



AMERICA
SUCCEEDS

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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Letter from the President

2020 was a year of extraordinary challenge. In the midst of a global movement for racial justice, a pandemic that ravaged thousands of lives and disrupted the learning of millions of students, and a tumultuous political season, looking back is an exercise in finding the positive.

Like many, America Succeeds spent time in early March navigating the disruption, adjusting to a fully-remote environment, and ensuring the well-being of our team, families, friends, and neighbors. We were focused on connecting across the ecosystem in the face of rapid change as well as offering immediate COVID-response resources. As the year's trajectory became more clear, we turned our efforts toward developing a new strategic plan. This fall, we published two reports and in the absence of our annual EDventure Summit, launched a virtual conversations series to bring great ideas to partners around the country.

Although some days were difficult, this year was also filled with incredible moments of community – thriving alongside partners as we worked to meet common challenges. Across the network, we saw impressive legislative victories to expand opportunities and pathways for students as they looked forward to an uncertain future. We supported state-level partners working to protect assessments and accountability so that we can know how students are doing no matter their circumstances, and we saw an increased focus on ensuring educators had a path and support to grow professionally.

Even more impressive were the responses of our network partners to the challenges happening outside of the classroom. From mobilizing restaurant leaders seeking to feed those out of work to partnering with large technology companies to distribute devices and WiFi hotspots to publicly encouraging appropriate social distancing behavior, our national network stepped up in ways they never imagined.

These bright spots give us the most hope for better days ahead. There is a renewed focus on equity among both business and education leaders in response to demands we do the critical work of dismantling institutional racism, begin to heal, and rebuild a more inclusive society. From the impact to schools due to COVID-19, we see an unprecedented recognition among policymakers, parents, and educators of the need for our education system to be more agile and responsive in the event of future disruptions. Finally, out of all the unrest, exhaustion, confusion, and loss, innovations have emerged which have the potential to reshape the future of education for generations.

Looking forward, America Succeeds is well-positioned to contribute to these areas. We're entering 2021 with an enhanced focus and an expanded network. Our team is excited to build momentum around new initiatives. And, we have renewed confidence in the possibility to drive forward change by bridging the gap between business and education.

Here's to looking back and looking forward,



Tim Taylor, President and Co-Founder
America Succeeds

Mission

The mission of America Succeeds is to improve educational opportunities, outcomes, and equity by harnessing the influence and acumen of the business community in accelerating systems change.



AMERICA
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2020 Board of Directors



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BOARD MEMBER

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America Succeeds Team



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Philanthropies**



DANIELS FUND



J.A. and KATHRYN
ALBERTSON FAMILY
FOUNDATION

WALTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION



Organizational Values

These core values guide our team as we work toward the mission.



