



**YOUR SPARK
CAN BECOME
A FLAME
AND CHANGE
EVERYTHING**

— E.D. NIXON, AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER

LETTER FROM THE INTERIM CEO



If you're like me, you rejoiced as our nation recently celebrated Juneteenth. It was June 19, 1865, when U.S. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, with federal troops and declared — more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation — that all enslaved people were to be freed. Six months later, the 13th Amendment was adopted.

But before the ink was dry on the ratification that effectively ended slavery, many Southern states had already begun imposing Jim Crow laws that would put a halt to Reconstruction efforts and the hopes of former slaves to be truly free.

Substantial change would take another 90 years. The catalyst came on December 1, 1955, when Rosa Parks — a 42-year-old seamstress — boarded a bus in downtown Montgomery, Alabama.

Like every other day, this petite woman with rimless glasses paid a dime at the front of the bus before boarding through the back door, which was designated for Black passengers, and taking a seat. But when a White man got on the bus, and the bus driver ordered the Black riders to make way for him, Parks made up her mind that this day wouldn't be like every other day. She remained seated. She later said, "I was not tired physically, no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. ...No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in."

It was a simple act of defiance, but one that E.D. Nixon, a pullman porter and local civil rights activist who was the first person Parks called after being arrested, later described as the "spark" that became a flame and changed everything.

While the nation has made progress since then, we still have a long way to go. As I write this, we and our partners in New York are mourning the senseless deaths of 10 elderly Black people gunned down by a white supremacist at a neighborhood grocery store in Buffalo, NY. Days later, we witnessed another horrific massacre in Uvalde, Texas, as 19 children and two teachers were executed. I know that at times like these we can feel helpless in the face of so much cruelty. But we cannot lose hope. We must remain steadfast in our quest for a more just America in which every child can grow up safely and achieve their dreams.

As fierce advocates for education equity, we at Ed Trust understand, as Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

I am excited to present our Ed Trust update. In it, you will see the progressive steps we have taken to advocate for data-driven solutions to spark positive change in schools across the country. The highlights from the past three months include:

- Focusing the nation's attention on the scale and scope of unfinished learning as a result of the pandemic, and the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity we have to create a school experience that values diversity, feeds every student's innate desire to learn, and embraces equal opportunities and second chances.
- Working with chief equity officers in school districts across the country to help them advance equity on their pathway to school district leadership.
- Graduating our first cohort of Justice Policy Fellows and scanning the country for effective data-driven re-entry strategies.
- Lifting the voices of Black student borrowers calling for investment in student aid, student debt cancellation, and an overhaul of the broken student loan system.
- Securing wins in Tennessee on school funding reform, lifting barriers to dual enrollment in Louisiana, reducing child poverty in New York, and elevating the voices of teachers of color across the country.
- Holding our first in-person bootcamp since the onset of the pandemic, bringing together advocates from across the country to examine student and school data and strategize effective tactics to drive change at state and local levels.

Through it all, we have worked to counter the avalanche of misinformation and disinformation currently undermining U.S. public education. Diversity, teacher freedoms, parental rights, accurate teaching, sexual orientation, and gender identity are just a few areas under attack by Jim Crow-era tactics and rhetoric designed to promote fear and division and douse the spark our education equity movement has ignited.

But with the wind at our backs and history on our side, we will never tire, we will never give in. Like Rosa Parks, we will advocate for what's right, and continue to have the audacity to believe we can change everything.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Forte". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

Denise Forte

Interim CEO of The Education Trust | [@dm_forte](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-education-trust/)



DURING THIS REPORTING PERIOD, WE CONTINUED TO EXECUTE OUR THEORY OF CHANGE BY ENGAGING IN THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES:

LISTEN

Ed Trust serves as a vigilant watchdog. We monitor policy proposals and engage legislators, parent and family coalitions, educators, advocates, and students to better understand context and conditions to inform our advocacy.

RESEARCH

Tapping the power of quantitative and qualitative data, Ed Trust publications and materials focus on policy, practice, and community tools that are either effective in — or detrimental to — advancing equity. From teacher diversity to college completion, Ed Trust is a thought leader on key issues due to our extensive research and subject matter expertise.

ENGAGE

Ed Trust engages policymakers, practitioners, and advocates to build a diverse coalition of people from various sectors and backgrounds. This increases political and public will to bring meaningful change for the students we serve.

SECURE

All of our efforts should result in the adoption of meaningful changes in policy and practice, opening up opportunities for students of color and students from families from low-income backgrounds.

Your spark can become a flame and change everything

At this precarious moment, many Americans can't safely send their children to school, shop at the grocery store, go to their place of worship, visit the hospital, or even venture out into their own neighborhoods without facing the threat of violence. At the same time, we are witnessing a dramatic assault on civil rights and civil liberties in the form of voter suppression and gerrymandering, anti-LGBTQ legislation, book bans, and efforts to prohibit the accurate teaching of history in the classroom. Indeed, attempts to unravel the American ideals of justice, democracy, fairness, and equity seem to be intensifying.

Despite what's happening now, we must keep working for a more just, fair, and safe nation. Remember the words of civil rights leader [E.D. Nixon](#), who when faced with similar obstacles in the 1950s, urged fellow activists to remain undaunted: "Your spark can become a flame and change everything." It is with that same urgency that we, and our partners, seek to spark change. Join us.

During this reporting period:

We spoke out against the criminalization of Black students

This school year, there's been a rise in school suspensions, expulsions, and other disciplinary actions across the country. To shine a light on this urgent problem and elevate potential solutions, we, in partnership with NAACP Legal Defense Fund, co-hosted an event on "The Criminalization

of Black Children." The discussion was led by Erica L. Green, a correspondent at The New York Times, and Kristin Henning, author of *The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth*. The event featured remarks by Catherine Lhamon, assistant secretary for the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, and Rashad Robinson, president of Color Of Change, and highlighted school-based solutions, such as restorative justice techniques, social-emotional learning activities, and other evidence-based alternatives to law enforcement and criminalization. [Watch the recording](#) and read "[Let's End the Criminalization of Black Children in and out of School](#)," a blog about the event by Letisha Marrero, associate managing editor at Ed Trust.



We elevated the need for more Black and Latino teachers in the classroom

Access to a racially and culturally diverse teacher workforce benefits all P-12 students, particularly students of color, who often thrive in classrooms led by teachers who share their racial and cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, the diversity of the national public-school teacher workforce does not reflect the diversity of the student population — a majority of whom are students of color. In many states, students attend schools and districts that do not have a single teacher of color on staff. To call attention to that issue, Ed Trust and Khan Academy co-hosted a virtual webinar about the link between teacher diversity and student success and ways to improve the recruitment and retention of teachers of color. The webinar featured a roundtable discussion between speakers from Latinos for Education and the TN Educators of Color Alliance, which was moderated by Sharif El-Mekki, CEO of The Center for Black Educator Development. Watch the roundtable [here](#).



We pushed policymakers and practitioners to prioritize the needs of underserved students in P-12 schools

In an [Ed Week article](#) on the removal of mask mandates in schools, Tanji Reed Marshall, Ph.D., director of P-12 practice, said that districts that drop mask mandates must be prepared to provide adequate protection for students and staff who need it. That might mean having teachers and students wear masks around those who are at risk, she said, adding that “What this should look like are schools really understanding their populations. They need to make a clear record of who will be most at-risk if masks mandates go away and put safety plans in place.”

EducationWeek®

In an [Equity Line post](#), “[Speaking Out and Showing Up for LGBTQ+ Students](#),” Blair Wriston, a senior government affairs associate at Ed Trust, and Bonnie Washick, Ph.D., a federal policy manager at GLSEN, noted that attacks on LGBTQ students are on the rise. At the time of writing, more than 150 anti-LGBTQ bills had been introduced and that number is growing. Blair and Bonnie laid out the sobering facts and explained what allies can do to support LGBTQ students.



In another [Equity Line post](#) titled, “[Why Assessments Matter: Data Quality Is Essential for Education Equity](#),” Brenda Berg, president and CEO of BEST NC (Business for Educational Success and Transformation in North Carolina), explains that reliable statewide assessments play an essential role in ensuring public schools meet the needs of individual students — especially those who are underserved — and describes how North Carolina policymakers used assessment data to expand access to AP STEM courses.

In this [Washington Post](#) article about the impact of virtual learning on students from low-income backgrounds, Allison Socol, Ph.D., vice president for P-12 policy, practice, and research, notes that the U.S. education system has long been unequal: “The pandemic shed a light on a situation that has existed for a very long time, which is that bright and eager Black and Latino students and students from low-income communities who want and deserve amazing educational opportunities aren’t getting them.” She said she hopes research on unfinished learning and the pandemic “will be a call to action and will light a fire under school leaders and policymakers and the public to do what has been needed for a long time.”

The Washington Post

Jay Matthews, an editorial writer at The Washington Post, wrote [an article](#) on the importance of extended learning time, which extensively featured our unfinished learning brief.



