

WE HAVE A  
LONG WAY  
TO GO, BUT  
WE HAVE TO  
GO THAT WAY  
TOGETHER

— *Dr. Dorothy Height, Civil Rights Activist*

#BetterTogether



The Education Trust

JUNE 2019

Quarterly Report

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT AND CEO



Dr. Dorothy Height once said, “Civil rights are civil rights. There are no persons who are not entitled to their civil rights. ... We have to recognize that we have a long way to go, but we have to go that way together.” In this spirit, we at The Education Trust work collaboratively each day to build a movement that expands educational excellence and equity — and thereby, educational justice — for students from low-income families and for students of color.

We find inspiration in the example of movements for social change, both from America’s past and present, that demonstrate *the power of people coming together* in service of bringing our nation closer to its founding principles of equality and democracy.

We see that power, for example, in the Montgomery Bus Boycotts of 1955 when thousands organized to protest racial segregation. We see that power in the Children’s Crusade of 1963 when students walked out of school to march for the protection of their civil rights and in the Poor People’s Campaign of 1968 when tens of thousands rallied for economic and human rights. And we observe that power in the Stonewall protests of 1969 for LGBTQ rights and in the young people across the country today, who have organized for safer schools, gun control, and the protection of voting rights.

In May, I was honored to give the spring commencement [address](#) at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, a public HBCU. My grandmother, a descendant of enslaved people, graduated from UMES in 1894. In that speech, I explored what it means to be worthy of the legacy of those who came before us, and, in so doing, I encouraged the Class of 2019 to work individually and collectively to dismantle systemic racial injustices and to live their lives in service of generations to come.

Over the last few months at The Education Trust, we have continued to push for equity-focused education policies and practices, working alongside our partners, fellow advocates and activists, and others.

We raised our voices on issues ranging from disparities in access to effective educators in our elementary and secondary schools to the ways in which preferences designed to further privilege — like legacy and donor preferences — harm underserved students in college admissions. We also lifted the voices of others in this work, including teachers, research scholars, and students themselves.

This quarter, we convened advocates from a dozen states to learn from one another, share data and best practices, and receive technical assistance around the equitable implementation of the *Every Student Succeeds Act*.

We also joined with partner organizations to advocate for lifting the ban on Pell Grants for individuals who are incarcerated and for a reauthorization of the *Higher Education Act* that pushes all colleges to effectively serve students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

Importantly, we engaged in shared learning as a team, as when our own board member James Forman Jr., joined us for a discussion about his insights into the intersections of education and the criminal justice system.

In the following pages, you’ll also learn how our [research](#) is changing national conversations on the underrepresentation of Black students in public colleges and universities. And you’ll get a glimpse into our continued coalition-building efforts in states on issues ranging from resource equity to educator diversity to parent engagement.

As Dr. Height beckoned, let us continue our collective work to further a movement that ensures every student in this nation can fulfill his or her incredible potential.

**John B. King Jr.**  
President and CEO of The Education Trust  
 [@JohnBKing](#)

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

**HOW WE WORK** Our approach is part of a larger movement toward social justice. It is informed by our theory of change, which includes four main components — all building on each other, with the aim of advancing positive outcomes that improve the lives of students who are most vulnerable.

## LISTEN

**scan, monitor, and evaluate**

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

**policy, practice, and community tools**

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

**policymakers, practitioners, leaders, and organizations in best practices centered on equity**

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

**the adoption of needed changes in policy and practice**

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 low-income families.

# #BetterTogether

At The Education Trust, we continue to boldly speak out against injustices and speak up for what's right for underserved students — Latino, Black, Native American, LGBTQ, and students from low-income households. We know that transforming our nation's schools into places where all students have access to engaging, challenging, and rewarding learning experiences is work that can't be done by one organization, one coalition, one tweeter, or even one passionate outspoken advocate. It will take the collective will of many communities united in pushing for more equitable policies and practices. That is why we are glad to have worked alongside our partners this quarter to advocate for evidence-based policies and practices to drive school improvement, improved systems of higher education, and high-quality education for incarcerated students. We are BETTER TOGETHER.

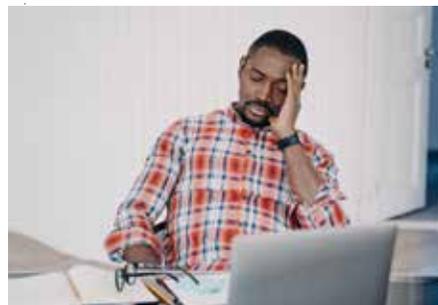


Through our “**Profiles in Education Equity**” blog series, we continued to be #BetterTogether by highlighting the courageous work of equity advocates. This quarter we featured:

- [Sharif El-Mekki, an educator and advocate](#) who spent over a decade leading Mastery Charter School's Shoemaker campus in West Philadelphia, a school where relationship building, community engagement, and social justice are at the core. El-Mekki is leaving the day-to-day job of leading Shoemaker to devote his full attention to his passion: bringing more high-quality teachers of color to classrooms throughout Philadelphia. It's an effort he started in 2014 by founding The Fellowship: Black Male Educators for Social Justice. Our interactive, in-depth profile takes a closer look at El-Mekki's Shoemaker legacy and how he leads with equity and justice.
- [Nancy Huante-Tzintzun](#), scholar-activist, education equity policy advocate, interim director for Stockton Schools Initiative (SSI), and an ethnic studies professor at Sacramento State University. SSI's Parent and Student Program allowed Stockton to build on the local, state, and national discourse on closing the opportunity and achievement gap for underrepresented students. She says, “When families and schools work together, it can be mutually beneficial. Discussions about funding, teacher quality, and curriculum and instruction cannot be done meaningfully without families’ input.”
- [Myra Jones-Taylor](#), chief policy officer of ZERO TO THREE, the national organization that focuses on infant-toddler policy and program development. “My belief in the limitless possibility of each child from birth is what motivates me to improve policies and eliminate the structural barriers that prevent children from realizing their full potential later in life,” she says.