**We mean
business.**



**Work hard.
Play hard.
Change the world.**



**Be in
service.**

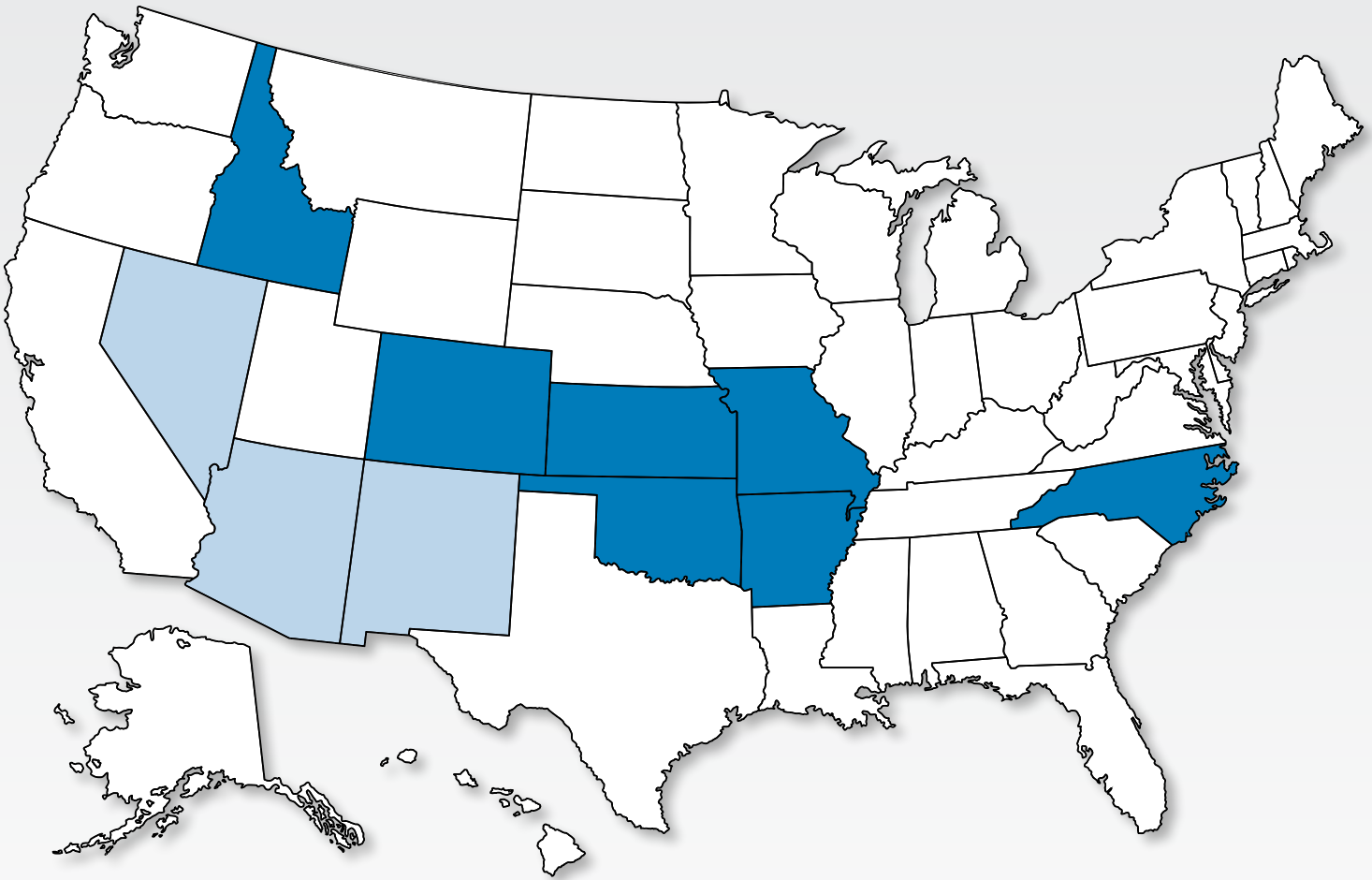


**Act like
an owner.**



**Be a great
problem solver.**

America Succeeds Network



Since the organization's founding in 2012, our vision has been to build a public education system that prepares every student to succeed in the competitive global economy and contribute to their local community. It is our belief that businesses have the obligation, opportunity, and capacity to foster greater student achievement, support an educated workforce pipeline, and protect the economic vitality of their communities.

Over the past eight years, we've been pursuing that vision through education policy and advocacy, supporting our network of state-based affiliates and strategic engagements with expert consulting and capacity-building support services to help them become more effective change agents within their respective states. This year, that work also included sharing supports, ideas, and best practices as we collectively navigated the challenges of COVID-19.

Power of a Network

The America Succeeds' model is supported by world-class research and analysis on highly effective impact networks. America Succeeds connects like-minded organizations to generate system-level change from the bottom-up. Joining the network can help increase an organization's impact and efficiency as an agent for education change. **Contact our team to learn more.**

State Affiliates

Each of America Succeeds' state affiliates is an independent organization with a non-partisan business membership reflecting our shared conviction in the importance of change happening organically at the state-level.



Additional Partners



Core Principles

America Succeeds and its state affiliates are guided by a shared set of five core principles. These principles, which are critical to the success of any business, are equally as important in transforming the education system.



Customer-focus

Putting students first in all policies and practices.



Accountability

Assigning direct responsibility for excellence in outcomes throughout the system.