In an article in [The 74 Million](#), Zahava Stadler, special assistant for state funding and policy, notes that COVID relief funds should be used to address students’ unfinished learning needs rather than build new gyms.



Likewise, in this [Equity Line blog](#), “[Is Your State Building An Intensive Tutoring System?](#)” Allison Socol, Ph.D., vice president for P-12 policy, practice, and research, highlights five states — Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas — that plan to use federal relief funding from the American Rescue Plan to build effective intensive tutoring systems.

We also encouraged policymakers and practitioners to prioritize the needs of underserved college students

We urged the Biden administration to address the student debt crisis now

In this [USA Today article](#), Victoria Jackson, assistant director of higher education policy, explains why the nation is facing a student debt crisis. She notes that “the current student loan landscape can be traced to declining state funding for public colleges,” which led institutions to increase their tuition prices to cover the shortfall. What’s more, she says, the Pell Grant, a federal award meant for low-income students, has not kept pace with inflation. “In 1980, the Pell Grant cover[ed] nearly half the cost of attendance at a public four-year university, but in 2021 it covered around just 28%.” Victoria calls on lawmakers to double the Pell Grant and index it to inflation, so it doesn’t lose value over time.



In a [Time magazine article](#) about the Biden administration’s plan to forgive student loans, Denise Forte calls on the administration to “increase the level of forgiveness and act in the coming weeks.” She says that “While there are additional investments in public higher education and policy improvements that need to be made to ensure long-term college affordability and access, direct relief is needed now.”



A recent [Business Insider article](#), “[The Student-Loan Industry Failed to Deliver on Its American Dream Promise](#),” points to Ed Trust’s National Black Student Loan Debt Study, which found that Black borrowers are disproportionately harmed by student loan debt and are in serious need of relief.



We fought for better implementation of income-driven repayment (IDR) plans

An [exclusive news story by NPR](#) suggests that these plans, which are supposed to make monthly payments more affordable for low-income borrowers and cancel loans after 20-25 years of payment, have been mismanaged by U.S. Department of Education and some loan servicers. IDR promises loan cancellation, but documents obtained by NPR show that “4.4 million borrowers had been repaying for at least 20 years but only 32 had had loans canceled under IDR.” That’s all the more reason to cancel student debt, said Victoria Jackson, who was quoted in the article: “We just need to recognize that there are these systemic failures — that, across the board, people are struggling to make these payments. And we can do that in a simple, straightforward way by having broad-based debt cancellation.”



We used data to press for more action on closing the college completion gap

A [PBS News Hour segment](#) about the decline in college enrollment amid the pandemic cited an Ed Trust analysis that shows that the drop was steepest among Black men at community colleges.



We joined our partners in celebrating #CollegeCompletionDay

We shared memories of our own college and graduation experiences. We also called on policymakers and institutional leaders to do more to help future generations of college students succeed and complete their degree. Check out this [Twitter moment](#).





In our [Profiles in Education Equity](#) on The Equity Line, we shared the great work that our partners in the states are doing



We featured [Judith Bradley](#), founder and managing partner of JackBeNimble, a nonprofit based in Kentucky that is re-imagining special education systems so that they work for students, families, educators, and policymakers alike.

We profiled [Dina Walker](#), president and CEO of BLU Educational Foundation, which provides educational and human services programming to youths, adults, and organizations to build healthy, productive communities in California's Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernadino counties).



We are thrilled that [Denise Forte](#) was named by Washingtonian magazine as one of Washington, D.C.'s [500 Most Influential People in 2022](#)



Denise Forte
[Education Trust](#)
Interim CEO

A former senior fellow at the Century Foundation, Forte sits at the heart of any policy battle where civil rights and education intersect, most recently the federal Pell Grant program.

To read more from The Equity Line and sign up to have posts sent directly to your email, please visit Edtrust.org/The-Equity-Line/

Ed Trust on The Hill

With the Build Back Better Act still stalled in Congress, we at Ed Trust moved to enact our priorities via the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 omnibus appropriations bill, which was signed into law in March. [This legislation](#) includes significant investments in many of our key advocacy areas, including an additional \$1 billion in Title I schools, a \$400 increase in the maximum Pell Grant award, and \$8 million for the Augustus F. Hawkins Centers of Excellence grant program (this is the first time this program has received funding). The FY22 omnibus bill also includes increased funding for special education, Full-Service Community Schools, minority-serving institutions, all of which are backed by Ed Trust and promise to be transformative investments.

Less than two weeks after signing the FY22 omnibus into law, President Joe Biden [released](#) his budget request for FY23, which includes significant investments in educational equity that Ed Trust has long [supported](#). If enacted, the President's latest budget proposal would double resources for Title I schools and increase the maximum Pell Grant award by \$1,775. It would also incentivize states to examine and address inequities in state funding systems and districts to conduct local resource equity reviews, establish a Retention and Completion Fund that would allocate grants to states for evidence-based programs that support college student success, and provide \$1 billion for new school-based mental health supports, and much more.

As interim CEO Denise Forte noted in [The Washington Post](#), "the proposed ... increase in funding is crucial to helping all students, particularly those most impacted by the pandemic — students of color and students from low-income backgrounds — get their academic and social emotional needs met." Over the last two months, we have worked tirelessly with congressional leaders to advance our priorities by providing written testimony to the [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations Committees outlining Ed Trust's FY23 priorities, [submitting coalition letters](#) to Congress, drafting report language for committees' consideration, and providing background information for congressional hearings.

We have also continued to [play a leading role](#) in urging both the Biden administration and Congress to take other critical actions to address students' needs, including

- encouraging President Biden to take [bold action](#) on student loan forgiveness
- publishing [recommendations](#) for Congress on Child Nutrition Reauthorization
- [submitting a regulatory comment](#), which is backed by our [Justice Fellows](#) and several federal and state organizations in response to a proposal to create a separate FAFSA for incarcerated students,
- playing a [leading](#) role among education-focused advocacy organizations in building support and momentum for the September 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health;
- and supplying the Education and Labor Committee with recommendations on potential witnesses and questions for an important [hearing](#) on promoting a healthy and more supportive school environment.

Ed Trust will continue to advocate for federal policies that make our nation's educational system more equitable for our most underserved students.



Sparking Change for P-12 Students

It's important to recognize that the gaps the nation is witnessing in P-12 opportunity and achievement weren't caused by COVID-19; the pandemic merely [highlighted and exacerbated them](#). Ed Trust's P-12 team has been busy highlighting funding gaps, best practices for the use of federal recovery funds, and access to advanced coursework. Now that Americans know the depth of these disparities, maybe we can finally spark meaningful change in our nation's schools and ensure that every child has access to a rich educational experience that allows them to live the life of their choosing.

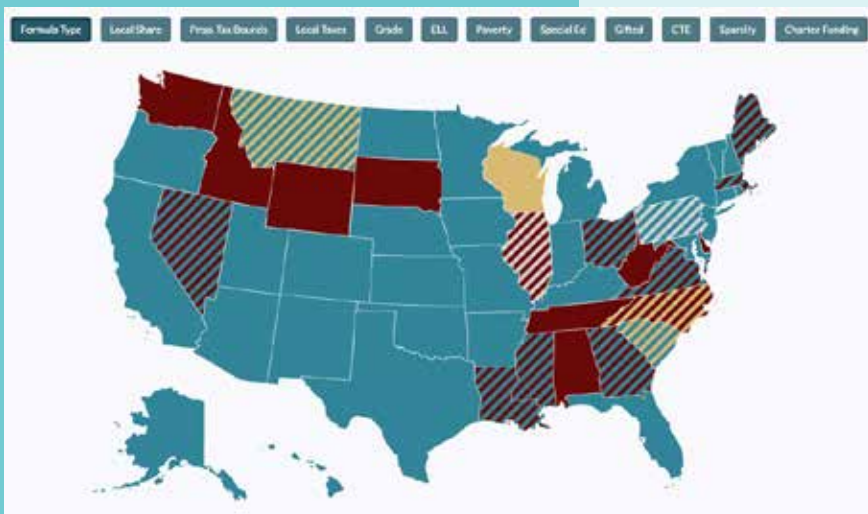


RESEARCH

Advocating to End Funding Disparities

As part of our ongoing work to highlight funding gaps and best practices for COVID recovery funds, EdTrust announced an update to [FundEd](#), a national interactive database of states' K-12 school funding policies. This web tool includes information and descriptions about funding policies that are tied to core equity issues — such as access to different levels of local tax dollars and state support for groups of students, including those from low-income backgrounds.

