



Education Forward DC

EDUCATION
FORWARD DC



Impact Report

Fiscal Year 2024

(July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)





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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,

Reflecting on this past year, we are filled with pride and a renewed sense of purpose. At Education Forward DC, we continue to stand alongside the visionary education leaders working tirelessly to create high-quality, equitable educational opportunities for all of DC's students. Together, we are shaping a future where every child—regardless of background or circumstance—has access to an excellent education that empowers them to realize their fullest potential.

This year's annual report highlights our collective progress in partnership with our grantees and city leaders to address the challenges we see in academic achievement, student well-being, leader preparedness, and educator support.

But we know our work is far from finished. While we've seen nominal progress in some of the data, it's almost a cliché to mention that the lingering effects of the pandemic continue to weigh heavily on students, particularly those who were already furthest from opportunity. Black and brown students, students with disabilities, and English learners still face systemic barriers to success.

These challenges of unfinished learning, chronic absenteeism, and student well-being remain critical concerns. They present a call to action—one that we are committed to answering with even greater focus, collaboration, and determination.

The progress we've made together has only been possible through the unwavering commitment of our partners, and we are deeply grateful for your continued support. We hope this report serves as a testament to what we have accomplished for the city's students and an energizer for the work that lies ahead.

Thank you for pushing forward with us to create a brighter, more equitable future for all of DC's students.

With gratitude and hope,



Bisi Oyedele

Bisi Oyedele
(Chief Executive Officer)



Josh Edelman

Josh Edelman
(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 grant making, technical assistance, and ecosystem coordination, while leaning heavily into communications and thought leadership 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**
- » **Establish a Vision**
- » **Advance Racial Equity**
- » **Foster Change**

Key Impact Facts and Figures

From Fiscal Year 2024

**75% OF
INVESTMENT
DOLLARS**

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



**44 UNIQUE
ORGANIZATIONS**

Supported

1,420 SEATS

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

\$41.6M

Secured as of the
conclusion of FY24



Fund II Impact Snapshot

A look at the past three years



\$24.85M

Invested in grantee
partners



4,319 SEATS

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



\$736M

Additional public per-pupil
funds through advocacy
coordination efforts



**250+ DIVERSE
EDUCATION LEADERS**

Supported through our investments

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 Ingenuity Prep Public Charter School, Friendship Public Charter School, Paul Public Charter School, Washington Yu Ying Public Charter School, Elsie Whitlow Stokes Community Freedom Public Charter School, and Lee Montessori Public Charter School to provide high-quality, high-equity educational experiences to an additional 1,420 students at full scale.
- » Funded the launch of the MOMENTUM Residency, a two-year school-based mental health clinician pipeline program. MOMENTUM recruited 11 residents to its inaugural cohort, with clinicians placed in both DC Public Schools (DCPS) and charter school networks.
- » Reinvested in SchoolTalk, which provides restorative justice and inclusive education support to schools, with a focus on students with disabilities. SchoolTalk will utilize its restorative and inclusive technical assistance frameworks and direct student programming model to help schools address chronic absenteeism.
- » Funded a reinvestment to enable the Special Education Leader Fellowship (SELF) to offer whole-school targeted recovery and redesign supports for students with disabilities, particularly those at the intersection of race and disability. Four schools (two Lee Montessori Public Charter School campuses, one Paul Public Charter School campus, and one Washington Leadership Academy Public Charter School campus), serving 1,299 students (over 20% of whom are students with disabilities), participated in school year 2023–24. Each school developed an 18-month project plan that included one research-based initiative focused on meeting the needs of students with disabilities, as well as specific student achievement measures that each school will aim to achieve by June 2025.

Strong academics and a sense of community earn Blue Ribbon School status



If you found learning challenging as an elementary student, imagine learning half your curriculum in one language and the other half in a second. That's exactly how students in the language immersion program at DC Bilingual Public Charter School learn their subjects. Teachers deliver literacy curriculum in English and Spanish, math in English, and science in Spanish.