Transparency

Enabling public access to clear, detailed financial and performance data



Return on Investment

Effectively investing limited resources to achieve desired student outcomes



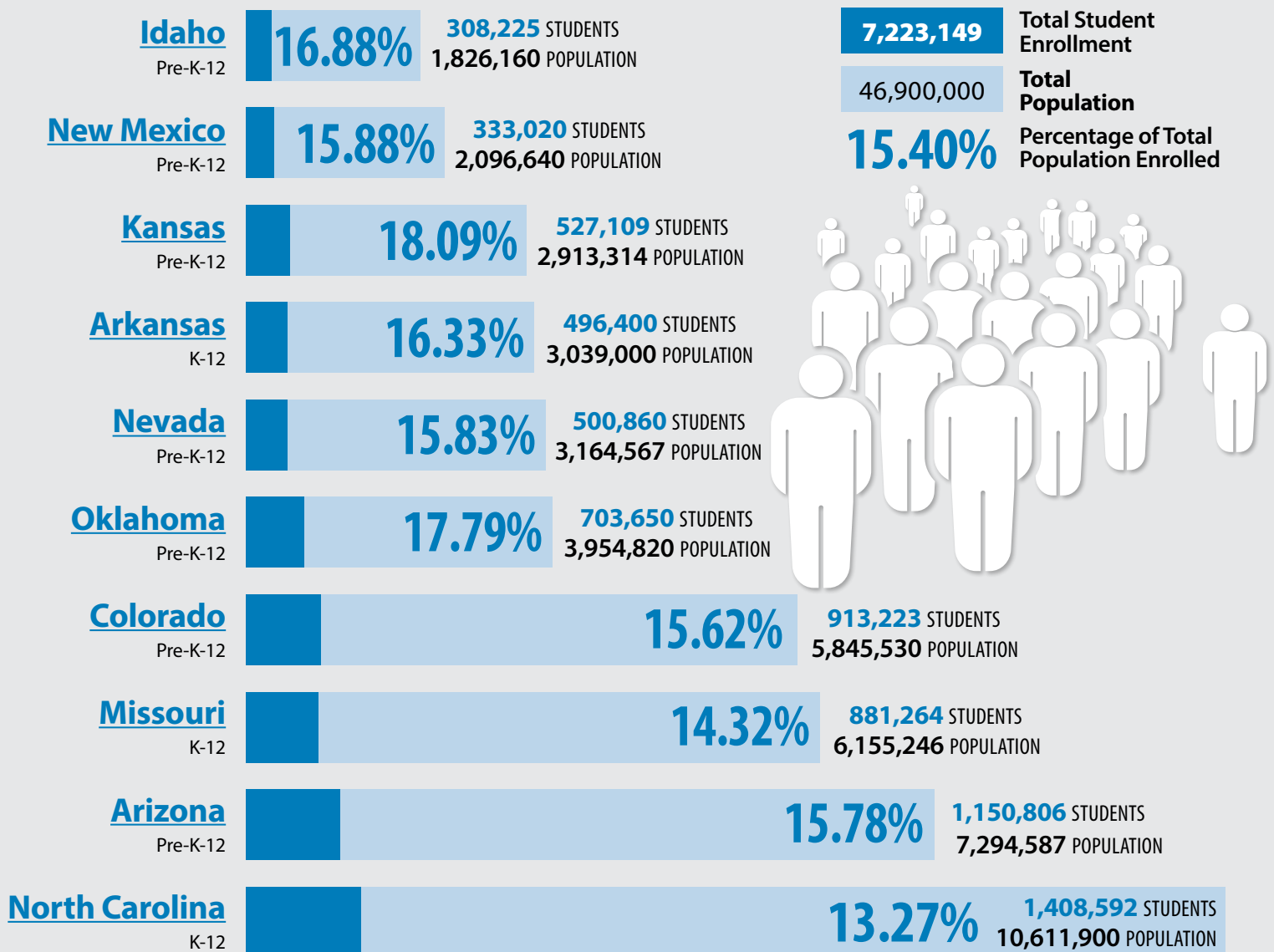
Choice & Innovation

Empowering parents and students to choose - and educators to create - the best learning environments

2020 By the Numbers

6	Affiliate Organizations	18	Policies Passed by Affiliates
9	Network Partners	557	Affiliate Business Members
10	States Represented	13.7K+	Website Impressions
29	Policies Actively Pursued by Affiliates	107K+	Social Media Impressions

2019-2020 Population & Student Enrollment



SOURCE: U.S. Census population estimates for 2020 taken by U.S. Census Bureau

Speaking Engagements & Media



Forbes

Responding to COVID-19

Like many organizations this year, the America Succeeds team has focused on how to best support our community as we confront the many challenges presented by the global pandemic.

In March, our team compiled a list of remote learning resources to help parents navigate distance learning during the initial pandemic response. Each affiliate received a branded version for local distribution. We also partnered with e-commerce company Vertebrae to share the resource with their customers, including Adidas, Crate & Barrel, Samsonite, and Home Depot. The press release for the effort was picked up over 100 times with a verified audience of 15 million views.

America Succeeds then concentrated on the impact of how both COVID-19 and social justice events were reshaping education systems over the long-term. Our team worked with state affiliates and national partners to identify policy solutions to address budget cuts, emotional trauma, and access to technology, among many other issues. We published our recommendations in *Bouncing Back: Student-Centered Policy Priorities for 2021*. We also published an analysis of the most agile school responses to the pandemic, *Agility Thriving: Education Adapting in a Time of Disruption*, late this fall.

Finally, our team was actively involved in broader efforts like PIE Network's Federal Stimulus Workgroup to advocate for an Education Stabilization Fund to be distributed equitably across all types of schools and conversations with Education Counsel's Assessment and Accountability Working Group regarding assessments to evaluate learning loss and create equitable interventions.

We know this work is far from over. And, America Succeeds and our network partners are committed to ensuring that business leaders remain engaged in this critical work as we continue to recover.





GRATEFUL ED

**"Music has healing power."
- Elton John**

Every day, America Succeeds works to ensure every student receives the excellent education they need and deserve. It's a hard battle, and we're glad to fight it. But we also never forget the importance of resting, recharging, and having fun. We operate with a 'work hard, play hard' mindset, and that attitude has been especially helpful to our team in navigating our work and daily lives this year.

The Grateful Ed blog is dedicated to sharing about America Succeeds, our portfolio of work, news in the education policy and reform space, and of course, reviews from our team and colleagues who want to spread their love for music.

Check it out at www.GratefulEd.org.

Biggest Wins:

- **Passed 90% of legislative priorities**, all of which were then vetoed by the governors of each state for funding reasons
- **Continued to grow as an organization**, increasing revenue by 30%
- **Focused on new collaborative partners**; deepened presence in Missouri with an advisory board in St. Louis and adding new members to the board of directors

2020 By the Numbers:

- 5 policies actively pursued in Missouri & 6 policies actively pursued in Kansas
- 90% of policies passed by the legislature
- 30 members

COVID-19 Response:

Aligned responded to the early stages of the pandemic by assembling a list of health and education resources for their members. As policymakers in both Kansas and Missouri shifted attention to the virus, Aligned worked publicly and behind-the-scenes with other partners to ensure that leaders kept schools and parents on the agenda. They also weighed in on how education relief funding could make the greatest impact and participated in leadership discussions about how to keep state early childhood education and care systems on track. An unfortunate side effect of the resource shifts, however, was that the governors in both states ultimately vetoed the legislative packages that included Aligned's key 2020 policy priorities in favor of budget stabilization and continuity. Undeterred, Aligned set its sights on planning for 2021. Along with its partners, Aligned used the pandemic as a focusing event to consider the pace of change and how to leverage the wheels in motion to promote reform and change within a system that is entrenched in status quo.



