

Education Forward DC

Impact Report

Fiscal Year 2023

(July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)



**EDUCATION
FORWARD DC**





Table of Contents

| | |
|---|---|
| Mission, Vision, and Core Values | 1 |
| Letter From Our CEO and Board Chair | 2 |
| Grantmaking Model and Fund II Strategy..... | 3 |
| Key Impact Facts and Figures | 4 |

Highlights and Program Spotlights

| | |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Reimagine Schools | 5 |
| Support Talent | 7 |
| Recover Equitably..... | 9 |
| Advance Racial Equity | 11 |
| Foster Change..... | 13 |
| Schools In Our Portfolio..... | 15 |
| Donors and Board Members..... | 16 |



Our Mission

Education Forward DC accelerates the work of visionary education leaders to foster a city of high-quality, equitable public schools for every DC student and family.

Our Vision

We envision a DC where students starting furthest from opportunity can chart their own path and thrive. Our 20-year vision is a city where public school students in DC are able to achieve economic success, power, and autonomy in their lives.



Our Core Values

We are resolute in our pursuit of great outcomes for all DC students.

We recognize current approaches are not enough to meet the needs of all students in DC's public schools. We work with leaders across the city to take bold action and engage in tough conversations to move the work forward. We make all decisions in service of students.

We are learners.

We embrace diverse perspectives to inform our work, especially from the communities we serve. We give and seek out candid feedback. We are open about what we do and why, we share what we've learned, and we are honest about our mistakes so that we can learn from them and improve.

We work intentionally to disrupt patterns of racial inequity.

We believe that addressing racial injustice in our schools and communities is fundamental to our success as a city. In particular, we prioritize investing in leaders of color who share the racial and economic background of the students we serve, and we create opportunities to amplify the voices of families and communities in DC. We seek to work in ways that dismantle existing power dynamics.

We care about each other and the leaders we support.

We passionately pursue our mission and bring our whole selves to our work. We strive to build authentic relationships with each other, our partners, and those we serve, and to foster a sense of community. We celebrate each success that brings us closer to achieving our mission!

Dear partners,

In the last year, Ed Forward DC has undergone changes. And though we have new leadership and new team members, what has not changed is our unwavering commitment to the visionary education leaders working to create high-quality, equitable learning experiences for the District of Columbia's students and families.

Our investments, taken together with the hard work of the entire education sector, have helped bring about positive trends since the "end" of the pandemic. We're starting to see signs of academic recovery in the District. Annual assessments have shown continued college and career readiness increases since students returned to the classroom in 2021. Studies and data from our partners show positive growth in early learning. And schools have seen increased investments in our students, signifying our city leaders' continued commitment to education.

We still have a long way to go to provide every DC student access to a great public school that prepares them to meet their vision for a successful future. Students are still feeling the effects of unfinished learning. Black and brown students, students with disabilities, and English learners are too often not receiving the support they need to thrive and have felt the negative impacts of the last few years more than their peers. Student social and emotional well-being continues to be a pressing concern for school leaders and families. Chronic absenteeism is worse now than before the pandemic. And our city faces an uncertain fiscal future.

These challenges are not unique to DC, but they present an opportunity for DC to lead the way in creating better outcomes for all our students. Your partnership throughout the years has helped bring about the positive impact detailed in the report that follows. It is a testament to what we can accomplish together. We are certain that, with your continued support, we can tackle the challenges before us and achieve our vision of a DC where students starting furthest from opportunity can chart their own path and thrive.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Bisi Oyedele

Bisi Oyedele
(Chief Executive Officer)



Kendrick E. Curry

Rev. Dr. Kendrick E. Curry
(Chair)

Grantmaking Model and Fund II Strategy

At Education Forward DC, we invest in and support visionary education leaders' work to provide students furthest from opportunity the educational experiences they need to thrive.

We do this by:

- » Raising funds from local and national donors.
- » Supporting grantees with investments and strategic assistance.
- » Connecting leaders' efforts to support citywide transformation.

We blend grantmaking, technical assistance, and citywide coordination, while leaning heavily into thought leadership and communications work to inform citywide education conversations and elevate the voices of students and families.