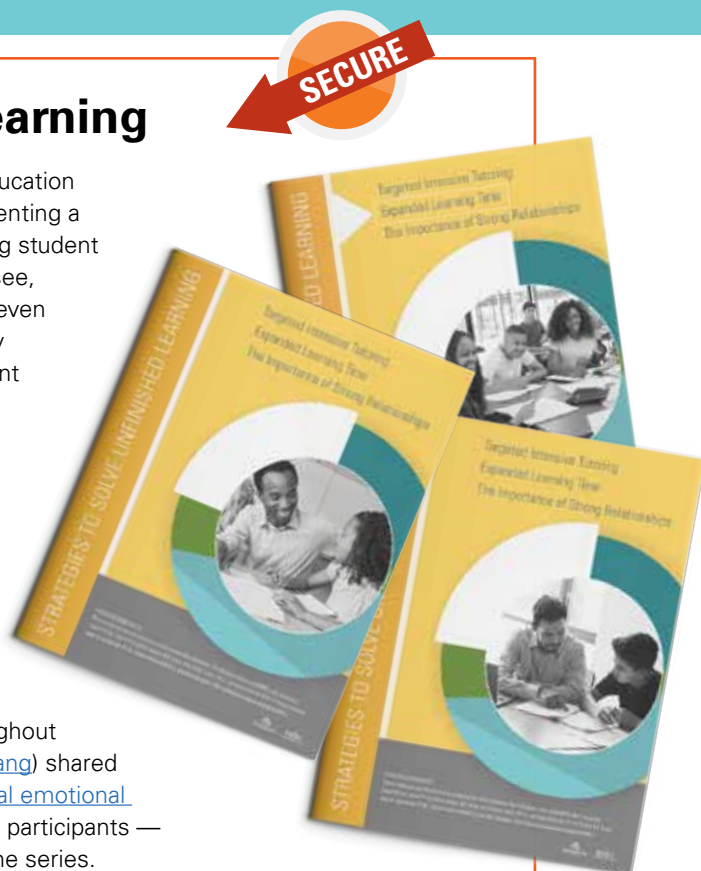
FundEd is also used by reporters — for background on news stories ([like this Philadelphia Inquirer piece](#)), context and comparisons on how states fund their local education systems. Zahava Stadler, special assistant for state funding and policy, held a training session for state and local reporters on how to use the tool to enhance their reporting. A reporter from a national publication extended this note of thanks to Ed Trust, “I just wanted to say thank you again for hosting this webinar. Your FundEd database will definitely help with my regional/ national coverage to explain how and why [the state I cover is] an exception for providing English learners with more support, etc.”



Working to Accelerate Student Learning

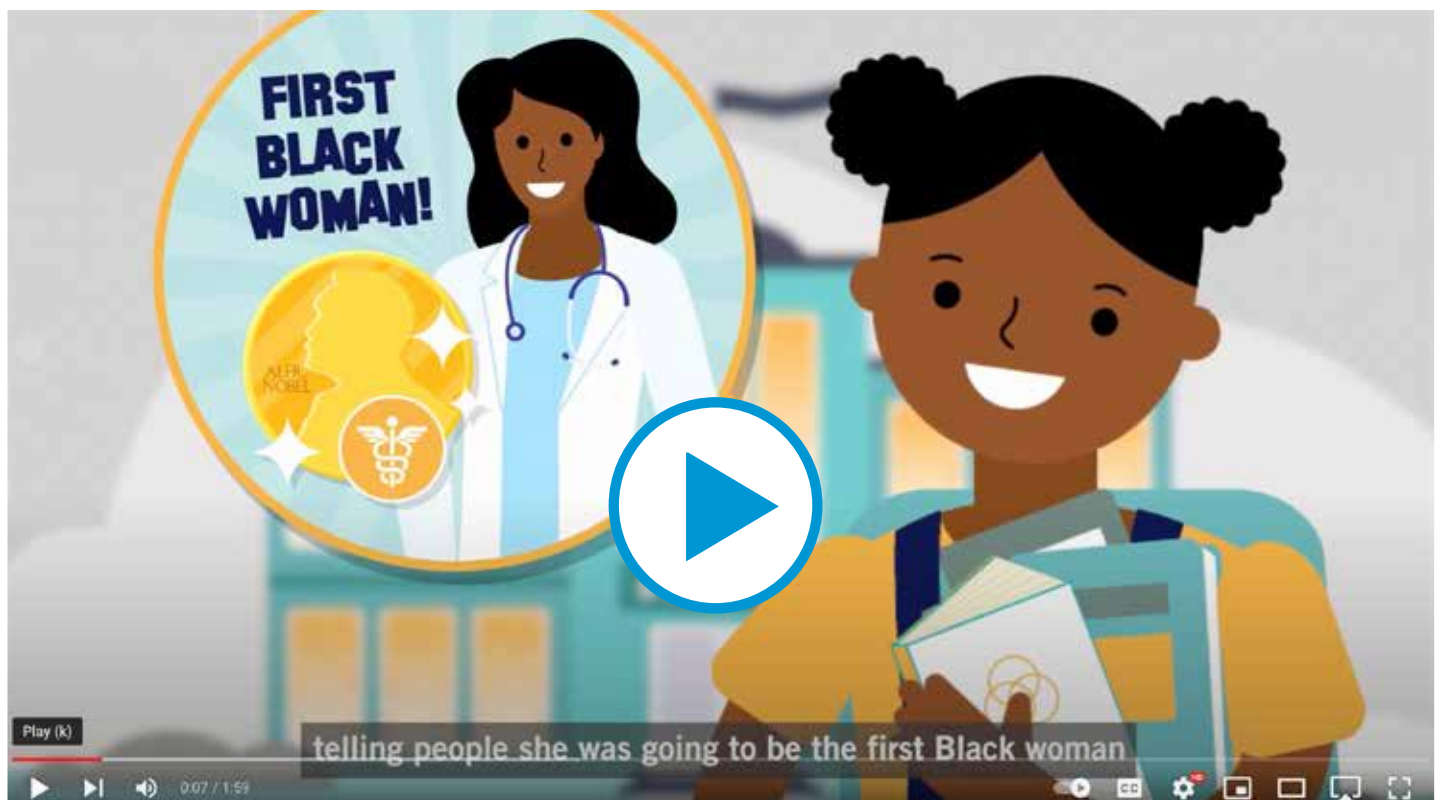
In partnership with Education Reform Now (ERN) and FutureEd, The Education Trust released a [report](#) that provides blueprints for building and implementing a high-impact tutoring system, which is a proven approach for accelerating student learning that's being used in Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas. Each of these states has incorporated at least three of the seven key strategies that are proven to support student learning — particularly for continually underserved students. This report was featured in a recent [Washington Post column](#).

We continued our ongoing workshop series, “Strategies to Solve Unfinished Learning,” which is based on our [briefs](#) of the same name. In February, we held session on “[How to Ensure All Students Have Access to High-Quality Teaching](#),” which was the third in the series and focused on helping advocates and practitioners develop strategies to address educator staffing shortages and ensure that all students have access to high-quality teachers. In March, we held our fourth session, “[Supporting Students' Social, Emotional and Academic Development](#),” in which various advocates and practitioners from throughout the education system ([Hayin Kimner](#), Ph.D.; [Rob Metz](#); and [Michael Huang](#)) shared real-time examples that show how critical [strong relationships](#) and [social emotional supports](#) are for addressing unfinished learning. To date, more than 500 participants — from more than 35 states — have attended, viewed, or registered for the series.



Advancing Advanced Placement Opportunities for Underserved Youth

As part of Ed Trust's ongoing efforts to highlight opportunity gaps, we released "[Shut out: Why Black and Latino Students Are Under-Enrolled in AP STEM Courses](#)" in April, along with an accompanying video. This report notes that while many students of color and students from low-income backgrounds aspire to go to college and say that STEM courses are their favorite subjects, these students continue to be excluded from AP STEM courses, which are crucial learning opportunities for aspiring scientists. This report, which was featured in [Word in Black's](#) recent series on barriers to AP course participation, highlights the importance of a positive and inviting school climate in getting more Black and Latino students into advanced courses that can nurture their interests and position them to thrive in college and future careers.





ExtraOrdinary Districts Season 5: Where Are All Those Dollars Going?

ExtraOrdinary Districts returned for [a fifth season](#), which looked at how educators are using the \$189 billion in federal relief funding sent to schools to help them cope with the effects of the pandemic.

Over the course of four episodes, Karin Chenoweth, Ed Trust’s recently retired writer-in-residence, talked with expert educators from districts — large and small — who said that, without federal funds, reopening their buildings would have been unimaginable.

Much of the money went toward COVID mitigation — which includes everything from masks and tests to much-needed ventilation improvements, they told Karin. But they’ve also used it for new curricula, teacher training, staff recruitment, and much, much more.

Podcast listeners will learn about the pandemic-induced problems still facing educators around the country, including shortages of bus drivers, substitute teachers, social workers, counselors, and school nurses.

They’ll also learn why many experts think this infusion of funds presents a unique opportunity to improve reading instruction — by allowing schools to purchase full curricula, including classroom libraries and books that students can take home, along with training for teachers and principals.



Subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts!

Addressing Teacher Shortages



Before COVID, the shortage of qualified, skilled teachers — especially in underserved communities and hard-to-staff roles — was among the top challenges facing education leaders. Now, because of the additional stresses brought on by the pandemic, it's likely that teacher shortages will be worse in the coming years. That could complicate efforts to attract and retain a stronger and more diverse teacher workforce. State- and district-leaders should be strongly encouraged to expand their teacher diversity efforts and provide more support for teachers of color, as only about a fifth of teachers are people of color.

