

For Immediate Release

Education Philanthropy Misses the Mark in Helping American Students

Study calls for more funding to support efforts that bring equal access to quality education



Washington, D.C. (10/27/2010) – Every year, our nation's grantmakers give billions of dollars in grants for education. Yet, only a small fraction of these foundations provides funding to address the specific needs of lower-income and other vulnerable students. An even smaller number supports efforts to solve the education equity crisis, according to a new report by the [National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy](http://www.ncrp.org) (<http://www.ncrp.org>), a watchdog group based in D.C.

In "Confronting Systemic Inequity in Education: High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy," Kevin Welner and Amy Farley examine the cycle of unequal educational access and opportunities faced by students from marginalized communities. They argue that education reform cannot take place without breaking this cycle, and this requires changes in the way philanthropy deploys its resources.

"Education in America is broken especially for children in vulnerable communities, and the situation is actually worsening, but that's not the news," says Welner, a professor at the University of Colorado at Boulder and director of the National Education Policy Center. "What's newsworthy is the fact that the country's education grantmakers are not effectively using their limited dollars to drive long-term solutions. By revisiting some basic assumptions, they can be more effective."

Welner and Farley recommend two high impact strategies for foundations: dedicate at least 50 percent of their education grantmaking towards supporting marginalized communities and 25 percent towards bringing those communities into the policymaking process through advocacy, community organizing and civic engagement.

Analysis by NCRP shows that of the 672 foundations that gave at least \$1 million in education grants from 2006 to 2008, only 11 percent devoted at least half of their philanthropic dollars for the benefit of vulnerable students. Only 2 percent allocated at least one quarter of their grantmaking for systemic change.

Marginalized students include those who are economically disadvantaged, disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, women and girls, students with AIDS, immigrants and refugees, crime/abuse victims, single parents, LGBTQ students and others from historically underserved communities.

"Who foundations fund and what they fund matters," says Aaron Dorfman, executive director of NCRP. "If your goal is to improve the education system in America, you can't ignore the large population of students that is disproportionately without access to quality education. And you can't claim you're seeking reform without engaging in education policy."

The report identified nine foundations that meet the two recommendations: Annie E. Casey Foundation (Baltimore, Md.), The California Endowment (Los Angeles, Calif.), Naomi and

Nehemiah Cohen Foundation (Bethesda, Md.), Ford Foundation (New York, N.Y.), Marguerite Casey Foundation (Seattle, Wash.), Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (Flint, Mich.), Nike Foundation (Portland, Or.), Skoll Foundation (Palo Alto, Calif.) and Surdna Foundation (New York, N.Y.).

"The great task to strengthen public education in the United States is to address the fundamental inequities that are built into the system," says Linda Darling-Hammond, professor at Stanford University School of Education. "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."

"Confronting Systemic Inequity in Education: High Impact Strategies for Philanthropy" is available on NCRP's website at <http://www.ncrp.org/paib/education-philanthropy> .

The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, D.C. is a national watchdog, research and advocacy organization that promotes 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.

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- [Aaron Dorfman](#) , Executive Director, NCRP
- [Kevin Welner](#) (co-author), National Education Policy Center, University of Colorado at Boulder
- [Amy Farley](#) (co-author), National Education Policy Center, University of Colorado at Boulder