



A Philanthropy at Its Best Report

CONFRONTING SYSTEMIC INEQUITY IN EDUCATION High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy

by Kevin Welner and Amy Farley

An Overview

What is the report about?

- Foundations provide billions of dollars each year for education. And yet, the education crisis continues, suggesting room for improvement in the way education philanthropy is practiced
- The crisis is about the continuous cycle of inequities in access and opportunities in education faced by certain groups. Students from vulnerable communities – such as low-wealth families and children of color, English language learners, gay and gender-nonconforming youth, students with disabilities, immigrant youth and females in male-dominated fields – experience public education differently – frequently more negatively – than their more advantaged counterparts.
- This report answers the questions:
 - > How can we in philanthropy help break this cycle of inequity?
 - > How can philanthropy be more effective at using its limited resources to be part of the solution to the education crisis?



[View the full report, executive summary or press release](#)

“The great task to strengthen public education in the United States is to address the fundamental inequities that are built into the system. In this very important report, NCRP has provided a roadmap for how philanthropy can play a critical and successful role in creating a system of great schools for all children.”

Professor Linda Darling-Hammond
Stanford University School of Education

What is the report about?

- The report recommends two high-impact strategies for education grantmakers:
 - > The deliberate focus on the needs of marginalized students to improve education for *all* students
 - > The support of efforts to find long-term solutions by funding heavily advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement
- There is no silver bullet. The report:
 - > Examines the tensions and trade offs education funders face between the prevailing universalist approach and the recommended targeted strategy.
 - > Examines the tensions between addressing immediate needs vs funding that seeks to have long-term impact.
 - > Includes discussion questions to help foundation decision-makers think through their current priorities and funding practices

[View the full report, executive summary or press release](#)



“The philanthropic community has historically played an essential role in fueling positive systemic changes for Americans. *Confronting Systemic Inequity in Education* provides a critical roadmap for funders to reclaim that space and provide all students an opportunity to learn.”

meet the authors



Dr. Kevin Welner

University of Colorado at Boulder

Dr. Welner is professor of education in School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder. He is director of the National Education Policy Center (NEPC), headquartered at CU-Boulder. Dr. Welner's research examines the use of research in policymaking, the intersection between education rights litigation and educational opportunity scholarship, and the school change process associated with equity-focused reform efforts. [Learn more about Dr. Welner](#)

Amy Farley, University of Colorado at Boulder

Ms. Farley is a doctoral candidate at CU-Boulder's School of Education, studying educational foundations, policy and practice, with an additional emphasis in research methods. She taught a low-income rural public school and at an affluent private institution; these experiences fuel Ms. Farley's interest in education policy and equity-focused reform. She works for the Initiative on Diversity, Equity and Learning (IDEAL), part of the National Education Policy Center. She earned her B.S. and M.Ed. from the University of Oregon.

about ncrp

The **National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy** is the only independent watchdog of institutional grantmakers in the U.S.

We promote philanthropy that serves the public good, is responsive to people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity, and is held accountable to the highest standards of integrity and openness.

Since 1976, our research and campaigns have contributed to vital improvements in the philanthropic sector.



Aaron Dorfman
Executive Director

Mr. Dorfman previously served for 15 years as a community organizer, including ten years as executive director of People Acting for Community Together in Miami, Fla. Aaron led dozens of successful grassroots campaigns to improve education, transportation, housing and other issues affecting low-income communities. He studied political science and grassroots social movements at Carleton College under the direction of the late Senator Paul Wellstone. Aaron holds an M.A. in philanthropic studies from Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy.

our advisory committee

Lori Bezahler, Edward W. Hazen Foundation

Amanda Broun, Public Education Network

Carol Goss, Skillman Foundation

Tina Gridiron Smith, Lumina Foundation For Education

John H. Jackson, Schott Foundation For Public Education

Kavitha Mediratta, The Atlantic Philanthropies

Joe Nathan, Macalester College

Jeannie Oakes, Ford Foundation

Ron Snyder, Oakland Community Organization

Chris Tebben, Grantmakers For Education

Lisa Villarreal, San Francisco Foundation

Joe Scantlebury, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Steve Suitts, Southern Education Foundation

Organization affiliation for identification purposes only.

contact us

To speak with our experts or select members of our advisory committee, or to receive a media copy of the report, please contact:

Yna C. Moore

Communications Director

NCRP

[ymoore\[at\]ncrp.org](mailto:yymoore[at]ncrp.org)

(202) 557-1381



National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy

1331 H Street NW,

Suite 200

Washington, D.C. 20005

T: (202) 387-9177

F: (202) 332-5084

www.ncrp.org