Biggest Wins:

- **Launched school board candidate recruitment and training initiative**, supported by an EDventure Shark Tank grant from the J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation. Recruited, trained, and/or supported seven candidates in two school districts, while creating a template for candidate training in future races.
- **Partnered with the Arkansas Public School Resource Center** to successfully advocate for maintaining open-enrollment public charter school facilities funding during the 92nd General Assembly Fiscal Session.
- **Distributed 203 Reward School presentational checks** to legislators to present to schools, giving them direct engagement with rewards for school academic growth and performance.
- **Successfully advocated for Lafayette County School District's participation** in the state's inter-district school choice, despite an active case before the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals, leaving only eleven districts in the state exempting because of ancient, unrelated federal court desegregation orders.

2020 By the Numbers:

- 1 policy actively pursued and passed
- 1 recommended State Board of Education member appointed
- 39 of 43 legislative races won
- 25 members

COVID-19 Response:

As in most states, Arkansas Learns found itself playing defense on hard-won accountability policies, working to ensure that parents, taxpayers, and policymakers would still know how students were performing throughout the disruption. Arkansas Learns' years of advancing transparency, choice, and innovation became more important than ever as students and families became hyper-aware of the education options available, as well as their limitations. With in-person membership recruitment limited, Arkansas Learns focused on growing contributions to its Political Action Committee to support student-focused candidates for school boards. As a result, in the high turnout general election, its candidates won two and lost two, with one elected without opposition. While Arkansas Learns supported the leading candidates in two four-person races, its supported candidates lost the low turnout runoffs to candidates endorsed and supported by the union and its proxies.

Biggest Wins:

- **Passed legislation** making the Advanced Teaching Roles Program a permanent part of the North Carolina state statute and expanding to six more districts
- **Successfully supported the first year of TeachNC implementation;** impressive first-year metrics include nearly 5,000 sign-ups, over 600 advisory calls, and 675 applications submitted to teacher preparation programs (many of whom are working in public schools while obtaining licensure), more than double BEST NC's initial targets
- **Launched and distributed the first ever North Carolina school-level per-pupil expenditure interactive tool** to enable parents, educators, and policymakers to examine school-level spending
- **Convened a statewide teacher recruitment working group** called NC STRIDE and held a virtual Education Innovation Lab around the issue of recruitment in order to inform a statewide recruitment action plan to be released in 2021

2020 By the Numbers:

- 4 policies actively pursued
- 4 policies passed
- 125 members

COVID-19 Response:

Knowing where kids are and ensuring their needs are being met – both academic and outside of the classroom – was the first priority. For BEST NC, this meant protecting annual standardized summative assessments for students and working to measure and address learning gaps using innovative learning resources. BEST NC broadened its awareness campaigns to include students who lack broadband access and students who are experiencing homelessness. The pandemic also presented opportunities to increase agility in North Carolina's education system. BEST NC worked with other North Carolina education leaders to begin to rethink school accountability, implement competency-based education, and reimagine teacher licensure.



Biggest Wins:

- **Invested \$750,000 through the Homegrown Talent Initiative** in 8 rural communities to support aligning educational opportunities with local industry & talent needs
- **Advocated with a coalition of partners to successfully pass HB20-1002**, which allows students and members of the current workforce more opportunities to earn postsecondary credit for demonstrating competencies gained through work-related experience
- **Hosted the fourth-annual Succeeds Prize** through a made-for-TV special with partner 9News, awarding \$120,000 to 12 of Colorado's most innovative schools for building agile systems that prepare students to thrive in an ever-changing world
- **72 educators, families, and community organizations participated** in Colorado Succeeds' practice-to-policy feedback sessions to inform future policy priorities

2020 By the Numbers:

- 8 policies actively pursued
- 8 policies passed
- 132 members

COVID-19 Response:

In partnership with local business leaders, Colorado Succeeds helped launch the Colorado Restaurant Response to address food insecurity brought on by the closure of schools. The program served 309,200 meals to over 35,000 families, and over 60 full-time employees were rehired. In addition, the team supported the COVID-19 Education Innovation Fund with local partners, which distributed a total of \$335,000 to 34 projects across Colorado promoting resilient education systems that meet the needs of learners during the pandemic. And, Colorado Succeeds members partnered with PCs for People to get tech into the hands of students.

2020 was a year of transition in Oklahoma

The past year marked the end of Oklahoma Achieves and the creation of a successor organization - Every Kid Counts Oklahoma (EKCO). EKCO was created because local business leaders determined Oklahoma Achieves, the America Succeeds affiliate, housed in the Oklahoma State Chamber of Commerce, could be more impactful as an independent organization. Ryan Walters, the Executive Director of Oklahoma Achieves transitioned to CEO of EKCO and will continue to carry out our mission to engage business leaders in education reform, alongside EKCO's many other efforts.

Shortly after launching EKCO, Walters was appointed by the Governor to be the Oklahoma State Secretary of Education. In this cabinet-level role, Walters serves as Governor Stitt's chief education advisor and helps to set the education policy agenda for the state. In addition to his state leadership role, Walters continues to teach AP U.S. History at several schools. He is an award winning teacher who was named as an Oklahoma Teacher of the Year finalist in 2016.

Since its inception, EKCO has positioned itself as an organization that influences policy and acts as a leading voice for education reform across the state. EKCO spent much of last year standing up the organization and its brand and then developing relationships with key stakeholders, including educators, parents, business/community leaders and legislators. EKCO hosted virtual roundtable discussions and panel events to hear from Oklahoma educators about their experiences and their needs during an extraordinary school year. Another big focus for EKCO was spearheading an education reform coalition, made up of 15+ education reform organizations, to focus on and generate support and awareness for legislation going into the 2021 session.