Our Fund II Strategy

Investing in visionary education leaders focused on dismantling inequity and empowering students and families can create a reimagined experience for students that meets their full academic, social, and emotional needs. In Fund II (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2026), we will support an equitable pandemic recovery and ensure that students have greater access to higher quality and more equitable public schools, with the **five-year goal to double the proportion of DC schools providing high-quality, high-equity experiences—increasing the share from 21% to 42% by 2026.**

To achieve this result, we aspire to put **\$62 million** towards the following five priority areas:

- » **Reimagine Schools**
- » **Support Talent**
- » **Recover Equitably**
- » **Advance Racial Equity**
- » **Foster Change**

Key Impact Facts and Figures

From Fiscal Year 2023



39 GRANTEES

Supported

1,740 SEATS

Created to provide high-quality, high-equity educational experiences

60% OF INVESTMENTS

Directed to an organization with a Black and/or Latinx executive director and/or board chair



\$39.4M

Secured as of the conclusion of FY23



Reimagine Schools



Five-year Goal

Schools will emerge from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a reimagined experience for students that values their identity and meets their full academic, social, and emotional needs.

Key Highlights

- » Supported the expansion of Washington Latin Public Charter School, AppleTree Institute for Education, Capital Village Public Charter School, and District of Columbia International School that will provide high-quality, high-equity educational experiences to 1,740 students at full scale.
- » Funded four schools (Two Rivers Public Charter School (Middle School), Thurgood Marshall Academy, Bunker Hill Elementary School, and H.D. Cooke Elementary School) to pilot evidence-based and school-based mental health interventions in school year 2023-24. Transcend Education led a Community of Practice for the four pilot schools to help schools design and implement their pilots. Transcend Education will host two webinars in spring 2024 to share learnings with school leaders and other stakeholders in the hopes of scaling initiatives that were successful.
- » Funded entrepreneur Toni Barton to support pilot and business planning in preparation for the launch of a non-profit school support organization, Spelligent, which will focus on school redesign and inclusive school models.



A first-class educational experience



Kiye Corbitt joined Statesmen College Preparatory Academy for Boys in the 4th grade, as a founding student. Early on, he understood that Statesmen was more than just the school he attended. “It felt like they were teaching each one of us, individually. They cared a whole lot, about all of us, and they loved us. Statesmen is a family,” said Kiye.

In June 2023, Kiye walked the stage as a member of Statesmen’s first graduating 8th grade class. Now a high school student, the core values of relationships, rigor, relevance, and resilience he learned will remain with him as he continues on his educational journey.

“Statesmen teaches you to never give up, to believe in yourself, and to believe in your dreams. It pushes you forward,” he said.

Statesmen has developed a “boy-friendly pedagogy,” with lessons incorporating “boy-activated” ingredients, such as competition, movement, passion, and cause, for example. At the epicenter of its academic model is Kings 101, the social studies class that centers Black history.

The academy focuses on educating the whole child, and cultivating an emotionally healthy learning community. Students have access to therapeutic services, including one-on-one and group therapy sessions, yoga, and mindfulness training. They also participate in enriching experiences that include college visits and educational trips to Europe and South Africa.

Founded in 2018, Statesmen serves boys in the 4th through 8th grades, with the vision of developing an abundance of well-rounded, well-educated, well-experienced Black and Latino men for future success in life, career, and leadership.

“Very simply, there would be no Statesmen without the original investment from Ed Forward DC,” said Statesmen’s CEO and Founder, Shawn Hardnett.

“This program and every single idea that developed to become Statesmen, was incubated under the curated care of Ed Forward DC. They were our first and primary funder. We lived with [Ed Forward DC] for more than a year as we traveled, studied, designed, and piloted what would become what we now see in our first graduating class.”



Highlights and Program Spotlights

Support Talent

Five-year Goal

Ensure DC has a robust pipeline of Black and Latinx school and non-profit education leaders who work to foster strong school communities.