"In first and second grade, it was a bit difficult, but then I got used to it. Then I started getting better and better at understanding science in Spanish," said Theodore. Now in fifth grade, science is Theodore's favorite subject. He likes conducting experiments and seeing how the lessons apply to the real world.

Located in Ward 5's Fort Totten neighborhood, DC Bilingual provides students from all eight wards with varied language backgrounds in pre-K3 through fifth grade with rigorous instruction, mutual respect, cultural relevancy, and a strong sense of community. It's a school where students can feel seen and supported.

"It's a good school and a good community," said Theodore. "I think that it's a good opportunity."

Jasmine Musgrave, Theodore's parent, and a parent representative to DC Bilingual's board of trustees, chose the school for her three children because she appreciates the importance of preparing them to live, work, and participate fully in a culturally and linguistically diverse society. Research also shows that students tend to be more successful academically when they're learning a second language, said Jasmine.

"Our oldest graduated from [DC Bilingual], and our youngest is in first grade now. We have been able to see the trajectory of growth and success as a school," said Jasmine.

Ed Forward DC has partnered with DC Bilingual since 2012, first funding the school's participation in an instructional improvement pilot and later investing in the school's expansion. That growth has included physical expansion, increased enrollment, and growth in student achievement and school quality. The US Department of Education named DC Bilingual a 2024 National Blue Ribbon School.

"DC Bilingual was recognized as a High Performing School, meaning our school performed in the top 15% of elementary schools across the country," said Daniela Anello, DC Bilingual's Head of School. "Being named a National Blue Ribbon School is a profound honor that uplifts our entire community—our students, families, staff, leadership, and board. It's a true celebration of our shared commitment and a powerful reminder of what we can achieve when we work together. As our school's tagline expresses: *Juntos somos líderes/Together we lead.*"

Investing in a diverse range of school models creates a system of public education in DC that can help every student thrive. Ed Forward DC is proud to partner with schools like DC Bilingual that provide high-quality programming to meet students' needs—especially those who are furthest from opportunity.

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

- » Invested in the National Association of Black Male Educators (NABME) as they refine, codify, and scale their Athari Fellowship (leaders of color fellowship), which aims to develop aspiring Black C-suite school leaders. NABME prioritizes relationship building, reflection, and personal growth for each cohort fellow to help them succeed and sustain in their roles. This is especially important for Black men navigating the reality of operating in spaces such as C-suites and boardrooms across lines of difference with predominantly white occupants.
- » Funded School Leader Lab (SLL) to launch EdEx, a new pipeline offering for Black and Latinx C-suite charter leaders in DC. This 10-month cohort-based program will support at least 14 leaders per cohort, at scale, with the goal of improving leader retention, increasing leader impact on teacher performance and student outcomes, and helping school networks build pipelines for future executive leader roles. The EdEx investment builds upon a FY22 investment in SLL to support implementation of a pilot fellowship for Black and Latinx C-suite charter leaders.
- » Reinvested in Greenhouse E3 (GE3) to develop and strengthen pipelines of Black and Latinx aspiring and early tenure charter school chief executive officers (CEOs) in DC. This investment will enable participation of up to 19 fellows in GE3's next two cohorts. All fellows will receive two years of cohort training, as well as coaching through the second year of their CEO role, as needed. Programming also includes capacity for a local consultant to provide tailored board engagement support.
- » Funded a reinvestment in Education Pioneers to support year two of their three-year rescale plan in DC, with the aim to ensure the city has robust pipelines of Black and Latinx school and non-profit education leaders who work to foster strong school communities. Since our initial investment, Education Pioneers has completed one year of relaunch in DC and is on track, as targeted, to have 90 fellows complete their DC fellowship programs by 2025. This investment will provide pathways for key noninstructional talent such as operations, finance, data, and other general management functions.

Growing thriving new school leaders with Greenhouse E3



"I've been in education for 25 years. This is hands down, the best professional learning experience I've ever had," said Laina Cox, a fellow in the innovative Greenhouse E3 Fellowship program designed for aspiring and new CEOs of public charter schools.