EKCO also had a leading role in planning for and executing the dissemination of Oklahoma's \$30 million in Governor's Emergency Education Relief Funds (GEER) and federal COVID-19 relief funding. Using part of the GEER funding, EKCO's Bridge The Gap Digital Wallet program was directly responsible for giving 5,000+ low-income families grants of \$1,000 to purchase technology, school supplies and tutoring resources. Finally, alongside the state Department of Education and Edmentum, EKCO helped the state adopt a new program - Exact Path, which is a personalized, diagnostic, learning growth and intervention platform to better serve Oklahoma K-12 students.

Looking to 2021, EKCO will continue to focus on elevating the voices of Oklahoma students, educators, and parents to build an education system that meets the needs of every kid.



Biggest Wins:

- **Launched the Close-the-Divide campaign**, which provided more than 3,000 computers to students in need and raised \$500,000 to provide connectivity to students without internet service at home
- **Established Idaho's first Federally Registered Youth Apprenticeship Program**, supported by a federal grant
- **Hosted the 3rd Annual Agility Summit** virtually with over 400 attendees from across the state
- **Secured numerous policy victories:** addition of a Master Teacher Tier to the teacher career ladder, funding for postsecondary scholarships, establishment of a tax credit for companies donating to employee 529 education savings accounts, and maintenance of funding for literacy initiatives

2020 By the Numbers:

- 5 policies actively pursued
- 5 policies passed
- 245 members

COVID-19 Response:

In response to the challenges of COVID-19, Idaho Business for Education launched the "Close the Divide" campaign to ensure students could access the internet in order to participate in online learning. This initiative brought the number of students without devices down from 180,000 to 10,000, with plans to close Idaho's digital divide completely in early 2021. Idaho Business for Education also mobilized 80 members behind an open letter full-page advertisement encouraging Idahoans to wear masks, social distance, and avoid gathering in large groups in order to contain the virus.

Network Expansion

Arizona: Relaunch Support

In early 2020, America Succeeds supported A for Arizona leadership in restructuring the organization as an independent, business-led advocacy organization. America Succeeds provided strategic consulting, organizational templates to support the launch of a non-profit, and served as the fiscal sponsor when A for Arizona launched anew in June. America Succeeds continues to serve as fiscal sponsor and provide strategic guidance going into 2021.



Nevada: Age of Agility Event

America Succeeds partnered with Opportunity 180 to host the first virtual Agility event, "The Nevada Age of Agility" on September 23, 2020. Business leaders, education experts, and policymakers gathered online for a half-day session to learn about real-world business and education partnerships to better prepare students for the Future of Work. In interactive breakout sessions, participants discussed actionable ideas for advancing Nevada's education system to be more agile and responsive to the changes ahead. Opportunity 180 continued the conversation in October with an interactive working session led by Age of Agility tour alum Colin Seale, founder and CEO of thinkLaw, focused on helping educators develop techniques for teaching students critical thinking skills and practices.



New Mexico: Financial Transparency Policy

In January 2020, State Senator Jacob Candelaria introduced SB0096 to establish financial reporting and transparency rules for schools in New Mexico. America Succeeds was proud to support the development of this legislation in fall of 2019, hosting a team with our partner, NewMexicoKidsCAN, in Denver to meet with local education advocacy leaders to learn more about Colorado's financial transparency policy and the advocacy efforts behind it. America Succeeds also supported NewMexicoKidsCAN on drafting the scope of the policy and with advocacy tools to engage legislators and business leaders in support. SB0096 was adopted in March, paving the way for parents, community and business leaders, and policymakers to see, for the first time, meaningful information regarding how New Mexico schools are funded and how schools utilize those funds to meet student needs.





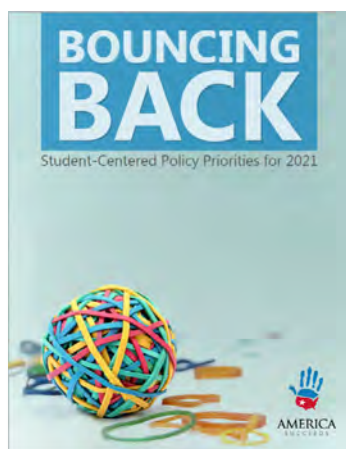
AMERICA SUCCEEDS

Great Schools are Good Business



Bouncing Back Policy Report

The unprecedented level of uncertainty in 2020 made planning an ambitious, strategic legislative agenda virtually impossible. In most cases, advocates are focused on basic ‘blocking and tackling’ as legislators react to ongoing crises and their fallout. The push from education stakeholders now is largely centered on ‘bouncing back’ by addressing foundational needs like providing more services with (likely) fewer resources, keeping track of kids’ attendance and physical well-being, supporting teachers and parent-teachers with remote instruction, and solving basic childcare issues. Of course, we cannot forget that all of this is happening in the midst of a generational fight to address the inequity that is a result of broader societal systemic racism.