LISTEN

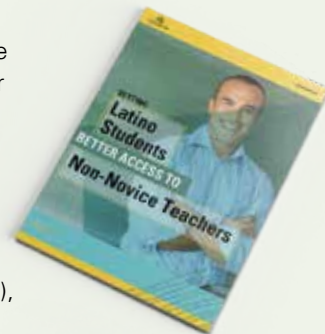
Building a high-quality educator workforce begins with early education. In February, Ed Trust and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation issued a report titled, "[Equity in Child Care Is Everyone's Business](#)," which examines how the pandemic has impacted Black and Latina child care providers and their ability to provide services.

The report highlights a host of challenges reported by early education professionals — including limited access to COVID-related financial and health resources and widespread racial discrimination that undermines their full participation in the business community. The report and accompanying policy brief on "Supporting Young Learners by Supporting Child Care Providers," are both available [here](#).

Ed Trust also issued a new brief — "[Addressing Teacher Shortages in the Short- and Long-Term: What States and Districts Can Do](#)" — on ways that state and district leaders can help address teacher shortages. This work builds upon Ed Trust's previous work on the educator pipeline, including:

- "[Is Your State Prioritizing Teacher Diversity & Equity?](#)," which examines teacher diversity in all 50 states and highlights examples of what states are doing to improve their recruitment and retention policies and increase the number of teachers of color in the profession;
- "[Supporting After-School Staff of Color in Teacher Pipelines](#)," which looks at how states and districts address teacher shortages and improve educator diversity by investing in teacher pipelines; and
- "Getting Students Better Access to Non-Novice Teachers" ([Black](#) and [Latino](#) editions), which found that high turnover has been an ongoing issue at schools serving high percentages of students of color.

SECURE



Coming Soon

This July, we will host a conference that brings together teachers from multiple states to discuss state-specific strategies for building and supporting a more diverse educator workforce.

Teaching Honest History in Our Schools




The Education Trust has used public messaging, strategic partnerships, and advocacy support to combat the ongoing attacks on the teaching of honest history in America's schools. [Since January 2021, 42 states have introduced bills or taken other steps to restrict how teachers can talk about race and systemic racism with their students.](#) These efforts are an alarming trend and are clearly aimed at undoing the work of equity advocates pushing for a more culturally diverse curriculum that includes the voices of those who've long been underrepresented or excluded and addresses the pervasive legacy of systemic racism in our country. These attacks are undermining public education and our democracy.

Ed Trust remains deeply engaged on this issue and is working with like-minded national organizations and coalitions on communications and state-based tactical planning to support advocates who are fighting this battle on the ground. In partnership with The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (LCCHR) and other civil rights partners, Ed Trust co-sponsored a webinar for state and national advocates on recent efforts to defend the teaching of honest history, what to expect from policymakers in 2022, and how to get involved. More than 400 participants from across the country attended this webinar on "[Teaching Truth: Protecting and Advancing Culturally Responsive Curricula in Our Schools.](#)"

While these attacks on education are intensifying, counterefforts to protect students and the integrity of our public education system have broad support and are becoming more coordinated and sophisticated. Ed Trust will continue to help defend honest and inclusive education in our public schools.

Working in Partnership Through Our Alliance For Resource Equity

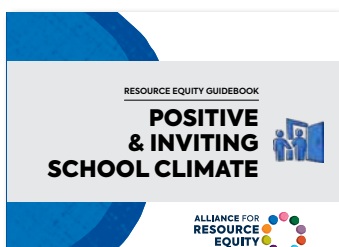


In February, Ed Trust held an [Alliance for Resource Equity](#) (ARE) workshop for state-level advocates and policymakers on keeping resource equity at the forefront of the COVID-19 recovery, with a specific focus on three topics: support for students' social, emotional, and academic well-being; equitable responses to staffing shortages; and multi-tiered systems of supports. Approximately 120 attendees participated in at least one of the workshop sessions, the videos of the three sessions have been viewed dozens of times, and the audience feedback from a survey about the workshop was robust and overwhelmingly positive.

In April, ARE released four more guidebooks on the key dimensions of resource equity: [Positive & Inviting School Climate](#); [High-Quality Early Learning](#); [Learning-Ready Facilities](#); and [Diverse Classrooms & Schools](#). The latest guidebooks are the last in the set of 10.

In the realm of federal advocacy, Ed Trust, alongside other national partners and with input from ERS, sent additional feedback in February [to the U.S. Department of Education](#) on the implementation of "Maintenance of Equity" at the state and local level. In [partnership with other national organizations](#), as well as [on its own](#), Ed Trust also submitted comments to the U.S. Department of Education regarding the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), which highlight how data collected within the CRDC can be used to identify resource inequities. In March, the U.S. Department of Education issued final guidance on the "Maintenance of Equity" provisions that closely mirrored input provided by Ed Trust and Education Resource Strategies (ERS).

Meanwhile, Ed Trust and ERS have renewed their partnership in the Alliance for Resource Equity via a new three-year grant.



EDUCATION TRUST BOOTCAMP



EQUITY MATTERS: A PATH FORWARD



After two years of virtual bootcamps, we were thrilled to finally be able to meet in person in Washington, DC this past April.

Our “Equity Matters: A Path Forward” bootcamp brought together more than 180 advocates and funders from the following states: California; Illinois; Indiana; Delaware; Washington, DC; Kentucky; Louisiana; Massachusetts; Maryland; Minnesota; New York; Pennsylvania; Tennessee; Texas; and Washington.

The two-day gathering leveraged the voices and skills of students, families, educators, and advocates who are finding solutions to the educational inequities that predated the pandemic, surfaced during the pandemic, or were exacerbated because of it.

Our P-12 breakout sessions covered topics such as: how states and districts are addressing staff shortages in schools in high-poverty areas; how to use funding tools to advocate for equitable school funding policies; and updates on statewide standardized assessments and accountability systems. The higher education sessions focused on the Black student debt crisis, as well as advocacy tools designed to highlight unjust barriers that keep incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals from accessing a higher education and participating fully in society.

We look forward to building on the success of this gathering at our next in-person bootcamp on October 26-28, 2022, in Memphis.

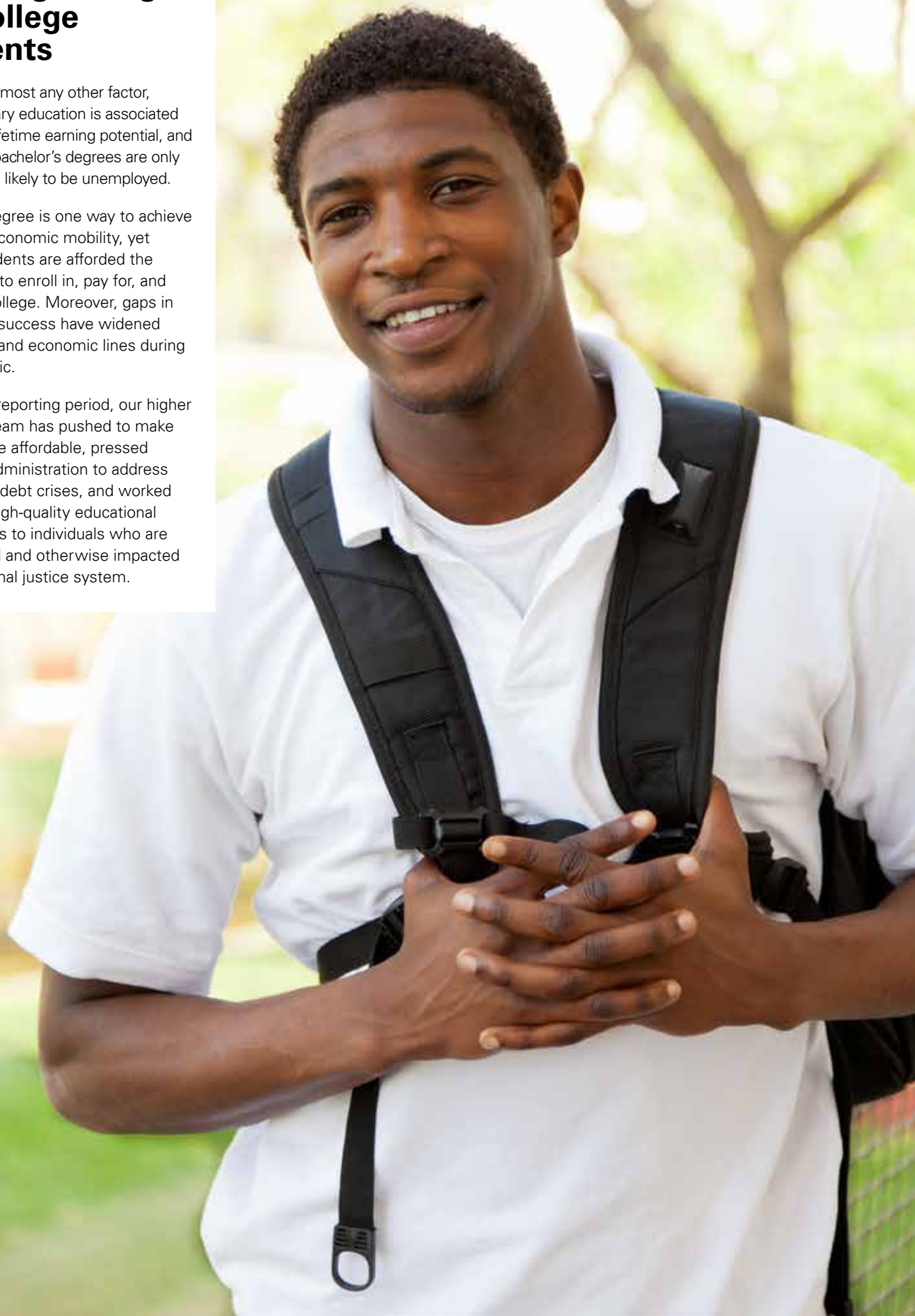


Sparking Change for College Students

More than almost any other factor, postsecondary education is associated with larger lifetime earning potential, and adults with bachelor's degrees are only about half as likely to be unemployed.