Ary Amerikaner, vice president for P-12 policy, practice, and research, wrote a blog about **how Black students are underserved by negative school cultures**, particularly school dress codes. Ary writes in [“Leggings, Tank Tops, and Short Skirts: How Dress Codes Affect Girls of Color”](#) that Black girls are much more likely to be suspended, expelled, harassed, and bullied than their White peers, all too often because of their clothing; and that school dress codes frequently send the message that “what girls are wearing is more important than what they're learning.”

**Also on the topic of dress codes**, Nancy Duchesneau, Ed Trust's Spencer Fellow, questioned the purpose of these policies in a [blog](#) responding to the latest injustice where an Oklahoma high school senior was denied the freedom to wear his Native American regalia to his graduation. She writes, “It's against the dress code’ is one of those answers we've been conditioned to accept at face value. But we rarely question what purpose those rules serve, who those rules exclude, and how those rules affect school climate and impact students’ mental and emotional well-being. It's high time we start.” Special thanks to the Spencer Foundation for funding Nancy's work with The Education Trust.



This quarter, we made the case that, **like Black students, Black teachers need strong school climates**, too. Davis Dixon, senior associate for P-12 research, [wrote an op-ed](#) for the Brookings Institution reflecting on the experiences of Black teachers. “Where Black students experience

disproportionate discipline, unequal opportunities to participate in advanced coursework, and more negative perceptions of school climate, Black teachers often report feeling invisible, being passed over for advancement opportunities, and feeling the need to prove their worth to their students, parents, and colleagues. Indeed, Black teacher experiences, and many teacher of color experiences, are school climate issues.”

In the spring edition of **ASCD's Educational Leadership magazine**, Tanji Reed Marshall, senior practice associate for P-12 literacy, wrote a powerful piece, [“Desegregated Schools, Unequal Assignments,”](#) which uses historical evidence to call attention to the need for **high-quality assignments for Black students**.



**This quarter, the National Urban League** released a report on how well states are implementing the Every Student Succeeds Act, or ESSA. Their findings show that only nine states seem to be on a good track. The rest of the states are performing less than ideally or are doing outright poorly. Ed Trust's senior vice president of partnerships and engagement, Denise Forte, participated in a robust panel discussion along with Becky Pringle, vice president of the National Education Association; Janet Murguía, president and CEO of UnidosUS; and Ruben Anthony Jr., president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Madison. They discussed the importance of accountability, community and stakeholder involvement in school improvement efforts, and sustained engagement to monitor the implementation of the law. [Read Ed Week's coverage of the report for more.](#)

**To kick off the college graduation season, Ed Trust partnered with Reach Higher** and thousands of advocates across the country to participate in College Signing Day. The event celebrates students' decisions to go to college while honoring those who are the first in their family to make the college journey. Ed Trust staff celebrated this moment by recalling our own decisions to go to college by wearing T-shirts from our alma maters and congratulating the Class of 2019 on deciding to continue their education. Check out #CollegeSigningDay.



**Did you know that corporal punishment is still legal in 19 states?** More than 106,000 children received corporal punishment during the 2013-14 school year. The Ed Trust, along with the Players Coalition and other child advocacy organizations, called for an end to corporal punishment in all schools. In an op-ed in *The Hill*, [Corporal Punishment in Schools Is Unacceptable](#), NFL players Demario Davis and Doug Baldwin write, "Much like in the criminal justice system, prejudice in our schools has also been institutionalized. For states that allow corporal punishment, a minor offense or mistake can lead to lasting mental, emotional, and physical effects for students."

**We continued to uplift student voices** on our blog, including that of [Charlie Scott, a graduate student](#) and a member of the Navajo Nation. In this personal essay, they describe what it's like to navigate higher education as a Native student. "Statistically, only 23 percent of all Native/Indigenous students, in what is currently known as the United States, who enroll in four-year institutions as first-time full-time students graduate within four years," Scott writes. "And only 41 percent graduate within six years. Given the challenges that I faced in my own experience and the broader narrative of Native/Indigenous students in education, I find these statistics unsurprising."



**Who has and who does not have access to strong teaching** was a constant theme of this reporting period. Allison Socol, assistant director of P-12 policy, was quoted in [Chalkbeat](#) on the inequities in access to quality teachers. Students from low-income families and students of color receive less access to qualified and effective teachers, but as Allison notes, "the impact of strong teachers is greater for students who are further behind academically. ... [And] we know that these gaps aren't inevitable."

**For a full review of all our media efforts this quarter, both traditional and social, please [click here.](#)**

# #BetterTogether: Strengthening Coalitions



Our ESSA equity convenings continue to be a vehicle for building and strengthening state-based coalitions dedicated to improving education for the most vulnerable youth. State and local advocates from over 100 business, civil rights, disability rights, immigrant rights, educator, parent, and other groups from 12 states attended our ESSA implementation convening in Charlotte, North Carolina.

## Participants:

- *Learned about evidence-based policies and practices to drive school improvement, including recruiting and retaining teachers of color, ensuring access to high-quality instructional materials, equity considerations in social-emotional learning, fiscal transparency, and high-quality early childhood education.*
- *Developed abilities to leverage data in advocacy, build an advocacy campaign, and communicate about equity.*
- *Engaged school, district, and state practitioners who have led improvement for low-income students and students of color, including Jackie Moore, Oak Park and River Forest High School board president, and James E. Ford, 2015 North Carolina State Teacher of the Year.*
- *Identified priorities for action in their state and community.*

**Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive. In a survey, over 90 percent of participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:**

- *I strengthened my knowledge of important advocacy opportunities to advance equity in my state.*
- *I was able to strengthen relationships with advocacy partners.*
- *The programming helped me to identify future advocacy targets and strategies.*

## Participant Comments:

- *“The leveraging data in advocacy workshop had information that can be directly implemented. Very strategy focused with concrete examples and practices for immediate implementation.”*
- *“The state time was most valuable, just to start building new relationships, better understand each other’s agendas and imagine ways of working better/differently together.”*
- *“Thank you for bringing us all together. This is the best education initiative and most powerful convening I’ve ever attended.”*
- *“This conference provided a much needed respite from the daily battlefields for equity that we are engaged in and become informed and engaged on a more strategic level.”*

For an overview of this convening, watch this short video.