As a newly appointed CEO and Head of School at Capital City Public Charter School (PreK-12th grade), she sought out a professional development program to prepare her for the challenges ahead.

Greenhouse E3's two-year cohort model brings Laina together with leaders from across the country to learn in community and provide one another with ongoing support. "It is really helpful, in a position like this, that is very lonely, where you are the only person in your building with that role, to be able to have a group of people to lean on that are going through this experience at the same time, and that are new to the work, too," said Laina.

Fellows learn how to set a clear direction, lead with a strong vision, drive results, and manage the complexities of the charter school landscape. They can also participate in one-to-one executive coaching from former charter school network CEOs and executive directors with strong track records of success.

Equipping new leaders to thrive can make them more likely to stay in the seat—and that's good for everyone. When a CEO leaves, studies show that a significant dip in student performance follows.

A CEO's departure can also have a negative effect on finances, the board, teachers and staff, as well as the local community, said Herneshia Dukes, National Fellowship Director for Greenhouse E3.

"We believe that leaders can sustain and thrive in the role if they are developed, supported and surrounded by a community of peers and mentors that are engaged in the same work. It is also important that these leaders receive executive coaching from an experienced CEO that has faced the challenges and circumstances that they are encountering," said Herneshia. "Community is a core element of Greenhouse E3. Through the fellowship, our fellows establish deep meaningful connections with other charter network CEOs."

Ed Forward DC agrees and invests in programs like the Greenhouse E3 Fellowship that support Black and brown aspiring and early tenure leaders. Since many public schools in DC enroll a large proportion of Black and brown students, the importance of programs like these cannot be overstated as students are well served by having school leaders reflective of their identities. Moreover, supporting the development and preparation of a robust pipeline of leaders helps to ensure minimal disruption and prevents a drop in school quality when a school leader transition occurs.

"Ed Forward DC's multi-year investment in [Greenhouse E3] fellows is crucial for developing a diverse pipeline of prepared charter executives for the District," said Veronica Conforme, Co-Founder and Co-CEO of Greenhouse E3. "This approach not only fosters national connections but also builds a community of deeply connected leaders."

Establish a Vision

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

- » In partnership with EmpowerK12 and the [DC Students Succeed](#) coalition, we led a media campaign to bring attention to and encourage increased policymaker focus on the unusually high level of chronic absenteeism. We supported the release of the [DC Education Recovery Dashboard](#) to highlight important student data and centered our advocacy priorities on student engagement and attendance. Ultimately, the city's FY25 budget allocated funding for these policy priorities, with a specific focus on addressing chronic absenteeism.
- » Supported several convenings to drive improvement in DC education including: EmpowerK12 and the Deputy Mayor for Education's [Math Summit](#) (shared best practices for improving student math achievement), EmpowerK12's [Bold Schools Event](#) (shared best practices for high-performing and improving schools that serve a high at-risk student population), and SchoolTalk's [Voices of Change](#) (for DC high school students with disabilities to gain knowledge and skills to lead self-determined lives through opportunities to learn, lead, and act).



Leading the way toward math recovery

Student performance on DC's annual math assessments showed slight improvement over the past year, but achievement has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. In discussions with school leaders, a common concern that continues to emerge is how best to support students and teachers in mathematics. Many express uncertainties about how to tackle this challenge effectively, a trend mirrored across the country.

"Math education is the cornerstone of analytical thinking and problem-solving skills, playing a critical role in understanding and thriving in our technologically driven world, yet post-pandemic results reveal a concerning gap, with students six to twelve months behind pre-2020 averages," said Josh Boots, executive director of EmpowerK12. "To reach our desired goals and equip the next generation with essential quantitative abilities, we need urgent and sustained efforts to improve math instruction, leverage innovative teaching methods, and provide targeted interventions for teachers and students that accelerate mathematical literacy."

In response, local grantees and city leaders are collaborating to address these challenges and position DC as a model for excellence in math education, ensuring students are set up for long-term success.

Earlier this year, Ed Forward DC grantees EmpowerK12 and the DC Education Research Collaborative, as well as the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education, brought together more than 225 teachers, school leaders, researchers, and funders for the inaugural DC Math Summit, facilitated with support from Ed Forward DC.