A college degree is one way to achieve social and economic mobility, yet too few students are afforded the opportunity to enroll in, pay for, and complete college. Moreover, gaps in access and success have widened along racial and economic lines during the pandemic.

During this reporting period, our higher education team has pushed to make college more affordable, pressed the Biden administration to address the student debt crises, and worked to expand high-quality educational opportunities to individuals who are incarcerated and otherwise impacted by the criminal justice system.



Removing Unjust Barriers That Keep Current and Formerly Incarcerated Individuals From Accessing a Higher Education

More than 2 million people are incarcerated in the United States. That is the highest incarceration rate in the world. National and state leaders have repeatedly pledged to reform the criminal justice system, but anyone seeking re-entry services can tell you that those “reforms” fall short, in large part because those closest to the problem aren’t driving the solutions.

“[Beyond the Ban](#),” a collection of state policy toolkits informed by Ed Trust’s inaugural cohort of [Justice Fellows](#) seeks to change that. Released in March, the toolkits, were compiled by Ed Trust researchers and Justice Fellows conducting comprehensive policy scans of eight states with the highest incarcerated populations — California, Illinois, Louisiana, New York, Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas — and identified barriers to higher education access and re-entry in each state.

The scans note that access to education programs and wraparound support services is critical to providing returning citizens the tools they need to successfully reintegrate into society and help reduce recidivism, housing insecurity, and unemployment rates.

The “Beyond the Ban” toolkits got [widespread media coverage](#) via editorials, television, and radio throughout March. [Inside Higher Ed](#) spotlighted the toolkits and quoted a letter from the Justice Fellows that was included in the report: “We deserve our freedom,” said the letter. “We deserve an education. And so do the millions of currently and formerly incarcerated Americans who have been failed by broken systems and poor public leadership.”

[Diverse Issues in Higher Education](#) interviewed William Freeman, a Justice Fellow alum and the new manager of our higher education justice initiative, and Kayla C. Elliott, Ph.D., director of higher education policy, about ways to increase opportunities for justice-impacted students. William and Kayla underscored the importance of ban-the-box initiatives, Pell restoration, and increasing access to financial aid for justice-impacted students.

Coverage by [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) noted that college access in prison is a racial equity issue, as Black and Latino people are “overrepresented” in the U.S. prison population and “underrepresented in higher education programs.” Improving access to higher education and lifting barriers to internet and state-funded financial aid access, obtaining a state ID or driver’s license, and removing criminal history questions from applications is, therefore, essential and would help ease re-entry for justice-impacted people. Expanding access to Pell Grants and financial aid would help make a higher education more affordable for justice-impacted students.

Ed Trust’s Justice Fellows were also interviewed by various other outlets about their work on the toolkits and their personal experiences:

- William Freeman talked with [FOX SOUL’s “Black Report,”](#) about his pursuit of a higher education in prison, the challenges of re-entry after two decades in prison, and how receiving a college education while incarcerated impacted his worldview.
- William and Kayla were also featured on SiriusXM Urban View’s “[Clay Cane Show](#),” where they talked about the short- and long-term impacts on justice-impacted people when education is denied.
- Alexa Garza and Rabia Qutab, meanwhile, spoke openly about the intersection of race, gender, and the criminal justice system, as well as their personal experiences in the Texas prison system and the difficulties they encountered in accessing higher education, housing, re-entry services, in an article on [The 19th News](#), an online media outlet that specializes in gender politics and policy issues.

Ed Trust’s researchers and Justice Fellows also led a well-attended [webinar](#), where they outlined their policy work, recommendations for states from the “Beyond the Ban” toolkit, and what advocates and policymakers can do to achieve impactful criminal justice reform.



JUSTICE FELLOWS

POLICY PROGRAM



Congratulations to the Inaugural Justice Fellows Cohort



The inaugural Justice Fellows cohort graduated this spring. The eight fellows gathered in Washington, DC, to celebrate their accomplishments; to reflect on their time in the program, their research and policy efforts; and to participate in a series of sessions on the need for criminal justice reform. The Fellows met with federal policy leaders, learned more about how to advance their agenda and engage with the media, in their local communities, and in the halls of government, where those impacted by the justice system are often left out of the decision-making process. The cohort of graduates shared the following reflections:

- “The most important takeaway from this fellowship is learning about how policy is created. Since taking part in this fellowship, I now have a better understanding of how to communicate with legislators, what policy should look like, and I’m intentional about how to effect change in Louisiana,” said Ed Trust Justice Fellow graduate [Montrell Carmouche](#). “Since being part of this fellowship, I’ve registered to be a lobbyist in the state of Louisiana.”





- Graduate [Rabia Qutab](#) said: “One of the most important things I am taking away from this fellowship is lessons of value.” She continued: “As a formerly incarcerated woman of color, I know that we often underestimate our value, integrity, honor, and what we bring to the table. The message I want to bring to formerly and currently incarcerated people is this — know that your value is high, your lived experience matters, your narrative matters, and what you bring to the table is priceless.”
- “Being an Ed Trust’s Justice Fellow has provided a great opportunity to see different parts of the social justice work and develop relationships within the community. This whole experience is a model for other organizations [on] what it means to not just talk about including people, but to actually do it the right way,” said graduate [Jarrod Wall](#).

An [Instagram reel](#) featuring the inaugural Fellows and their speeches, and a blog recapping the graduation ceremony can be found [here](#).

Criminal justice reform and educational access go hand-in-hand, and The Education Trust is committed to advocating for policy changes that showcase the broad influence higher educational access and degree attainment has on justice-impacted people and their communities. We are currently recruiting for our second cohort. If you or someone you know are interested in becoming a fellow, check out the requirements and [apply](#).





Pressing for Student Debt Relief for Black Women Borrowers

Forty-five million Americans collectively owe \$1.7 trillion in student loan debt, and women hold nearly two-thirds of it. But because of the gender pay gap, women are more likely than men to have trouble paying off their debt. Black borrowers are most negatively affected by student loans, in large part because of systemic racism, the inequitable distribution of wealth, a stratified labor market, and rising college costs. Because Black women exist at the intersection of two marginalized identities and experience sexism and racism at the same time, they make less money and often need to borrow more to cover the cost of attendance, and struggle significantly with repayment. To call attention to this important issue, we issued a brief this reporting period called, “[How Black Women Experience Student Debt](#).” The release of the brief comes as cries for student debt relief, cancellation, and reasonable solutions to the student loan debt crises are reaching a fever pitch.

In the wake of the release of the Black student debt brief, our outreach and advocacy efforts included strategic partnerships with organizations like Black Girls Vote, Higher Heights, ACLU, and many more. Coverage by [The Hechinger Report](#) highlighted the ways in which female Black borrowers suffer more than other groups, on account of discrimination in the labor market, where they often earn less than many of their counterparts, despite having competitive skills and advanced degrees. In an article in [The Economist](#), Victoria Jackson and Brittani Williams, who co-authored the brief, explained what the repayment pause has meant to female Black borrowers. They noted that many borrowers felt relieved, were finally able to pay for basic necessities like health care, child care, and utilities without worrying. Others took this opportunity to find better housing for themselves and their families and or save for the future.



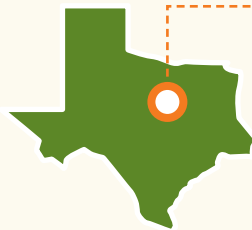


White House correspondent and writer for [The Grio](#), April Ryan, talked with Sen. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.) and Ed Trust's Victoria Jackson about the student debt forgiveness movement. Victoria explained that the study's goal was to "highlight the voices of Black borrowers," since for so long, "the stories of Black student debt" have been told by people who aren't Black and "aren't listening to Black borrowers." She explained that The Education Trust believes that "canceling at least \$50,000 in federal student loan debt would alleviate the debt burden for over 90% of Black people with student debt."