## We are thankful for the GENEROUS SUPPORT of our funders who made this convening possible:

**Baltimore  
Community  
Foundation**

**Barr Foundation**

**Bill & Melinda Gates  
Foundation**

**The Bloomberg  
Philanthropies**

**The Boston  
Foundation**

**The Charles and Lynn  
Schusterman Family  
Foundation**

**The Nellie  
Mae Education  
Foundation**

**Open Society  
Institute - Baltimore**

**W. Clement & Jessie  
V. Stone Foundation**

**The W.K. Kellogg  
Foundation**

**The Walton Family  
Foundation**

**The Z. Smith  
Reynolds Foundation**

# 'Operation Varsity Blues' College Admissions Scandal

LISTEN

News of the FBI investigation of the college admissions scandal, dubbed "Operation Varsity Blues," broke this quarter with stories of wealthy parents allegedly faking their child's SAT scores and abilities, and paying thousands of dollars to unscrupulous deal makers to get their children enrolled in the nation's most selective institutions.

Immediately following this groundbreaking news, John B. King Jr. hit the airwaves on *MSNBC* and was quoted in the *Washington Post* registering deep disappointment and making the important point that affluent families routinely secure an edge in higher education admissions without breaking the law ... from hiring expensive tutors for their children's test prep to making large donations to schools. John noted, "Ultimately, I think the goal of a racially and socioeconomically diverse student body is essential to the mission of higher education. ... So one has to ask: What goal is served by legacy preferences or donor preferences?"

Tiffany Jones, director of higher education policy, made a similar point in *MTV* news, [9 Totally Legal Ways the Collegiate System Is Rigged in Favor of Higher-Income Students](#). In the *Los Angeles Times* on the same topic, Wil Del Pilar, vice president of higher education policy and practice, was quoted talking about youth of privilege, "And many of those same teens attend top-rated public or private high schools, where GPAs may be inflated. It's theorized that

teachers are more likely to give students high marks in these high-pressure environments due to the stress placed on college admissions. This is a less prevalent practice at lower-income high schools where the majority of students are Black and Brown." Wil was also quoted in stories in the *Dallas Morning News*, *Univision*, among others.

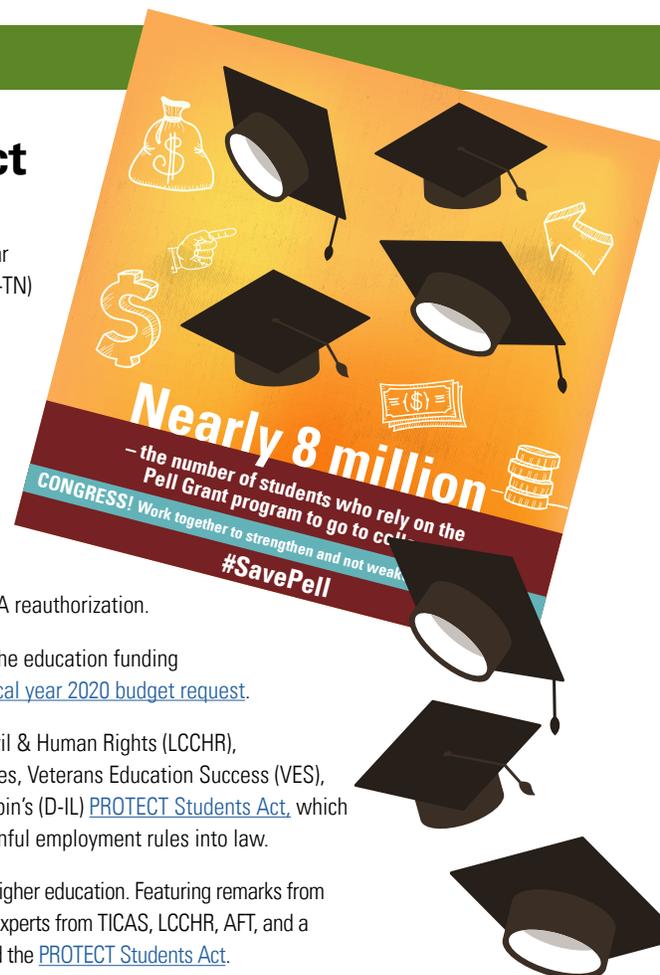
And in an opinion piece for *Education Post*, [As Long as There's White Privilege, We're Going to Need Affirmative Action](#), Letisha Marrero, senior editor/writer, asserts, "The ugly truth is now exposed: Wealthy White kids have always had the upper hand. This is exactly why students of color and those from low-income families need a leg up. Diverse campuses, both racially and socioeconomically, are what colleges should be striving to be as true engines of social mobility and to better reflect America's changing population."

SECURE

## Reauthorizing the Higher Education Act

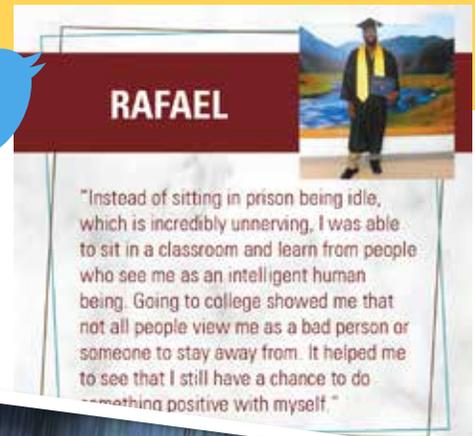
Last Congress, the House of Representatives released two partisan proposals to reauthorize the Higher Education Act or HEA — the [PROSPER Act](#) and Aim Higher. Now, as the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress kicks into high-gear with multiple hearings on higher education issues, all eyes are on the Senate as Chair Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-WA) negotiate a comprehensive bill, which many believe has little room for compromise. At Ed Trust, we've continued to push our HEA [priorities](#) both on and off the Hill:

- John, along with the National Student Legal Defense Network president, Aaron Ament, [sent a letter](#) to the House and Senate education committees and [co-wrote an op-ed in the \*Washington Post\*](#) outlining proposals that Congress should consider when reauthorizing HEA, including three specific measures that "represent a backstop for vulnerable students against unintended consequences and ill-intended predators."
- Alongside 20 organizations, we called for [policies to increase teacher diversity](#) as part of HEA reauthorization.
- We've been a [vocal](#) critic regarding the Trump administration's continued attempts to slash the education funding necessary to make higher education affordable — [specifically Pell Grants](#) — through the [fiscal year 2020 budget request](#).
- We joined The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS), Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights (LCCHR), National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), Third Way, Young Invincibles, Veterans Education Success (VES), and [many more](#) coalition partners to endorse Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) and Sen. Dick Durbin's (D-IL) [PROTECT Students Act](#), which would close the GI Bill loophole in the 90/10 rule and write strong borrower defense and gainful employment rules into law.
- In May, Ed Trust cohosted a Hill briefing with TICAS on accountability for for-profit institutions in higher education. Featuring remarks from Representatives Pramila [Jayapal \(D-WA\)](#) and Joaquin [Castro \(D-TX\)](#), a panel of higher education experts from TICAS, LCCHR, AFT, and a student defrauded by her for-profit college, this conversation continued Ed Trust's advocacy around the [PROTECT Students Act](#).



# #SecondChancePell

SECURE



Ed Trust continues to work alongside criminal justice groups, education organizations, and civil rights advocates to remove barriers to higher education and employment for individuals impacted by the criminal justice system. The bulk of Ed Trust's advocacy over the past year has centered on Congressional removal of the 1994 ban on the [use of Pell Grants by incarcerated students](#).

On March 20th, Ed Trust cohosted a Hill briefing with [FAMM](#) called "[Second Chances for Students: Reducing Recidivism Through College Education](#)."

The briefing drew an audience of approximately 100 people and featured a panel of experts and directly impacted individuals:

- Heidi E. Washington, director, Michigan Department of Corrections
- Debi Campbell, deputy director of family outreach and storytelling, FAMM
- Gerard Robinson, executive director, Center for Advancing Opportunity
- Hayne Yoon, director of government affairs, Vera Institute of Justice
- John B. King Jr., president and CEO, The Education Trust

In early April, we partnered with the Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP), LCCHR, the American Civil Liberties Union, and Just Leadership USA to sponsor an innovative, [interactive simulation](#) with the West Virginia attorney general's office to model the barriers to reentry that incarcerated people face upon release. The simulation also featured remarks by Rep. Elijah Cummings (D-MD).

Ed Trust's participation in the Unlock Higher Ed coalition, Pell Restoration group, and Reentry Working Group helped secure bipartisan support for the April reintroduction of the REAL Act, which would strike legislative language in Title IV of the Higher Education Act and lift the Pell Grant ban for students to access and afford college while in prison. [Ed Trust was vocal in supporting the REAL Act](#), which was championed by Sens. Brian Schatz (D-HI) and Mike Lee (R-UT) and Reps. Danny Davis (D-IL), Jim Banks (R-IN), and Barbara Lee (D-CA).

On April 24th, Ed Trust and [Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop](#) held an event entitled "[Educational Justice: Centering the Voices and Experiences of Incarcerated Individuals](#)." The gathering included a panel discussion, [poetry reading](#) by a formerly incarcerated student, and an interactive advocacy workshop where currently incarcerated students in Connecticut participated in the conversation via video from their correctional facility. View the event [here](#).



## Ed Trust staff used a variety of mechanisms to build the case to #LiftTheBan:

- Ivy Smith Morgan, associate director for analytics, wrote about the intergenerational impact of the criminal justice system on *The Equity Line*: "[The Forgotten Children: Students Who Have an Incarcerated Parent](#)."
- Tiffany Jones and Satra Taylor, higher education policy analyst, traveled to Connecticut to [guest teach a class](#) at a correctional facility in partnership with Erin Corbett, assistant director of applied research at IHEP.
- John honored four graduates in an address at [Goucher College's Prison Education Partnership](#) celebration ceremony.
- We filmed a "[Profile in Equity](#)" video featuring [Operation Restoration](#), a Louisiana-based criminal justice reform group that has led the Unlock Higher Ed coalition and advanced "ban the box" efforts in state legislatures across the country.
- Reid Setzer [applauded](#) the U.S. Department of Education's decision to fund and expand the Second Chance Pell pilot program established during the Obama administration.

In tandem with our advocacy around lifting the Pell Grant ban, Ed Trust was also vocal during Sen. Schatz's reintroduction of the "[Beyond the Box for Higher Education Act](#)," which would remove criminal record questions from college applications.





## THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION



### Moving To Make College More Affordable

Ed Trust is continuing to build public demand for college affordability policies that focus on helping the students who struggle the most to pay for college. In this *New York Times* op-ed by Tiffany Jones, [The Cruel Irony of 'Free' College Promises](#), she states, “for lower- and middle-income students ‘free public college’ isn’t truly free if only tuition is taken care of.” The piece was produced in partnership with the *Hechinger Report*. Tiffany also contributed to a deep-dive piece in the *Christian Science Monitor*: [“Is ‘Free College’ Really Free?”](#)

Tiffany also weighed in on Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s (D-MA) debt forgiveness plan, which would cancel outstanding loans and make public college tuition-free. In articles in [The Atlantic](#), [Inside Higher Ed](#), and [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#), Tiffany argued for debt forgiveness policies to account for the racial wealth gap, not only differences in family income.

There is movement on Capitol Hill around free college. In March, Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI) re-introduced the [Debt-Free College Act](#), which is co-sponsored by most Democratic candidates for president. The bill, if signed into law, would meet all of Ed Trust’s equity criteria presented in [A Promise Fulfilled](#), our 2018 report on equity-focused free college plans.

# Systemic Underrepresentation of Black Students and Graduates in Public Colleges & Universities

Too often, higher education insiders say things like, “We’ve tackled access; the issue now is completion.” But the quest to achieve equitable access to higher education is far from over. The focus on ensuring that students complete college once they start is a critical one. Ending up with debt and no degree means wasting precious time and money. In [“Broken Mirrors: Black Student Representation at Public State Colleges and Universities,”](#) authors Andrew H. Nichols, senior director of higher education research and data analytics, and J. Oliver Schak, assistant director of higher education research and data analytics, document the systemic underrepresentation of Black students and graduates in public colleges and universities.