America Succeeds released our report, *Bouncing Back: Student-Centered Policies for 2021*, in September of 2020 detailing policy priorities for 2021 for three key reasons:

1. We need an agenda that works for a transitional period. While rebound and recovery are the most widely shared focus, ‘catching up’ is not going to happen in the near future. Between accounting for the severe learning loss, particularly among students of color and students with fewer resources at home; chaotic enrollment transitions among traditional brick-and-mortar schools, online programs, pods, homeschooling, and other options; and an interruption in assessment data, it’s going to be years before we truly understand the depth of change wreaked by COVID-19. We cannot expect our education system to be ‘back on track’ anytime in the near future, and certainly states can’t get there without a coherent strategy.

2. We cannot let students fall further behind – the moral imperative is matched by an economic one. While we recognize there are immediate needs that aren’t academic, advocates must continue to use their voice to ensure our education system rebounds from this crisis smarter and stronger than before. Prior to the pandemic, McKinsey estimated the economic effects of the persistent achievement gap to be equivalent to a permanent recession. Remote learning is likely to exacerbate those gaps in achievement and opportunity by as much as 15 to 20 percent. McKinsey initially estimated that while the average learning loss may be around seven months, it could be as great as ten months for Black students and more than a year for low-income students. However, new modeling has predicted these numbers will be even higher. High school drop-out rates are likely to grow as well. In short, the impact of COVID-19-related learning losses and higher drop-out rates will be felt in the United States for decades.

School Finance

“I think that especially in a moment of revenue constraints, you discover how important it is that the structure of your funding is strong because the size of pie is going to grow and shrink over time. But a really good method of slicing is up is going to serve you well always.”

– Zahava Stadler,
formerly with EdBuild

Social-Emotional Learning

“Getting some actual meat behind some of the social-emotional learning standards or competencies that states are developing and increasing the number [of clear and defined policies] is a key priority in a number of states.”

– Nick Yoder, formerly
with the Collaborative
for Academic, Social, and
Emotional Learning

Teachers and Leaders

“Now more than ever, we need to have a laser focus on increasing the ability of teachers to be effective and the strategic distribution of our most effective teachers. Teachers will be this nation’s only vaccine against learning loss.”

– Kate Walsh, National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

Assessment and Accountability

“We cannot underestimate the importance of assessment in the fall – teachers have to know where their kids are.”

– Katharine Strunk, Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at Michigan State University

3. *We must be planning now for future disruptions.*

COVID-19 is not likely to go away and stay away anytime soon; ongoing flare-ups and spikes in cases remain highly predictable. Even if the U.S. manages to get the virus under control and keep it there until vaccinations are more widely in use, this may not be the last pandemic. We’re also very familiar with how natural disasters can disrupt school systems, and they are happening with increasing frequency. We must become better prepared for periodic, significant disruptions, learn what we can, and develop more agile education systems to deal with them in a way that mitigates the impact on students, families, and educators as much as possible.

With those motivations in mind, America Succeeds spent much of the spring and summer of 2020 listening and learning. We attended countless webinars and read a mile-long list of browser tabs with articles on every aspect of the pandemic and education. From all of that information, we distilled four key policy areas for advocacy over the next year: **school finance**, **social-emotional learning**, **teachers and leaders**, and **assessment and accountability**. We then reached out to experts and thought-leaders who work on these policies and posed a very straightforward inquiry: “If you were to push for policy in 2021, what would your ideal state look like? What would you prioritize and why?”

This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, but we believe these policy priorities will be key to ensuring our schools, educators, and students bounce back from the current crisis and are more resilient and ready for the next one. Download the full report from our [Resource Library](#).

We would also like to give a special thanks to Kency Nittler (formerly with NCTQ), Zahava Stadler (formerly with EdBuild), Katharine Strunk (Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at Michigan State University), Kate Walsh (NCTQ), and Nick Yoder (formerly with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) for engaging in conversation and sharing your expertise with us.



Base Camp Virtual Event Series 2020

One of our team's favorite features of the fall season is spending time with friends and colleagues at America Succeeds' annual EDventure summit. Then, 2020 happened. And since we couldn't gather in Boise, we decided to deliver a little bit of EDventure goodness in a virtual format. [Base Camp 2020](#) built on one of the conference's most popular sessions with quick 30-minute webinars to learn from experts and peers about how they are reinventing themselves during this challenging time.



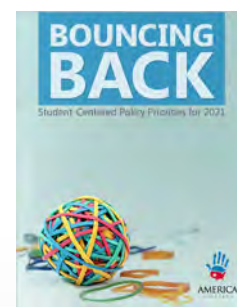
Session #1: My Journey by PAIRIN



Base Camp 2020 kicked off with Alli Phillips and Michael Simpson from PAIRIN, highlighting the My Journey platform. Think about the millions of workers newly-unemployed from the COVID-19 pandemic or students moving beyond high school into a postsecondary pathway. Navigating assistance and opportunities - unemployment benefits, reskilling and upskilling programs, two- and four-year college applications - is an incredible challenge with numerous redundancies. My Journey is an innovative technology solution helping to connect the "messy spaghetti" of disparate government data systems with a user-friendly content interface.

Session #2: Bouncing Back 2021

Base Camp continued with the America Succeeds team sharing insights from the "Bouncing Back: Student-Centered Policy Priorities 2021" report. Upcoming legislative sessions are not going to be about ambitious, sweeping reforms; they are about getting back to basics and in many cases, simply playing block-and-tackle on previous progress made. We recommend focusing efforts on four key areas: social-emotional learning, teachers and leaders, assessment and accountability, and finally, school finance. Zahava Stadler, formerly of EdBuild, joined the conversation to dig deeper into the nuance of improving both the revenue and allocation sides of a state funding formula, to ensure every student is given the resources they need to succeed.