This brief also got the attention of writers and social media influencers like Elie Mystal, justice correspondent for The Nation. His piece, "[The Student Debt Crisis, It's Infinitely Worse for Black Women](#)," examined the intersection of racial and gender discrimination and highlighted the brief on Black women and student debt in its analysis. An April segment of "[Good Morning America](#)" also featured the brief and underscored the fact that Black women receive little help when it comes to repaying their student loans. Many Black female borrowers have no choice but to take on higher student debt loads to pay for their education.

It's no wonder then that, according to our research, 12 years after starting college, Black women owe 13% more than they borrowed, while White men, on average, have paid off 44% of their debt. This message clearly resonated with readers, as the article was shared thousands of times on social media, quoted by top news sources, spurred a lot of interest in the Black student debt series, and garnered numerous invitations to collaborate and attend events.

WORKING IN THE STATES



The Education Trust in Texas

As [the state legislature prepares for the next session in January](#), we are engaging partners across multiple P-12 and higher ed coalitions to solidify shared priorities for addressing unfinished learning, strengthening and diversifying our teacher workforce, and building more equitable pathways to postsecondary completion.

We continue to invest in the development of underrepresented student, teacher, and community leaders. We are supporting a statewide [Community College Student Advisory Council](#) to elevate students' stories and influence policy decisions related to the state's funding of community colleges. We are also elevating the leadership of Alexa Garza, a graduate of Ed Trust's Justice Fellows program, to raise awareness about [Pell reinstatement for students who are incarcerated](#). Having launched a series of listening sessions with aspiring and current teachers of color in the Houston region, we are amplifying the [voices of diverse educators](#) across the state to inform and mobilize advocates in support of better feedback, coaching, and support for the 25,000 new teachers who enter Texas classrooms every year.

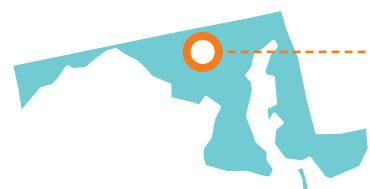


The Education Trust in Louisiana

Ed Trust in Louisiana launched a campaign to encourage Black and Latino students to enroll in the state's [dual enrollment program](#). We created videos in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#), and other social media content to share with our partners throughout the state to raise awareness about these programs in local communities.

We also conducted in-person [focus groups](#) with Black teachers in Louisiana, so that we can use their input to develop better state and local policies that encourage more people of color to pursue teaching, and support and retain those teachers of color already working in the profession. Our conversations with Black educators are intended to uncover their motivations for teaching, the barriers they face when entering the profession, and the reasons they leave the classroom.

Maryland: During the 2022 legislative session the Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), along with other coalition members, fought to ensure that the Blueprint for Maryland's Future was implemented with [fidelity and fully funded](#). MAREE drew attention to the governor's efforts to withhold education funding, which had a disparate impact on school districts with the largest Black and Latino student populations and helped perpetuate the racial inequities in the state's school system.



The Education Trust in Tennessee

The Education Trust in Tennessee spent the first quarter of 2022 deeply engaged in our state's legislative session. We released an [equity-focused policy agenda](#), launched a [bill tracker](#) to monitor every education bill filed in the legislature, and provided [weekly legislative updates](#) to advocates throughout the duration of the legislative session. We were excited to meet many equity advocates, students, and Alliance for Equity in Education partners in person at our first [Alliance Day on the Hill](#). Additionally, we premiered our [Ten for Tennessee Awards](#), which recognize the top 10 bills or proposals that have the greatest potential to improve opportunity and access for students of color, students from lower-income communities, students with disabilities, and students learning English.

Dominating the Tennessee Legislature this year was Gov. Bill Lee's new funding formula bill, the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA). To prepare Tennessee advocates to fully engage in the school funding formula conversation, we created a [TISA evaluation tool](#), hosted a [half-day school funding bootcamp](#), provided a sign-on opportunity for alliance partners and released a series of [reports](#), [toolkits](#), and [resources](#). Our Tennessee Alliance for Equity in Education released a [public statement of support for TISA](#), signed by over 40 partners.

A wave of anti-truth and censorship bills also permeated the general assembly in Tennessee this year, and we collaborated with partners and advocates to engage on the issue by launching the [TN Coalition for Truth in Our Classrooms](#). We also [released a statement regarding "Prohibited Concepts in Instruction"](#) and hosted a series of webinars, including one with Chalkbeat on "[How the CRT Debate and the Culture Wars Impact Students in Tennessee](#)" and another with the ACLU of Tennessee titled, "[Know Your Rights: What You Need to Know About Tennessee's Latest Censorship Bills](#)"



The Education Trust in Massachusetts:

EdTrust's Massachusetts team, alongside the Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership (MEEP), has continued to advocate for a robust implementation of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), a landmark 2019 school funding reform law that invested significant new resources in the state's highest-need districts and required district leaders to engage their school communities in developing plans for how to use those resources.

As school districts across the state prepared to revise their SOA plans and engage in conversations regarding how to spend state SOA and federal COVID-19 relief funds, we focused our efforts on helping families and community stakeholders weigh in on how the millions — sometimes tens of millions — of new dollars should be allocated to dramatically improve learning experiences and outcomes for continually underserved students.

To that end, MEEP created the [Massachusetts Family Funding Toolkit](#), an easy-to-use guide in English and Spanish that explains the different state and federal funding streams available to districts and shares examples of the kinds of strategies and interventions to advocate for to best respond to students' academic and social-emotional needs. In conjunction with the toolkit, we also created collateral materials for families to make collaborating and engaging with district leaders as easy as possible, including an in-depth [frequently asked questions](#) document and [phone and email scripts](#). Since the toolkit's release, we have reached many families through a variety of outreach efforts, including an [op-ed](#) authored by two MEEP partners and community conversations co-led by partners and our team. To date, the toolkit has been viewed online nearly 1,000 times.



The Education Trust—West

California's Budget Proposals and Legislative Wins Align With Key ETW Priorities



In March, Ed Trust—West released its policy agenda, "[Momentum: A Policy Agenda for Accelerating Racial Equity in California's Education Systems in 2022](#)." Thanks to our advocacy efforts, and those of our partners, Gov. Gavin Newsom's revised budget, released in May, included many of our key policy priorities. As our [blog](#) summarizing our analysis of the budget explains, there are some wins for California students as well as areas for improvement.

The revised budget includes a \$385 million proposal for equity-focused professional development for STEM teachers, a proposal championed by Ed Trust—West through advocacy and co-sponsorship of Assembly Bill 2565. To reinforce the importance of improving equity in math for California's K-12 students, this reporting period, we held our annual Ed Equity Advocacy Day, which brought together more than 100 advocates from across the state to participate in dozens of virtual meetings with legislative staffers over the course of two days.

The STEM professional development allocation is one of the featured proposals in Ed Trust—West's annual list of great opportunities to advance education equity and justice in California, [The Equity 8](#), which also highlights a \$500 million budget ask and accompanying legislative bill to increase access to dual enrollment and prioritize equity in expansion efforts. ETW has explicitly advocated for these investments in recent publications, including "[Jumpstart: A California Roadmap for Equitable Dual Enrollment Policy & Practice](#)," which was released in March, and in external presentations and meetings.

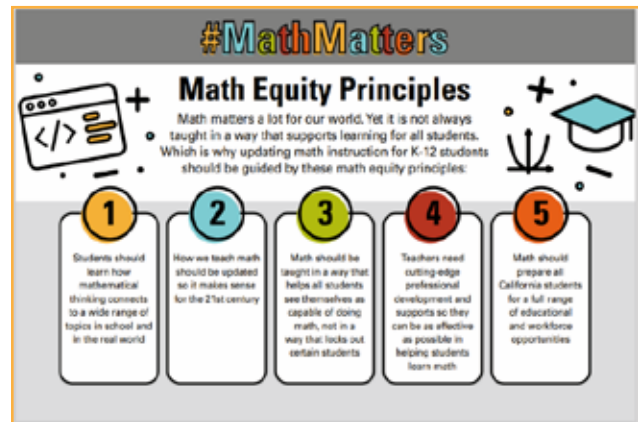




Engaging Educators and Communities in Math Matters Advocacy

As part of Ed Trust–West’s work on ensuring equity in STEM for students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and English learners, we launched a [#MathMatters campaign hub](#) that includes a set of principles that we shared with state leaders to guide their decision-making as our new math framework is finalized over the coming weeks.

In April, Ed Trust–West released the latest paper in the Research in Brief series, “[Equitable Math Instruction for California’s Multilingual Students.](#)” This research sets out to inform and mobilize advocates around pressing issues related to math equity. The brief, authored by external researchers and released as part of an effort to spread actionable equity research around the state, adds yet another voice to the



choir of educators and advocates calling for significant improvements to California’s math instructional guidance for teachers.



Monitoring and Maximizing Equity in Implementation Efforts

In February, The Education Trust–West released an equity alert, “[Time to Close the Loopholes in Remedial Education at Community Colleges.](#)” highlighting the need to amend California Assembly Bill 705, which sets out to address the inequitable challenges of remedial education at California Community Colleges. There are several loopholes in the legislation that allow colleges to engage in harmful placement and assessment practices.