“Broken Mirrors” is part of our [“State of Higher Education Equity”](#) project. In this report, we argue that the racial makeup of students and graduates at public colleges and universities should reflect the broader demographics of the state. In nearly all states, however, this is not the reality today.

## Some of the key findings:

- In all but four states in the study, Black students are underrepresented on four-year college campuses when compared with the broader racial makeup of the state.
- In about half of states, Black students are underrepresented even at two-year public community and technical colleges.
- When it comes to attending resource-rich colleges and universities with more stringent entrance requirements, in 3 out of 4 states those elite public colleges enroll White students at a higher rate than Black students. In other words, Black students are being excluded from the institutions of higher education where they would have the greatest chance of success during and after college.
- In some states, the college access disparities are particularly stark. Wisconsin, for example, would have to triple the share of four-year public college and university students who are Black to mirror the statewide population.
- When it comes to earning a college degree, Black graduates are underrepresented in three-quarters of states at the associate degree level and nearly all states at the bachelor’s degree level.



In roughly **1/2** of the states examined, **Black enrollment at community & technical colleges** failed to reflect the state’s racial & ethnic background

**ONLY 3** Out of the **41** states examined show an equitable share of Black bachelor degree earners compared to the state’s population

**WI, HI, MI, NE, SC, KS, OH, & CA** all need to more than double their Black students earning bachelor’s degrees to mirror their state’s demographics

#BrokenMirrors

#BrokenMirrors

# The State Equity Report Card

The State Equity Report Card assesses states' commitment to equitable college opportunity and success for Black and Latino Americans. This tool contains state-level data on who has a college degree, who enrolls in college, and who graduates.

Ready to Get Started?

FIND MY STATE

COMPARE STATES

## Impact

Through the report and accompanying [interactive data tool](#), Ed Trust issued a call to action to state leaders to ask hard questions about the systemic barriers that block the path to college access and success for Black students, and commit to clearing away those barriers and ensuring educational equity.

Following initial coverage of “Broken Mirrors” in [Diverse: Issues in Higher Education](#), Andrew joined an [Education Post podcast](#) with higher education expert Shaun Harper, author of a similar report on Black representation in public colleges and universities, to answer the question: Is Your State Serving Black Students?

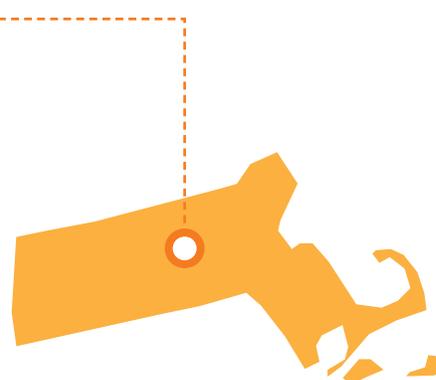
Since the launch of the report, we have presented “Broken Mirrors” findings to the [State Higher Education Executive Officers Association Community of Practice](#), [Tennessee Educational Equity Coalition Summit](#), [Philanthropy Ohio Education Initiative Meeting](#), [National Governors Association Center for Best Practices](#), [National Institute on Scaling Work](#), [American Association of State Colleges and Universities Spring 2019 Board Meeting](#), [Latino Leadership Initiative](#), [State Council of Higher Education for Virginia](#), and the [University of California College Access and Preparation Forum](#).

**We'd like to thank Lumina Foundation for their generous support of this work.**

# Ed Trust Working in the States

Since February, members of the **Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership** have continued to work together to push for more resources for districts serving the commonwealth's highest need students — and for legislative provisions that incentivize districts to use those dollars to significantly improve student learning experiences and outcomes.

In March, we submitted joint testimony to the state's education committee, urging lawmakers to: eliminate deep funding disparities between our lowest-income districts and their wealthy counterparts; require district leaders to work with students, families, and community advocates to improve opportunity and outcomes for students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, English learners, and students with disabilities; and ensure that new funding comes with greater transparency around both spending and student outcomes. The coalition wrote a [joint op-ed](#) calling for a holistic approach to revamping the school funding formula and, soon thereafter, partners discussed priorities with the chairs of the Joint Education Committee, who then asked us to submit more detailed policy recommendations. Ed Trust worked with eight partners to develop a detailed policy proposal that we submitted on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.



In **Tennessee**, we hosted a panel of partners and presented on racial disparities in college attainment at the Tennessee Education Equity Coalition's [annual summit](#), convened by Conexión Américas. We provided technical assistance on the coalition's institutional and system-level graduation rate goals for public institutions to complement the state's [Drive to 55](#) overall attainment goal.



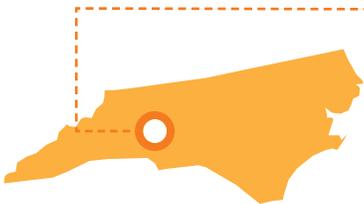
In **Louisiana**, we are making sure parents and local communities are meaningfully engaged in local school improvement plans and prepared when joining policymaking decision tables. Keisha Smith, state director for Louisiana, developed and administered parent perception surveys and conducted a focus group of parents to help the Urban League of Louisiana inform career and technical education efforts in New Orleans public schools and increase parent awareness of high school to college/career options. Working with our partner, Urban League of Louisiana, we shared with parent audiences the legislative requirements to engage them, as required by the federal law (ESSA), and a school audit tool to help parents track how schools are engaging parents and community.



The **Texas** advocacy organizations that attended our Charlotte equity convening have expressed interest in working together and are in the process of developing a vision document for what an equity coalition might look like. In April, nearly half of the groups from Charlotte met with the Texas Education Agency to discuss their collective demands for what they want from Texas' plan to meet ESSA's new per-pupil expenditure reporting requirements.



In **Maryland**, Ed Trust, along with our state partners, submitted testimony on behalf of several restorative justice bills. John provided oral testimony on a bill that was passed into law. The bill requires that school board regulations related to discipline include restorative practices and all goals involving discipline be rehabilitative, restorative, and educational. The bill also mandates that the Maryland State Department of Education annually submit a student discipline report with disaggregated data. Additionally, Ed Trust worked with state legislators on a bill to broaden access to dual enrollment/early college programs by allowing eligibility to be determined by factors such as assessments, academic performance reviews, and guidance counselor recommendations. The bill was passed into law.