Key Highlights

- » In partnership with School Leader Lab, funded Teach For America to pilot a cross-sector (DC Public Schools and public charter schools) School Leader Professional Learning Community (SL-PLC) aimed at improving leadership capacity, building community, and bolstering retention of leaders who are serving a majority of Black and brown students furthest from opportunity. The SL-PLC will support joint learning, innovation, and sustainability among eight to ten high-quality Black and Latinx school leaders.
- » Supported the re-launch of Education Pioneers' fellowship programs in DC which will scale to have 90 fellows complete their DC fellowship programs by 2025, catalyzing a much-needed pipeline of strong non-instructional leaders necessary to enable teachers and students to be successful inside the classroom.
- » Made foundational investments toward building a pipeline of Black and Latinx C-suite leaders for public charter schools by supporting School Leader Lab to complete a strategic planning process for a comprehensive aspiring leader training fellowship and initiating a companion contract with Greenhouse E3 for four early-tenure CEOs in Ed Forward DC's portfolio to participate in a two-year inaugural national charter CEO development cohort. These investments in future public charter school and education non-profit leaders are critical to succession planning to ensure a consistent pipeline of high-quality talent is available to run great schools and school support organizations in the years to come.

Incubating the next generation of education leaders

“Education Pioneers was like the family I needed to re-instill the confidence and courage that I knew was in me, so I could make the transition into a career in education,” said Malaika Ogukwe.

Education Pioneers builds the capacity and knowledge of new non-instructional education leaders with its fellowship program that matches early career professionals with high-impact projects at local education organizations.

Malaika served as a Marketing and Communications Fellow at Rocketship Public Schools DC, where she developed and implemented communications and outreach strategies to engage parents and families. During her ten-week Summer Fellowship, Malaika helped school leaders implement social media strategies, including creating engaging videos for Rocketship’s Back to School campaign, and developing tools to help schools more easily produce their own family newsletters.

The monthly convenings with her Education Pioneers cohort offered a source of support and community and provided space for deep learning. “I can’t speak enough about the investment that our facilitators made in us, and the investment the other Fellows made in each other,” said Malaika. “We were all so invested in each other’s growth that I feel like I want all of them to win.”

Ed Forward DC invests in future education leaders such as Malaika through our support of the innovative Education Pioneers fellowship program.

“Education Forward DC’s investment has helped to catalyze our relaunch of local cohorts in Washington, DC,” said Melissa Wu, Chief Executive Officer of Education Pioneers. “Over 500 alumni of Education Pioneers currently serve as leaders across all levels of the DC public education ecosystem.”



Recover Equitably

Five-year Goal

Support COVID-19 recovery to enable the creation and implementation of a community-informed, citywide vision of equity and excellence for all students.



Key Highlights

- » Through our Better Than Before event series, Ed Forward DC convened over 500 school leaders, education advocates, city officials, educators, parents, and students to explore what DC needs to do to support a strong pandemic recovery. These events focused on EmpowerK12's DC Education Recovery Dashboard and panel discussions on academic metrics, student emotional well-being, and the District's fiscal outlook.
- » Continued our investment to support convenings intended to strengthen trust and collaboration between the four education cluster agency leaders (the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education, DC Public Schools, and the Public Charter School Board) as they work towards a shared long-term vision for equity in DC education.
- » Supported the city's vision of a shared, cross-school network course offering program via an investment in CourseMojo to create a Virtual Course Hub. Four public charter school education networks (a total of 5 high schools) will pilot this program to give students the opportunity to enroll in courses that are not directly offered by their schools.



Student well-being as an indicator for a strong recovery



As students returned to school following the pandemic, Education Forward DC sought to keep the focus on the need for a strong recovery and to give school leaders a greater understanding of how students are faring after the COVID-19 pandemic ended and how they can better support them through the recovery.

“The first step in supporting student well-being is understanding it – and that starts with asking students what they’re experiencing in school,” said Melissa Steel King, Partner and Evaluation Leader at Bellwether Education Partners and co-author of [Students Speak: A Snapshot of Student Well-Being in Washington, DC](#), released earlier this year and supported by Education Forward DC.

The report analyzed survey results from over 5,000 students in 3rd through 12th grade across the District to examine how students feel about their school environment, their motivation and support to do well in school, the quality of their social relationships, and their self-perception and skills to succeed.

“Participating schools now have actionable data – rooted in student voice – that can help them build on bright spots, address challenges, and better support all the young people they serve,” said King.

Among the recommendations for using the data to improve student well-being is to prioritize hearing directly from students about their experiences in school, through surveys and other tools.

Ed Forward DC sat down with students at Thurgood Marshall Academy, shared the report findings, and listened to their experiences directly.