Our policy and communications team members continue to participate in coalitions to ensure equitable implementation of AB 705. To increase awareness of the need for equity in implementation and to support legislative fixes that prioritize equitable implementation, we are working together to amplify voices of support for this important legislation by testifying at hearings and strategically targeting earned and social media.

As the state works to distribute and implement early education expansion efforts, Ed Trust–West is partnering with Young Invincibles to utilize our [#Data4ThePeople](#) brand to expand and engage Early Learning and Care communities. This work will monitor the development of the Early Learning and Care data system that will be included in California’s Cradle-to-Career State Longitudinal Data System to ensure the necessary planning, data alignment, and coordination are happening now for full integration of early learning data.



Black Minds Matter: 7 Years Later

In 2015, Ed Trust–West launched the Black Minds Matter campaign to galvanize Californians around the need to do significantly more to live up to their progressive values, reverse racial inequities in policy, and honor Black students’ civil right to education. While the state has taken steps toward fulfilling its responsibilities and commitments to Black students and families, progress has been far too slow. That’s why, in April, Ed Trust–West released the [Black Minds Matter: 2022 Fact Sheet](#), which provides an update on how well California early learning programs, K-12 school districts, and higher education systems are serving Black students and families. The fact sheet has been widely disseminated and was featured at a session at a Black Student Success Week event.

For more information, please visit EdTrustWest.org

The Education Trust—Midwest

Policy Wins to Strengthen Early Reading

The Education Trust—Midwest (ETM) has long worked alongside early reading advocates to pass legislation that would help early learners improve their readings skills, including by removing barriers to reading success. A bipartisan, four-bill package would require schools to screen early elementary students for characteristics of dyslexia and provide multi-tier levels of support for students who demonstrate those characteristics. The legislation, [championed by ETM and the Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity](#), would also require teaching colleges to provide specific training on dyslexia and ensure that all current teachers receive professional development on how to provide the necessary resources to students who need support. The Senate overwhelmingly voted to approve the legislation. The bills are now before the House Education Committee.



ETM and a Growing Bipartisan Coalition Call for Educational Transformation, as Report Shows Student Learning Is Stalled in Michigan

The Education Trust—Midwest, along with members of a growing bipartisan, statewide group convened by ETM, [called for educational transformation, including more honesty and transparency in student achievement data](#) and spending to understand the impact of public investments on student learning. Their increased advocacy comes amid findings from ETM's State of Michigan Education report, which was released in May.

The report, "[Still Stalled: 2022 State of Michigan Education](#)," shows that Michigan, which currently ranks 32nd in fourth grade reading and 28th in eighth grade math, is leaving young students behind. If the state does not take steps to improve early literacy and math performance, those rankings could sink even further by 2030 — to 39th in reading and 29th in math, according to the latest projections.

Leaders of the statewide group — known as the [Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity](#) — also called for a fair system of school funding to ensure that the state's most underserved students — Black and Latino students, English learners, students with disabilities, students in isolated, rural communities and students from low-income backgrounds — have the funding and resources they need to succeed.

"While these results are clearly troubling, they also represent an opportunity for our state to create a 'new normal,' where every

student has the opportunity to achieve and where students with the greatest needs receive the funding and resources they need to succeed," said Amber Arellano, executive director of ETM.

In conjunction with ETM's report, The Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity coalition issued a companion report titled, "[We Imagine](#)," which captures the shared hopes and dreams of advocates and teachers who are working together to transform Michigan's education system into one that prioritizes and protects vulnerable students and ensures that these students have the funding and resources they need to succeed.

"If Michigan had a fair school funding system, Michigan's underserved students, Black and Latino students, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students living in high-poverty districts would receive a 100% weighted, equitable funding formula," said Alice G. Thompson, chair of the education committee at the Detroit Branch NAACP, and chief executive officer of BFDI Educational Services, Inc., in the "[We Imagine](#)" report. "This funding would eliminate the achievement gap and foster a solid path for mastery of grade level proficiency, embodied with a high degree of social and emotional support."

The reports garnered considerable media coverage and traction, including in [The Detroit News](#), [Michigan Radio](#) (NPR), [Crain's Detroit Business](#), WWJ Radio, and the Michigan News Connection. The reports also were mentioned often on social media by the Business Leaders of Michigan and others. They were also touted at an [education-related panel](#) discussion hosted by The Michigan Chronicle.



Our vision:

Michigan will be a national leader in public education, where all children achieve at high levels, regardless of race, gender, disability, family income, native language or geography.



ENGAGE

Building a Movement: Our Coalition Is Growing

ETM is building a movement of advocates working toward better opportunities for all Michigan students. Onboarding continues as we expand our bipartisan, diverse coalition — [The Michigan Partnership for Equity and Opportunity](#). We've added eight new member organizations from across the state, including Teach Plus-Michigan, Detroit Future City, Michigan's Children, Michigan League for Public Policy (MLPP), 313 Reads-Brilliant Detroit, VOCES, New Detroit, and Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Additionally, the teacher leaders of the [Michigan Teacher Leadership Collaborative](#) (MTLC) continued their advocacy for more school funding, more resources for students, and more. We, along with Teach Plus, a national equity-focused teacher leadership organization, launched the MTLC in 2021.

MTLC is a highly selective leadership opportunity for outstanding Michigan teachers looking to share their expertise around equity-focused instructional practices, deepen their knowledge of education policy, and gain a voice in decisions that affect continually underserved students and educators. The MTLC provides a community for sharing best practices, along with training and opportunities to advance equity at the systems and policy levels.

The inaugural cohort met with legislators to advocate for equity-based strategies and share their voice in the press. ETM and Teach Plus have selected the second cohort and will begin onboarding them in July, while determining strategies to engage alumni of the program and continue advocacy.

For more information, please visit EdTrustMidwest.org

The Education Trust—New York

Investing in Equity: How New York's 2023 Final Budget Advances Educational Equity

The Education Trust—New York (Ed Trust—NY) continued to work alongside our partners to make certain the 2023 New York State Budget includes key investments to advance educational equity from birth through college and into the workforce.

Throughout the legislative session, we provided public testimony, letters to lawmakers, and digital content that focused on educational equity for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds. To that end, our collective efforts resulted in significant investments for New York's children and students.

Recognizing the incredible toll the ongoing pandemic continues to take on New Yorkers, the budget promises much-needed investments to help students and families get back on track and recover mentally, academically, and economically. This year's budget commits unprecedented support to education, including a historic \$7 billion for early childhood education, \$31.5 billion in school aid, and \$8.2 billion to New



York's higher education system to help put more New Yorkers on the path to earning a high-quality degree or credential.

Read more about New York's investment in equity [here](#).

We're Growing! Ed Trust—NY Welcomes New Deputy Director, Opens Office in Upstate New York



Ed Trust—NY is thrilled to welcome Jeff Smink as its deputy director, a position in which he will work closely with the executive director to implement the organization's key initiatives while leading policy and advocacy strategies at the state and local levels.

Smink comes to the role with more than 20 years of experience in education policy at the national, state, and local levels, working on issues affecting students from birth through college and into the workforce.

With Smink's appointment, Ed Trust—NY also opened a satellite office in Rochester, a city with one of the highest concentrations of child poverty in the country. The opening of the office will enable Smink and other senior leaders to better support and grow our network of partners in upstate New York.

"As Ed Trust—NY continues to celebrate our fifth anniversary, we are excited about the wealth of experience Jeff brings to the team that will support our work to advance educational equity for all New York students," said Dia Bryant, executive director of The Education Trust—New York. "We are also thrilled to expand our presence in upstate New York, particularly in Rochester, where we can contribute to the city's rich history of fighting for racial justice."

Read more about Smink [here](#).



ANOTHER LOST YEAR?

Lessons from a year like no other



Poll: Parents Overwhelmingly Are Concerned About Their Child’s Academic Performance and Social-Emotional Well-Being

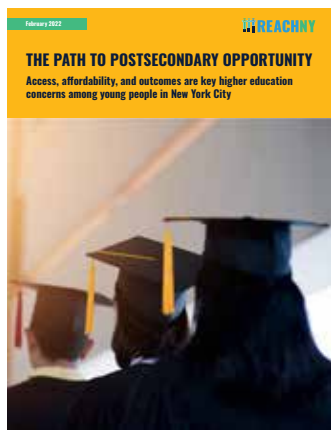
Even as schools across New York returned to full-time in-person instruction this year, a new statewide poll of parents identified significant concerns about how the pandemic is affecting their children academically, socially, and emotionally.

The poll found that concerns about unfinished learning, an accelerating mental health crisis, exclusionary school discipline practices, low student attendance, gaps in support services for students with disabilities and multilingual learners, and inadequate extended learning opportunities are top of mind for parents across all racial groups.

An astounding 97% of parents said they want feedback from schools about whether their child is on track academically. The vast majority (86%) also said they are concerned about whether their child’s mental health needs are being met.