In **North Carolina**, we hosted a one-day convening focusing on what advocates can do to improve teacher diversity in their state. Nearly half of students in the state are Black or Latino, but only 20 percent of teachers are Black or Latino.

Also in North Carolina, the Ed Trust Family Fellows successfully advocated against a disturbing policy change being added to the State Board of Education's agenda. The change would have affected how children with autism are deemed eligible for services. The fellows shared the proposal and concerns with their networks, asked community members to act, and one fellow even emailed every board member to express her disappointment. At the board meeting, where the policy change was to be discussed, fellows were introduced to the members, several of whom expressed appreciation and encouraged fellows to keep the lines of communication open.



Ed Trust's partner, the **Ohio** Higher Education Coalition, has developed a clear platform and plan for how they will advocate during the Ohio budget cycle, which ends June 30<sup>th</sup>. The coalition met with legislators, testified, and wrote op-eds asking that more need-based aid be available to community college students and allowed for non-tuition expenses, and that the eligibility cap be raised. To assist the coalition's advocacy efforts, Ed Trust presented our work on racial degree attainment gaps and goals to members of Philanthropy Ohio, a leading group in the Ohio coalition.



For the Equity Coalition in **Kentucky**, Ed Trust hosted a webinar evaluating the state's newly released school report cards, key areas to focus on for improvement, and how to engage communities to advocate for change. The coalition presented the information at community meetings and gathered feedback on report cards. Coalition members will advocate for the report cards to be more user-friendly and include indicators and school ratings, which are absent on the current report cards.

# The Education Trust—Midwest

## 2019: A Moment of Challenge; a Moment of Opportunity

The Education Trust—Midwest (ETM) continued its successful [Michigan Achieves!](#) campaign in May with the release of “[Opportunity for All](#)”, the organization’s 2019 annual state of Michigan education report.

Despite sobering data on student outcomes, real opportunity exists in the growing consensus among leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, who increasingly agree on Michigan’s public education crisis and the urgent need for action.

ETM laid out a playbook for making meaningful change to prioritize equity and excellence in Michigan public education. Recommendations focus on:

- Early childhood to third grade
- Equitable funding
- Systems of data, transparency and accountability
- Top talent: effective educators and school leaders
- Transition to college and postsecondary opportunities

A strong early reception has included coverage from [The Detroit News](#), [Michigan Radio](#), [Bridge Magazine](#), and the [Lansing State Journal](#).



## Prioritizing Equity in State Budget

Following years of state budgets that flatten Michigan’s funding system instead of basing funding on student need, Michigan’s new governor, Gretchen Whitmer, broke the mold by proposing a weighted student funding formula. In an [analysis](#) of the governor’s executive budget recommendation, ETM praised the budget for moving “in the right direction by . . . targeting resources for students with the greatest need.”

In addition to increasing funds for underserved student groups, [ETM applauded Gov. Whitmer](#) for proposing additional funds to support early literacy instruction and to expand access to postsecondary education through a community college “promise” program and need-based grants for qualifying students from low- and middle-income families to apply toward the cost of a four-year degree.

## Maintaining Consistency, Quality Data in Evaluations and Feedback

After arriving at a compromise position in late 2015 about systems of feedback, support, and evaluation for educators, some education advocacy groups have changed course on the inclusion of student growth data. At the request of the House Education Committee Chairman, ETM testified twice on the importance of high-quality feedback and evaluation data, including the inclusion of valuable student growth data. While a short-term measure to delay the increased use of such data was enacted, ETM remains an outspoken voice on the issue and is working on a long-term bill to improve the quality of feedback, support, and evaluations for Michigan educators.





Michigan equity allies convene at ESSA equity convening in Charlotte, North Carolina.

## Raising Parent and Family Voice: Adding Parent Perspectives into Education Policy

A spring 2019 [poll of 600 Michigan parents](#) by ETM and Michigan polling firm EPIC-MRA found that parents list [improving the quality of education as their top priority](#) — above fixing the roads, improving the economy, and making healthcare more affordable.

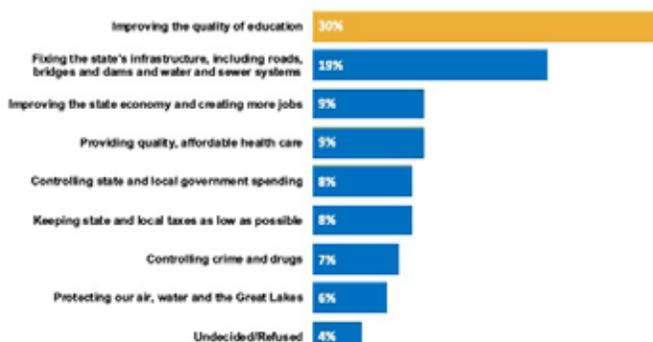
And parents confirmed that on a wide range of issue areas, public education and quality education do not break down on political, geographic, or racial divides.

For example, 93 percent of Black parents and 90 percent of Republican parents support school accountability for student outcomes using A-F letter grades. This idea enjoys the [support of 84 percent](#) of all parents.

Two-thirds of all Michigan parents support a school funding system that prioritizes equity by funding students from low-income families and students of color at a higher level than statewide averages. This idea carries support across family income levels.

Similarly, parents spoke in a common voice about prioritizing educator effectiveness and using student learning data to inform practice and hold educators accountable.

### Quality education is shared top concern



## Helping Parents Advocate at School and in the Community

Beginning next school year, Michigan third-grade students who are a year or more behind in reading may be retained under Michigan's "Ready by Grade Three" law. The stakes of this law are placed solely on the shoulders of 9-year-old students, instead of on the shoulders of school systems that routinely failed to meet students' learning needs. While we advocate for Michigan leaders to rethink this retention requirement, support from the [Max M. & Marjorie S. Fisher Foundation](#) has [brought together](#) the research and policy strengths of ETM with the grassroots know-how of [Detroit Parent Network](#) (DPN).