The summit examined national and local research on math programs and celebrated several DC schools demonstrating exceptional success in supporting math education, as highlighted in EmpowerK12's 2024 [DC Math Report](#). Attendees gained valuable insights from instructional leadership teams and educators at public schools in DC who have made notable strides in improving students' math outcomes.

The event also featured teacher-focused workshops, offering strategies for accelerating the recovery of math education for DC students.

Additionally, the summit marked the launch of the [DC Math Hub](#), a growing coalition of DC education agencies and researchers. This collaborative effort, housed within the DC Educational Research Collaborative, will work with the city's 69 school networks (DCPS and all public charter schools) to collect, analyze, and apply data-driven insights on how students best learn and master mathematical skills.

"Math is an incredibly important focus for our public schools as we continue to accelerate our recovery," said Deputy Mayor for Education Paul Kihn. "The DC Math Summit—and the ongoing work of the DC Math Hub—represent the best of our collaborative city and our united approach to identify, measure, and double-down on what will strengthen math learning."



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

- » Invested in CityTutor DC to further support the work of providers launching High Impact Tutoring (HIT) programs to DC, with the aim of successfully closing academic performance gaps between Black students and their peers. Specifically, this investment will provide tutoring for approximately 300-350 students across at least three schools. CityTutor DC will analyze the impact of these HIT programs on academic achievement and amplify findings citywide, informing other schools and potentially encouraging them to implement HIT with these providers in the future.
- » Supported The New Teacher Project (TNTP) in their work to develop an Insight Equity Action Framework to measure a school's equity structures and practices. This builds upon previous investments in and addresses feedback taken from TNTP's Insight Racial Equity Analysis and Culture Audit. Schools have requested assistance beyond survey implementation to make sense of results and develop strategic next steps for improvement. Designed to be usable off-the-shelf, this new framework will provide school networks with more specific and actionable data trends and teachers with a clear synthesis of different needs for targeted supports, in service of better meeting student needs. TNTP will partner both with DCPS and public charter schools to create and pilot this framework.



Turning data into action to support student well-being



Supporting student well-being is critical, particularly as DC seeks to recover from the negative impacts of the pandemic. Students who feel supported emotionally and connected to their school communities are more likely to remain engaged and succeed academically.

That's why, over the past year, Education Forward DC has been investing in measuring student well-being and assisting schools in building more positive school climates that support students and academic achievement.

This year we invested in a second administration of the Panorama well-being survey, which measures students' perceptions of school climate, teaching and learning, relationships, and belonging. The second round of that data—which included results from more than 30,000 students in 16 DC school networks—was recently released in an analysis by Bellwether, [Students Speak: A 2024 Snapshot of Youth Well-Being in the District of Columbia](#).

The survey found a significant decrease after the pandemic in DC middle and high school students' sense of belonging and valuing school compared to earlier grades, in line with national trends. Native American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, English learner (EL), and Hispanic students responded less favorably than their peers on items related to self-efficacy and rigorous expectations—raising questions about how students' performance may be affected if they do not feel confident that they can be successful and if they do not think their teacher believes in their potential.

The data collected through the initial Panorama survey helped school leaders identify the specific needs of their students. Ed Forward DC supported four of those school leaders to pilot interventions to support student and staff mental health and well-being in partnership with Transcend. The learnings from those pilots were published in a white paper this past May, [Supporting Student and Staff Well-Being: School Pilots in Action](#).

Ed Forward DC's investment in the Panorama surveys led to citywide uptake. Next year, the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) will administer the Panorama survey to all public schools in the District of Columbia. This will provide the city with its first complete picture of student well-being and provide schools with a critical tool for designing more impactful school and community supports.

Now Ed Forward DC is partnering with OSSE and the Flamboyant Foundation to provide "microgrants" for 19 public schools in the District of Columbia. These grants will allow schools to understand and respond to school culture and climate data from the 2024 Panorama survey.