The poll also identified significant gaps between resources parents said would be helpful and what they have access to. Of the 97% of parents who said it would be helpful for schools to provide information about whether their child is on track to meet academic expectations for their grade level, just 40% said they had that information. Of the 93% of parents who indicated that support for children struggling with mental health needs would be helpful, just 37% said they had access to that resource.

Read more about what parents had to say about these issues [here](#).



Ed Trust–NY Research Identifies Several Areas to Better Support Students To and Through College

In our continued focus on better supporting New York students to and through college, several Ed Trust–NY’s analyses identified gaps and opportunities in college readiness and persistence.

A February [poll](#) found that although a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential can be the key to putting New Yorkers on the path to earning a family-sustaining wage and participating in the workforce, young people in New York City indicated there is still much to be done to support New Yorkers on their path to and through the higher education system.

Access to financial aid and resources to prepare them for college were among the top issues young people identified in the poll, particularly among young people who have been historically underserved by the education system.

Concerns about financial aid underscore the importance of helping students complete the FAFSA, with a [new analysis](#) finding that the FAFSA completion rate continues to lag behind pre-pandemic levels.

Statewide, the FAFSA completion rate at the end of February was down 1 percentage point from the same time last year and 5 percentage points since the end of February 2020, before the pandemic forced school closures.

The gap between the current (February 2022) completion rate and the pre-pandemic rate also persists, particularly between schools serving the largest share of students from low-income backgrounds (8 percentage points) and those serving the smallest share of students from low-income backgrounds (2 percentage points).

Financial aid is just one piece of the college access puzzle, though, and Ed Trust–NY’s findings on the college persistence gap highlight the need to better support students on the path ‘to and through’ college.

The [analysis](#) revealed that while the rate of students earning an associate or bachelor’s degree within six years of starting college is up 9 percentage points — from 50% for the cohort that graduated from high school in 2012 to 59% for the cohort that graduated from high school 2014 — far too many students are leaving college without a diploma, particularly those who graduated from high schools serving the largest share of students from low-income backgrounds.

How are you working to *spark change*?

We at The Education Trust are working to make our society a better place. Here are some ways that Ed Trusters are working to spark change in our local communities and on the job.

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“A single spark can start a flame, but it is the winds of change we need to spread the fire. At Ed Trust–NY, we work hard every day to ignite the sparks in our partners, our communities, and our education system, and then collectively fan the flames of change we so desperately need for our children.”

Dia Bryant, Ed.L.D.,
executive director,
The Education Trust – New York

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“Maryland is a hotbed for human trafficking of teenagers and young adults, due to its proximity to several major cities from Richmond to Boston, access to major waterways, three international airports, closeness to powerful people. COVID-19 has caused the crisis to explode. I work to effect change by raising awareness, pushing for stricter laws in Annapolis, and organizing voter registration drives. Indeed as Shirley Chisholm said, ‘Service is the rent we pay for the privilege of living on this earth.’”

Nicolle H. Grayson, director of communications,
The Education Trust, National Office

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“To spark change in my community, I am encouraging family, friends, neighbors, and others via social media outlets to register to VOTE if they haven’t done so, AND to make sure they get out and VOTE! This election year is very important and change must and has to happen at the polls.”

Ivy Ellis, senior executive assistant,
The Education Trust, National Office

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“My children are now old enough that they can understand the news — and it’s been tough. I’m sparking change by teaching them how to process and understand difficult news and also what they can do to effect change, like lifting their voices through activism.”

Rachel Stalcup, chief development
officer, The Education Trust,
National Office

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“Sometimes we have to start off small — like a spark. But if we have an idea, nothing is going to stop us from implementing it. Working with diverse communities and partners in New York is what will turn any idea into something bigger and better.”

Liz Warden, communications manager,
The Education Trust – New York

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“One reason I was drawn to The Education Trust was that it ignited sparks at its inception, and I have since seen how my coworkers give those flames oxygen every day. I have tried to emulate that perseverance in my work here, as well as in my home community through my local mutual aid organization.”

William Rodick, Spencer scholar,
The Education Trust, National Office

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“I’m working to spark change in my community by giving back through mentoring young Black students who aspire to be educators and advocates and by normalizing mental health as a critical part of overall health.”

Christopher J. Nellum, Ph.D.,
executive director, The Education Trust – West

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“I am inspired while working with the American Muslim Advisory Council to empower the Tennessee Muslim community to advocate for their students. In the past few months, the community has met with legislators to discuss anti-CRT legislation, run voter registration drives, and encouraged voter turnout, particularly to support the Muslims running for office throughout the city.”

Fariha Hossain, P-12 policy fellow,
The Education Trust in Tennessee

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“I am working to spark change in my community; by creatively sharing important ed policy and practice information that may not typically be known or made accessible, then holding space for dialogue and ways to increase positive progress.”

Brittani Williams, higher education senior policy analyst,
The Education Trust, National Office

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“To spark change in Tennessee, I have helped create and oversee the Tennessee Coalition for Truth in Our Classrooms, a statewide group of students, education advocates, and community organizations fighting to promote truthful history and diversity in our schools, while also working against our state’s anti-equity/anti-truth, censorship legislation. This past legislative session, one major win was supporting two high school student organizers who lead the Tennessee Youth Coalition in Memphis to organize, meet with legislators, and ultimately, powerfully testify against and kill a harmful library censorship bill.”

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Meili Powell, advocacy and partnerships manager,
The Education Trust in Tennessee



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“Change starts at home. For me that’s on the southside of Chicago. Gun and gang violence, low expectations and futures being cut short are everyday realities. I sit on the board for the Chicago Youth Centers working to provide academic, sports, mentoring and social emotional support venues for youth in the hardest hit communities. I also sit on the board of the Chicago Scholars program and foundation and serve as a mentor for first-generation would-be college students beginning their sophomore year of high school. I help them navigate financial aid, college choices, college culture, exams, and preparedness. The work continues throughout their college career because getting a student to college isn’t enough; they need support most once they walk onto a college campus.”

Ameshia Cross, assistant director for higher education communications, The Education Trust, National Office

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“In my work and our collective efforts as a Tennessee team, we engage students, educators, and advocates across the state to demystify politics and the policymaking process in order to inspire more communities to get involved and raise their voices on key issues. In Tennessee and the nation more broadly, we all have an important responsibility to ensure the children we are fighting for inherit a society and education system that is more just, equitable, and reflective of our nation’s rich diversity.”

Reginald Nash, external relations manager, The Education Trust in Tennessee

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“I mentor 14 Black high schoolers in Detroit to help them graduate and be safe. I take inspiration from their successes and failures to advocate for more equitable funding for underserved students in my community.”

Brian L. Love,
director of community outreach,
The Education Trust – Midwest

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“I’m sparking change through grieving, processing, and taking action in community. I’m holding space for friends and family, and myself, to process pain — and rolling up my sleeves and taking action alongside others by stocking the community fridge, tutoring fabulous students in my community, and striving to be an engaged, loving friend and neighbor.”

Sarah King, doctoral resident, national and state partnerships, The Education Trust, National Office

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"I am working to spark change in my community by recognizing and appreciating everyone's humanity in everything I do."

Gabriel Montague, Nichols higher education research fellow, The Education Trust, National Office

"I worked to spark change in my community by working with staff and educators at local schools to help with organizing and planning for the school year."

Tameia Williams, communications intern, The Education Trust, National Office

"I serve on the board of a local nonprofit, Voices for Children Montgomery. Our mission is to ensure children in foster care have safe and permanent homes, and we do that by training volunteer advocates who can help represent a child's best interest in court proceedings. Today, we are able to provide almost half of the children in foster care in my county with their own court-appointed special advocate. By 2026, we want to be able to serve them all! Every child needs and deserves a caring adult in their lives who can help them find, use, and amplify their voice so they can live the life of their dreams."

Robin Harris, Ph.D., vice president of communications, The Education Trust, National Office

"I spark change in my community by engaging, mentoring, and investing in our youth in Tennessee. I encourage students to view themselves as experts of their own lived experiences and to take ownership of what they know and to lead with those experiences. Encouraging students to take ownership and view themselves as experts of their lives instills a sense of confidence in them to lead with conviction."

Vilmaris González, senior manager of engagement and operations, The Education Trust in Tennessee



WITH GRATITUDE

The Education Trust would like to express our deepest gratitude for the support of our mission to expand excellence and equity in education for students of color and those from low-income backgrounds from pre-kindergarten through college.

As the nation continues to go through troubling times, generous gifts from donors such as these provide the financial and moral support needed to spark flames and continue to press for education justice. We are continually thankful for your support. **Thank you!**

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Ed Trust would like to thank the fifth graders at Shepherd Elementary School in Washington, DC, and their teacher, Dr. Timothy Leonard, for their generous donation. The students picked educational inequity as their final school project and raised funds to support Ed Trust's work.

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The Education Trust

Our Mission

The Education Trust is a national nonprofit that works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income families. Through our research and advocacy, EdTrust supports efforts that expand excellence and equity in education from preschool through college; increase college access and completion, particularly for historically underserved students; engage diverse communities dedicated to education equity; and increase political and public will to act on equity issues.

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