Collaboratively, ETM and DPN are [developing tools and resources](#) to help parents understand the complexities of this law, seek out existing resources to support their child's learning, and advance the interest of students in the school and district.

A planned second phase of this work will include the co-development of a train-the-trainer module for parents to support and train one another on using these tools.



# The Education Trust—New York

## Ed Trust—NY Launches 'For the Students' Project Focused on School Board Elections Across New York

In most New York school districts, elected school boards run our schools. Their members establish the district's values and determine the allocation of resources, including making the most important human capital decisions. Their work can ensure that a child's zip code and circumstances do not have to determine her future, and build education systems with the transformative power to close opportunity and achievement gaps.

That's why — with school board elections this year impacting more than 650,000 students from low-income backgrounds and more than 580,000 students of color — Ed Trust—NY launched "For the Students" to increase public awareness and engagement around key education achievement and equity issues in New York.

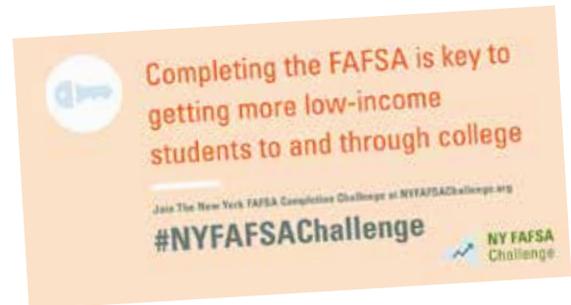
The nonpartisan project includes a website ([ForTheStudentsNY.org](http://ForTheStudentsNY.org)), where voters can learn about critical education equity issues and steps every school board member can take to advance equity and achievement around these key issues.

### The project focuses on five key issues:

- Access to rigorous courses that prepare students for college and careers
- Graduation pathways and the high school diploma
- How to allocate resources to support the students with the greatest needs
- Access to strong, well-supported, and diverse educators
- Suspensions and the school-to-prison pipeline

We invited candidates in a number of key districts to complete a questionnaire focused on these issues and partnered with civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations to disseminate nonpartisan information on these issues and the candidate responses. Ed Trust—NY also distributed information about these issues to school board members elected across New York State.

"School board members are key leaders in the fight for education equity across New York, and this year's elections offer an opportunity to focus the public discussion on some of the issues that matter most in ensuring all students are prepared for a successful future," said Ian Rosenblum, executive director of Ed Trust—NY.



## The New York FAFSA Challenge Highlights Success and Encourages High Schools to Help Students Complete the Application for College Financial Aid

While high school students from low-income backgrounds are more likely than their wealthier peers to attend schools with low rates of completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), dozens of New York high schools that serve large shares of seniors from low-income backgrounds are models of success for the rest of the state, according to analysis by Ed Trust—NY as part of our [New York FAFSA Completion Project](#).

The [New York FAFSA Completion Project](#) aims to build on this success by providing easily accessible resources, including an interactive data tool that allows users to track the progress of New York high schools, with new FAFSA completion estimates updated weekly, and comparisons to similar schools and top performers.



The project also includes resources for schools and educators on how they can assist more eligible students in completing the FAFSA, drawing on national research and best practices already being used in New York schools. The [“3 Steps Every High School Can Take”](#) resource at [NYFAFSACHallenge.org](#) encourages schools to:

- Help their seniors make a plan to complete the FAFSA.
- Hold a FAFSA completion event.
- Set targets and track the data.

The project also highlights success stories across New York.

Ed Trust–NY recognized schools that ended the school year with high FAFSA completion rates and that showed improvement through the New York FAFSA Completion Challenge. Twelve awards were granted to schools across the state. Each award will consist of \$750 granted to the winning high schools for the purpose of providing a scholarship to one of its students.

Explore the data, read more about FAFSA completion strategies being used at New York schools, and find additional resources at [NYFAFSACHallenge.org](#).

## The Educator Diversity Playbook Highlights Strategies Being Used Across New York to Foster More Educator Diversity

Across New York State and around the country, increasing the diversity of the educator workforce is attracting attention and gaining momentum.

At the same time, we also know that New York has a long way to go to ensure that all students have access to strong and diverse educators. According to data released by Ed Trust–NY, one-third of all New York schools had no Black or Latino teachers in the 2015-16 school year. As a result, more than 115,000 Latino and Black students were enrolled in schools without a single full-time same-race/ethnicity teacher, and nearly half of the state’s White students attended schools without a single full-time Latino or Black teacher.

Yet there are also bright spots across the state — school districts working hard to create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for educators and students alike. These examples remind us that in addition to seeking state-level policy changes and investments to support a more diverse educator workforce, there are powerful and practical steps that individual school districts and district leaders can take right now in their local communities.

The [Educator Diversity Playbook](#) was designed as a tool for school district leaders who are interested in improving diversity, equity, and inclusion in their schools and central offices. The Playbook focuses on five steps that school districts can take:

- Encourage school boards to signal and embrace the importance of teacher and school leader diversity.
- Collect and use data to examine school district recruitment, interview, and hiring practices.
- Question and change recruitment practices to identify additional qualified applicants of color.
- Improve the working environment for educators of color.
- Invest in mentorship and career ladders for current and aspiring teacher, school, and district leaders.

For each of these steps, the playbook briefly cites the research, offers a district policy checklist, recommends indicators to track, and describes examples of New York school districts that are taking on this important work. Ed Trust–NY produced the playbook in partnership with the New York State Council of School Superintendents and the organization’s Commission on Diversity and Inclusion. It was unveiled at a May forum in Long Island that brought together educators, advocates, and community members to discuss how school districts can foster more educator diversity.