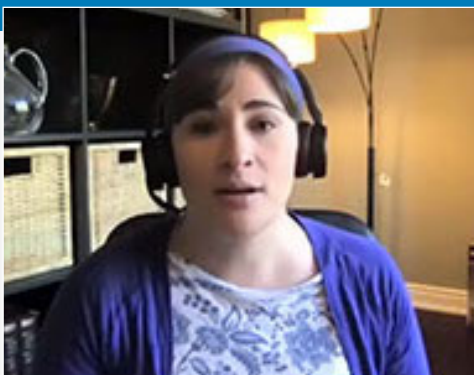


Session #3: Edmentum Exact Path



Our third Base Camp session featured Marcus Lingenfelter, SVP of Strategic Initiatives & Partnerships at Edmentum. He shared the story of their latest mission in Oklahoma: helping school districts transition to a remote learning platform in the face of COVID-19. In partnership with State Superintendent Hofmeister and Secretary of Education, Ryan Walters, they were able to launch Exact Path in a matter of weeks across the entire state. The platform offers personalized K-12 learning pathways in core subjects that adapt to meet each student's unique academic needs. Whether pushing a student towards advanced mastery or remediating a critical skill, the program is helping both educators and districts ensure learning continues during this challenging time.

Base Camp Virtual Event Series 2020 *(continued)*



Session #4: Gooru GPS for Learning

Our next Base Camp session featured Prasad Ram, Founder & CEO of Gooru, which is an open-source “GPS for Learning.” The platform guides students along a personalized learning journey, rerouting them toward the helpful projects and study resources needed for mastery in core academic subjects. Even more impressively, the platform offers actionable insights to all stakeholders involved in supporting that growth - teachers, parents, and admin. In a time when assessment data is limited and the country is facing incredible learning loss due to COVID-19, this tool provides the real-time information needed to support all learners well.



Session #5: Microsoft Day of Data

America Succeeds was excited to welcome back Microsoft for Base Camp 2020.

During the session, Ankur Anand shared more about how the Hacking STEM team has pivoted student projects and teacher supports online during the pandemic. The Day of Data campaign, in partnership with NASA, is designed to introduce 8-15-year-old students to data science. Why? Because data science and data literacy are the foundations for not only every other science field but for success in a future of work continually reshaped by artificial intelligence and automation. Importantly, this program is designed with educator support at the center – as many teachers lack the skills to offer this critical learning in a classroom today.



Session #6: Blueprint Education & ACE Agile Educators

Base Camp 2020 continued with Blueprint Education. During the session, Krissyn Sumare shared the story of how Scrum and Agile business practices helped to transform this network of Arizona charter schools in the face of a 2015 shutdown. Over the course of five years, this school system has moved from a “meltdown” mindset to a place of greater student achievement, financial strength, staff empowerment, transparency, and servant leadership. While these practices offer value in any context, they have been an even greater strength in the face of COVID-19 – the crisis helped to spur even greater innovation.



Session #7: Bottom Line

Our final Base Camp 2020 session featured Steve Colón, Chief Executive Officer of Bottom Line and the winner of this year’s Evergreen National Education Prize. For the past two decades, Bottom Line has been helping first-generation college students successfully get to and through college and has demonstrated impressive results in improving the economic mobility of their graduates. Programs like Bottom Line play a critical role in ensuring that low-income students of color do not simply fall through the cracks, however, they should only be a compliment to larger systemic change efforts.



Agility Thriving Report

America Succeeds report, *Agility Thriving: Education Adapting in a Time of Global Disruption*, highlights stories of heroism, strength, and resilient communities from this past year. There are thousands of school leaders and educators, alongside countless parents and families, who rose to face the many challenges of COVID-19. The brightest among these embody organization-wide agility.

Building off our previous agility work, the team analyzed the Center on Reinventing Public Education’s database of 477 K-12 school system responses using McKinsey & Company’s indicators of agile organizations to identify schools with the most effective responses to the pandemic.

The most successful districts had already invested in building agility across five areas: strategy, structure, process, people, and technology. More specifically, these systems shared school cultures and visions with equity at the center, clear decision-making protocols, empowered and trusting teams, and existing technology integrations designed to unlock value in student learning. It’s a powerful combination, and unfortunately, as we’ve seen during the last year, they are not qualities that can simply be turned on overnight. Educational agility takes time and investment to cultivate.

The Business Agility Institute, an international consortium of agile enterprises, business leaders, and practitioners, frames agility in this way:

“Agility is a continuum, where the question is not whether you have it, but rather how much you have and is it enough. Achieving Agility is not simple. There is no silver bullet or single framework, method, or system that can implement business agility – and, by definition, because an organization is a complex adaptive system, there can never be one. Yet, while no two organizations follow the same journey, common patterns emerge.”