The video of our conversation with them was shared, along with the snapshot, at our fourth Better Than Before event in April. Nearly 100 participants continued the conversation with city leaders, mental health practitioners, parents, and school leaders as to what we can do collectively to ensure DC is supporting students’ mental health and well-being better than before.



Advance Racial Equity

Five-year Goal

Build capacity of community members and education leaders to identify and address the systemic barriers anti-Black racism creates for students.



Key Highlights

- » To further our school-based racial equity work, we made a joint investment in The New Teacher Project (TNTP) and School Leader Lab to conduct a second cohort of the Insight Racial Equity Analysis (scaling a pilot from our previous fiscal year) for six public charter schools to analyze diversity, belonging, equity, and inclusion (DBEI) in their school communities. Equity survey data was analyzed to inform strategically aligned follow-on supports including the development of targeted action plans connected to DBEI growth areas at the participating public charter schools.
- » Continued our support for DC's core parent-led advocacy organization, Parents Amplifying Voices in Education (PAVE), to continue critical advocacy and racial equity work on behalf of DC students. Most PAVE parent leaders are Black parents living in Wards 7 and 8 with firsthand knowledge of the issues facing their communities. By virtue of the power of their collective voice, PAVE helps city leaders understand and respond to the systemic barriers their communities face. This past year, PAVE hosted a Black Voices in Education Series (a total of three events) to give voice to the history, context, and lived experiences of Black children, families, teachers, and leaders in DC's education system. Attendees (including Councilmembers, advocates, media, and faith leaders) heard from panelists who lived, taught, attended, and led DC Public Schools, DC public charter schools, and DC Catholic schools before, during, and after the 1995 DC School Reform Act.



Advancing equity through academic rigor

Students at Two Rivers Public Charter School now have an English Language Arts curriculum that offers a wide range of diverse perspectives, challenging assignments, and differentiated instruction after working with TNTP to make data-driven instructional decisions.

“The question we asked was, how do we, as an organization, really get a hold of both the expectations and the level of rigor, and bring consistency to our two elementary schools and among our teachers at our middle school?” said Belicia Reaves, Executive Director at Two Rivers Public Charter School.

The opportunity for enhancement arose as teachers and administrators underwent a thorough evaluation of assignments, student work, and instructional trends, making comparisons across grade-level classrooms. Because teachers were able to design their own lessons or select a curriculum of choice, some inconsistencies were present in the levels of rigor in classroom assignments, specifically in the area of English Language Arts.

Two Rivers also incorporated data from an in-depth survey and site assessments administered by TNTP—with support from Ed Forward DC—to inform its school-wide task force. After researching several potential options, Two Rivers chose the EL Education K-8 Language Arts curriculum. EL, or expeditionary learning, emphasizes authentic,

multidisciplinary, and experiential learning and integrates rigorous academic content with real-world experiences. Because Two Rivers focuses on Expeditionary Learning as its instructional model, the task force determined that the EL Education curriculum would present the best match for its approach to teaching and learning.

Every student possesses the ability to excel. Schools working with TNTP as part of Ed Forward DC’s investment are seeking to increase educational equity by ensuring that they are providing every student, regardless of race, with an education that holds rigor and high expectations for them.

“Last year, Ed Forward DC made an investment in academic and talent strategy work in DC,” said Marni Bromberg, Director, TNTP. “We started with a diagnostic. The diagnostic process that we went through is backed by research, and essentially unearths whether students have access to four resources that have been really impactful in terms of learning outcomes: grade appropriate assignments, strong instruction, high expectations from their teachers, and engaging experiences.”



Highlights and Program Spotlights

Foster Change

Five-year Goal

Build a supportive policy environment that fosters equitable school access, resource allocation, and long-term trust.