- 1 ENCOURAGE SCHOOL BOARDS TO SIGNAL AND EMBRACE THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER AND SCHOOL LEADER DIVERSITY
- 2 COLLECT AND USE DATA TO EXAMINE SCHOOL DISTRICT RECRUITMENT, INTERVIEW, AND HIRING PRACTICES
- 3 QUESTION AND CHANGE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES TO IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL QUALIFIED APPLICANTS OF COLOR
- 4 IMPROVE THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR EDUCATORS OF COLOR
- 5 INVEST IN MENTORSHIP AND CAREER LADDERS FOR CURRENT AND ASPIRING TEACHER, SCHOOL, AND DISTRICT LEADERS

# The Education Trust—West



Founded in 2001 and based in Oakland, The Education Trust—West (ETW) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that has worked to advance educational equity in California for 17+ years. To the extent any activities described in this report constitute lobbying for IRS purposes, these activities are described only to provide the full context of ETW's work on this issue. Such lobbying activities are separately funded and were not supported by funds provided by any foundation.

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## Continuing Momentum With #WhatsNextCA

Under the new leadership of [Elisha Smith Arrillaga](#), The Education Trust—West's recently named executive director, we continue to promote our #WhatsNextCA campaign and are working hard to build capacity for local advocates to engage in the state policymaking process. In March, we welcomed over 100 advocates from community and partner organizations to our new office space for an [open house](#) and the release of our first ever [annual report](#).

Leading up to our second annual Ed Equity Advocacy Day on May 1 in Sacramento, we led a series of training webinars for advocates on the state budget process, the legislative process, and specifics related to our sponsored legislation and state budget priorities. Our advocacy day saw nearly 200 advocates come together in the State Capitol, where we held over 85 meetings with legislators and/or their staffers; hosted a [College Signing Day rally](#) featuring Assemblymember Shirley Weber, Assemblymember Eloise Reyes, Val Verde Unified School District Superintendent Michael McCormick, and Cosumnes River Community College student Chris Adams; and launched our [#WhatsNextCA campaign hub page](#).

Our sponsored legislation and budget advocacy work continue to gain energy. We welcomed over 20 legislative staffers to a State Capitol "Lunch and Learn" event for [AB 1617](#) in April, our financial aid access bill. In mid-May, we saw our sponsored bill on teacher grant incentives for teacher shortage areas pass a major hurdle in the legislative process. Both are included in [our 2019 "Equity 8" bills list](#), with updates on those bills and the legislative process going out to our partners and fellow advocates throughout May. Also included

are the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) proposals from Governor Gavin Newsom and two state legislators. Our [Data for the People brief](#), released in early May, assesses these proposals on a five-point equity principles list.

We also continue our work deepening our relationship with state leaders. In April, Elisha was invited to speak at State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond's second event in his Closing the Achievement Gap series. Superintendent Thurmond also named Elisha and an additional seven members of the ETW team to his transition committees on topics ranging from professional development for educators and dual language instruction to data collection and college affordability.



## Leading With Community

In March, ETW joined our national and state office colleagues at the ESSA equity convening in Charlotte, North Carolina. We excitedly brought with us the largest group of advocates yet from our state, including new members of our community grantee program. Our 12 community grantees include organizations focusing on college access, K-12 school change, community organizing, and empowerment. Many of those organizations also participated in ETW's first Digital Week of Action, which saw us reach over 60,000 folks on Twitter that week alone. Over 100 organizations and other participants signed up for the week, which focused on dual enrollment and included daily topics, resource sharing, and a Twitter chat. All of our activity was geared around connecting organizations and individuals to make the case for dual enrollment as an equity strategy to increase college-going for underserved students of color.

Under Elisha's leadership, the organization is working more intentionally on connecting and collaborating with our partners to serve and better support community efforts. We are hard at work ensuring that community perspectives guide our work. In that vein, this spring we launched two landscape analyses to help us better understand and add value to existing efforts. As we continue to explore the area of equity in early education, we are in the midst of a landscape analysis to strengthen our relationships with early education organizations and home in on the best, most strategic and helpful role ETW can play as we expand work in this area. Similarly, as we delve deeper into work supporting the recruitment and retention of teachers of color, we are in the midst of a landscape analysis to further assess opportunities for collaboration with fellow advocates and community-focused efforts.



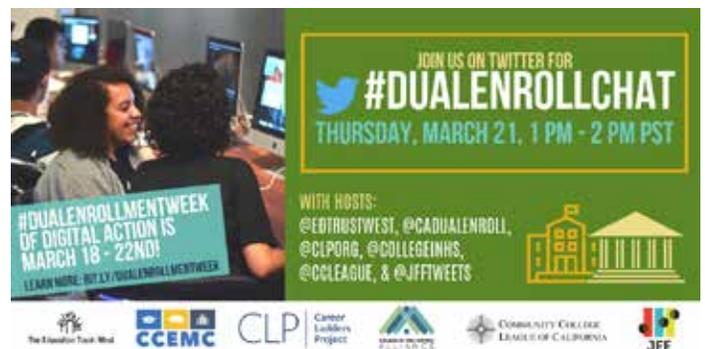
## Maximizing Equity in College Access

We continue to promote and present on our college and career readiness best practices work. Senior Practice Associate Mayra Lara delivered presentations around the state, including:

- A webinar hosted by Schoolzilla in mid-May
- A presentation to the Equity in Education for Practitioners statewide conference for school counselors in April
- A presentation to The Center for Leadership, Equity, and Research's (CLEAR) 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Leadership Mentoring Summit in March. We very recently launched the first of our three promising practice action guides and videos. These tools provide actionable examples of equitable approaches to college and career readiness and give advocates key questions to guide conversations with the education leaders in their community.

Also this spring, ETW kicked off two crucial advocacy efforts to prevent changes to the college admissions and access process in California. In March, we spoke alongside several community partners at the California State University (CSU) Board of Governors meeting, urging the board to pause on an initiative to increase admissions requirements for eligibility to the CSU. Nearly 40 other advocacy groups also joined us on [a coalition letter](#) outlining our concerns around how the CSU proposal could exacerbate rather than eradicate existing inequities in access to college prep courses and eligibility for the CSU system.

Similarly, in May, we ramped up our work in opposition to Assembly Bill 751, which would replace the state's K-12 content standards-aligned 11th-grade assessments with the SAT, furthering the use of a biased test in a way that threatens to undermine K-12 accountability and perpetuate inequities inherent in the SAT test-preparation model.





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# The Education Trust

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## 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.

To view this copy online, please visit [EdTrust.org/ed-trust-updates](https://www.EdTrust.org/ed-trust-updates).



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