Indicators of Agile Education Systems

Adapted from McKinsey & Company’s “The Five Trademarks of Agile Organizations”

Element	Ideal State	Indicators
Strategy	North Star designed around equity and embodied across the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Coherent, articulated, shared vision with students at the center■ Focus on equity and inclusion■ Clearly identifiable school culture that reflects the shared vision and school’s values■ Aligned and flexible resource allocation
Structure	Networks of empowered teams at school and system-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Clear roles, teams, and decision-making protocols at school and system-level■ Continual systems of professional development for educators and school leaders■ Dedicated time for collaboration and improvement■ Active community partnership ecosystem
Process	Rapid decision-making and continuous learning cycles among staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Robust internal communication systems■ Information and data transparency between staff, families, and governance structures■ Continuous learning mindset and structured feedback loops at school and system-level■ Small batch problem-solving approach; pilot solutions scaled upon success
People	Dynamic culture that ignites passion across the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Cohesive community and strong relationships among staff, families, students, and other stakeholders■ Regular, inclusive communications and updates to staff, family, students, and other stakeholders■ Psychologically “safe” and nurturing culture for students, families, and educators including a focus on SEL
Technology	Technology integrations unlock value for student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ High-proportion of student broadband and device access (measured pre- and post-COVID-19)■ LMS/technology utilized by high-proportion of teachers, students, and parents■ Curriculum and instructional models that can be adapted, evolved, and implemented effectively through technology; values personalized and project-based learning

Agility Thriving Report *(continued)*

This report provides an in-depth review of five school systems - Achievement First, Milwaukee Public Schools, Oakland Unified School District, Tulsa Public Schools, and IDEA Public Schools - offering promising practices and policies to help school communities build back to become more resilient, more adaptive, and more agile than before. There is no way for schools to make disruptions obsolete, but they can be more ready and able to deal with them if they focus on the following:

- **Know who you are and why now** – Every school and district must have a strategy, mission, and values in place, and a team that has bought into pursuing them.
- **Put decision-making where it belongs** – States and districts must empower schools with the flexibility and autonomy to make the decisions needed to meet the challenges faced in their communities.
- **Prioritize development and time for talent** – States and districts must coordinate the provision of professional development resources and training opportunities, and ensure that every school has a professional development plan in place and makes educator collaboration time a paramount priority.
- **Embrace technology and remove barriers early** – States, districts, schools, and community partners all have a role to play in supporting educators, students, and families with the tools and training they need to remain connected and engaged in teaching and learning through any disruption.
- **Commit to transparency** – School and district leaders should establish regular practices for sharing data, soliciting feedback, and incorporating input from their teams and stakeholders in order to cultivate buy-in, power agile decision-making, and ensure lasting cohesion around the organizational strategy.

There is also an economic imperative to rebounding from this crisis smarter and stronger than before. Prior to the pandemic, McKinsey estimated the economic effects of the persistent achievement gap to be equivalent to a permanent recession: “By 2040, most of the current K–12 cohort will be in the workforce. We estimate a GDP loss of \$173 billion to \$271 billion a year – a 0.8 to 1.3 percent hit.”

While the magnitude of what’s at stake can feel overwhelming, we cannot let it stop us from taking action. There is a proven, straightforward set of priorities for policy and practice to push school systems further along the spectrum of agility. There are also education leaders across the country showing us the way. In the face of uncertainty, incredible challenge, and heartbreak, is an opportunity to propel us forward – an opportunity to build our agility and resilience.

Download the report at
AgeofAgility.org/Agility-Thriving



Looking Forward

Although COVID-19 disrupted some plans in 2020, it also provided us the space to thoughtfully consider the shifting landscape, our organization's role within it, and the best opportunities to make an impact moving forward.

America Succeeds continues to be uniquely positioned between business and the education policy sector – acting as an “education voice to business” nationally and a “business voice for education” at the state-level. Our work bridges these two distinct constituencies, with advocacy efforts aimed at larger culture change and policy efforts that ultimately help us achieve our vision of preparing every student to succeed in the competitive global economy and contribute to their local community.

The power of this approach lies within connecting a coalition of partners in business and education who demonstrate alignment to America Succeeds' mission, vision, and goals. We also know that our impact grows as this coalition grows, which is why we are excited to share more about our plans for 2021.

Expanding our State Partners

Moving forward, we are shifting how we define our network. This new vision includes all of the familiar faces – the America Succeeds affiliates who continue to do incredible work within their states – and some new ones. We look forward to engaging more State Partners looking to make an impact at the cross-section of business and education in the coming years.

Focusing on Durable Skills

Since 2017, we have called on education systems to become more responsive in preparing students for the rapidly evolving future of work. This past year, calls for educational agility became even more urgent. Regardless of a disruption's cause – changing technology, global pandemic, or otherwise – there is an important set of durable ‘soft skills’ behind an individual's resilience. Durable skills transfer from job to job; they include how we use what we know (critical thinking, communication, collaboration) and character skills (resilience, ethics, leadership). They are also in high-demand from employers in every industry sector across the country. This new initiative seeks to improve education-to-employment pathways by ensuring students graduate high school with a solid foundation of Durable Skills that will power their entire careers and last a lifetime.

Fighting for Equity in Education

At the heart of our work is an unwavering belief that education system-change can be a powerful lever in building a world where all individuals can thrive. Addressing systemic racism in schools is not only the right thing to do but a critical part of building the talent and leadership pipelines of the future. 2020 underscored how much work is left. America Succeeds is launching an Equity in Education platform focused on five areas:

- Funding equity
- Equity in STEM
- Recruitment and retention of teachers of color
- Equity through social-emotional learning
- Equity plans

By continually expanding our network, growing the national movement of business leaders engaged in improving education, and elevating critical conversations like Durable Skills and Equity in Education, we are capable of inspiring great change within the education space. And, that is exactly what we plan to do.



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