelled into restrictive educational placements at higher rates, and they have significantly worse outcomes across every metric of educational attainment and post-secondary employment (National Center for Education Statistics May 2023). Because research shows more involved families have a corollary effect on inequities experienced by BIPOC children with disabilities we are starting with a focus on parent and family engagement.

Families who are more engaged in the special education advocacy process gain greater trust in educators, have a stronger sense of belonging with the school, and raise their expectations for their own children. Best of all, students have more positive experiences that lead to increased confidence, higher achievement, and sense of belonging in school. Many of the current models for parent engagement are not broken; they simply need a more deeply entrenched, culturally responsive framework through which to implement them.

###

**About Intersection Collective**

Equity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging are at the core of our purpose and serve as the North Star for our work. We are intentional in our centering of children, their families, and individuals at the intersection of race and disability. The disability community is the most diverse community in the world and conversations about disability inclusion and belonging that do not also consider intersectionality are at best incomplete.

We intentionally focus on Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities with disabilities as these communities experience the greatest disparities for those with disabilities. The Intersection Collective is committed to amplifying, learning from, and valuing the lived experiences of children and families at the intersection of race and disability.

We believe in the mantra, "Nothing about us without us!" We respect that the BIPOC disability community holds the ideas and solutions that will help close the education and opportunity gap that unjustly impact them. We will work alongside the BIPOC disability community and equity allies to achieve full acceptance, belonging, and access as equal participants in society.

**About NewSchool**

NewSchools Venture Fund is a venture philanthropy committed to building a better education system by connecting people, resources, and ideas. We bridge the gap between those with capital and those with the courage to put that capital to work on the frontlines of education. Learn more at [newschools.org](https://newschools.org).

**About Carol Ann & Ralph V. Haile, Jr. foundation**

Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr. Foundation is an independent family foundation dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for residents in our region. We concentrate our efforts and resources in areas about which Carol and Ralph were most passionate: Arts and Culture, Civic and Community, Education, and Human Services. In collaboration with our region's stakeholders, we help lead the way to a strong and vibrant community across ten counties in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. For more information visit [www.hailefoundation.org](http://www.hailefoundation.org).