"The School Climate Enhancement Microgrant enables schools to turn school climate survey insights into action," said Interim State Superintendent Antoinette S. Mitchell, Ph.D. "OSSE is making strides to foster strong, supportive environments for every DC student, school staff member, and family. We are grateful for Ed Forward DC's partnership in establishing these microgrants to support this vision."

Foster Change

Five-year Goal

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



Photo credit:
Bloomberg Philanthropies

Key Highlights

- » Supported the DC Policy Center's fifth "[State of DC Schools](#)" report, which provides an annual systemwide overview of public education in DC. 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, focused on school year 2022-23, examined the District's persistent push for academic recovery and improving attendance.
- » Led the [DC Students Succeed Campaign](#), a coalition of over 40 youth-intersecting organizations, to achieve significant wins for DC students and families in the FY25 city budget. In a fiscally tight climate where many areas experienced budget cuts, our advocacy coalition secured a historic 12.43% increase to the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula (UPSFF), a 3.8% increase to facilities funding, and more than \$36M in other education funding to address chronic absenteeism, expand high-quality literacy instructional materials and training, provide high-impact tutoring, create post-secondary pathways, reimagine high schools, and ensure Safe Passage for students traveling to school.
- » Invested in the education councils based in Wards 5, 7, and 8 to increase their operating capacity, ability to organize and mobilize constituencies, and participation and influence in citywide education planning and decision-making. The re-energization of the education councils' community-based engagement has generated greater interest, driven awareness of education issues, and increased collaboration between the councils and city agencies (e.g., Council Chairman Phil Mendelson, State Board of Education representatives, and the Deputy Mayor for Education). This work has also sown the seeds of potential partnerships with key non-profit partners in these wards. Building the capacity and sustainability of the councils in Wards 5, 7, and 8 will diversify the voices at the table in education decision-making in the District and, given the historically disparate representation of families in these communities, will add critical grassroots organizing and advocacy.
- » Invested in The Creative School (TCS), a youth-led program founded to develop students in Ward 8 as designers who listen deeply to the experiences of their peers and community members and create solutions from those exchanges that address issues impacting their lives. Our investment supports TCS in implementing its vision of reshaping what education can be: experiential, creative, and youth-led.

Building bridges between educators and parents of students with disabilities

Parents' voices are critical to student success, especially for students with special educational and health needs.

From assessments to Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, every piece of special education can seem overwhelming for parents working to ensure their students receive the academic and support services they need.

"For neurodiverse children, there's a whole alphabet soup of letters out there, vocabulary-wise," said Sherry Persaud, a parent at Bridges Public Charter School.

"It can become a tension-filled situation when you go to IEP meetings," said Amelia French, Director of Advocacy at Advocates for Justice and Education (AJE). "As [parents], we are worried about the long-term outcomes of our child. We are trying to impart knowledge that is related to the whole makeup of our child to the school leaders, and sometimes we're feeling as if they don't always listen or they don't always get it."

But parents don't have to go it alone. The Parents Building Bridges Program brings parents together to learn how to navigate the special education jargon, use their collective voices as advocates, and work collaboratively with schools to produce better student outcomes.

"I can speak more confidently [about special education]," said Sherry.

The program was founded last year with support from Education Forward DC and is led by AJE. Since then, the program has worked with 21 families from 17 DC schools to help them navigate the special education process and build trust and communication with teachers, staff, and school leaders at DC public charter schools.

The goal is to continue growing the program, so more parents can have a seat at the table and help cultivate a culture where all students can succeed, and teachers can thrive.

For Amelia, Ed Forward DC's investment has helped foster a new culture of advocacy within school communities.

"What I've seen is really a closer connection among the people who are the most affected by the changes going on at individual schools."



Schools In Our Portfolio

Education Forward DC currently works with 30 public charter school networks and district schools encompassing a total of 82 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 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
- » Ingenuity Prep Public Charter School
- » KIPP DC
- » LEARN DC
- » Lee Montessori Public Charter School
- » Mundo Verde Bilingual Public Charter School
- » Paul 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

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our work possible.**

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