Key Highlights

- » Via the [DC Students Succeed Campaign](#), our advocacy coalition successfully advocated for over \$145M in additional funding for public charter schools in the FY24 city budget. This included a 5.05% increase in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF), over \$73M in public charter school teacher salary increases, a 3.1% increase in the facilities allotment, and over \$9M in additional at-risk concentration funding.
- » Supported the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) in its community engagement efforts and facilitated an equity-centered approach to the decennial DC Public School boundary process of reviewing and recommending changes to the feeder patterns and attendance zones that govern by-right DC public school assignments. In addition to regular meetings with staff members from the DME, Ed Forward DC funded a small group of think tanks and academic entities ([The Century Foundation](#), [Maryland Population Research Center](#), and [Urban Institute](#)) to produce research briefs on topics related to the boundary process.
- » In partnership with Youth Invest Partners (formerly VPP+Raise DC), we advanced access to student well-being data by making subsidized survey licenses available to all public education networks. In school year 2022-23, 12 public education networks and roughly 5,000 students participated, and we worked with Bellwether Education Partners to make custom reporting available for school leaders along with a city-wide public-facing report on student well-being trends and bright spots.
- » Ed Forward DC supported the DC Policy Center's fourth "[State of DC Schools](#)" [report](#)—its annual systemwide overview of public education in the District of Columbia. The DC Policy Center conducts objective and rigorous research and collaboration to develop and test policy ideas, disseminates findings, promotes policy solutions, and engages in constructive dialogue and debate. This report covered school year 2021-22 and examined the transition back to in-person learning, measured outcomes for the first time since the start of the pandemic, and looked at the beginning work on recovery.

Engaging student voice in DC education research



Gustavo Rosas Cardoso and several fellow student researchers from the Columbia Heights Educational Campus (CHEC) earned the unique opportunity to present their research at one of the most prominent education conferences in the world with the help of the DC Education Research Collaborative (the “Collaborative”).

The CHEC team was selected to present at the 2023 American Educational Research Association (AERA) meeting in Chicago, IL, as part of AERA’s first-ever “Youth Teams in Education Research Program” session.

Over the three days of the AERA annual meeting, the CHEC students participated in youth-centered programming where they met other student research teams, and they spoke with teachers, principals, superintendents, and school district leaders. For Gustavo, the opportunity to share his work and ideas at AERA was truly inspiring.

“I’m still so happy that I was able to do such a thing. This was our first time being able to spread our ideas to such a high standard,” Gustavo said.

The AERA experience stemmed from research the students did at CHEC, using a design thinking approach to test assumptions, gather data, and present recommendations. The research team sought to answer an important question: Why aren’t students eating in the cafeteria?

With mentorship and guidance from the Collaborative, the students used several methods to gather data and develop recommendations to address the issue of food equity at their school. The research has already yielded positive results at CHEC, including enhanced menus and offerings. Student lunch participation has increased by 17 percent.

This is just one way that the Collaborative is breaking down barriers between community and research and ensuring that families, policymakers, and educators have greater access to high-quality research.

The Collaborative’s work with CHEC students provided an opportunity for them to research pressing issues and develop viable solutions, while also gaining access to technical assistance and mentoring from leading education researchers serving our community. We are excited about the Collaborative’s research agenda, as well as the deep community engagement that created it and continues to inform the Collaborative’s work.

“The way that Ed Forward DC has allowed us to be flexible and have discretion is critical for the way that we do our work. This is a way for us to uplift the actual experts, which are the communities, the schools, the parents, the teachers, and the students,” said Dara Zeehandelaar Shaw, Research Director for the Collaborative.

Schools In Our Portfolio

Education Forward DC currently works with 28 public charter school networks and district schools encompassing a total of 78 school sites. Below is a list of the public charter school networks and district schools in our portfolio.

- » Anacostia High School
- » AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School
- » Ballou High School
- » Bard High School Early College DC
- » Bunker Hill Elementary School
- » Capital Village Public Charter School
- » DC Bilingual Public Charter School
- » DC Prep Public Charter School
- » DC Scholars Public Charter School
- » DC Wildflower Public Charter School
- » Digital Pioneers Academy
- » District of Columbia International School
- » Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School
- » Friendship Public Charter School
- » Girls Global Academy
- » Global Citizens Public Charter School
- » H.D. Cooke Elementary School
- » I Dream Public Charter School
- » KIPP DC
- » LEARN D.C.
- » Mundo Verde Bilingual Public Charter School
- » Social Justice School
- » Statesman College Preparatory Academy for Boys Public Charter School
- » The Sojourner Truth School
- » Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School
- » Two Rivers Public Charter School
- » Washington Latin Public Charter School
- » Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School

Thank you to our generous donors and committed board members whose partnerships make our work possible.

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