







MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO 4

OUR IMPACT 6

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY 2025: A STRATEGIC PLAN 8

OUR WORK 10

SHARING EXPERTISE & EXPERIENCE 14

RESOURCES & TOOLS 16

FUNDERS AND PARTNERS 16

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT & CEO

In 2020, we had the honor of partnering with (s)heroes in schools and school systems across the country. The leaders we support grappled with identifying and disrupting inequities in their schools while also facing head on racial injustice, the Covid-19 pandemic, the economic crisis, and the impact of climate change. They filled the safe learning spaces we co-created with some real fears and challenges and a lot of determination and grace.

They grappled with the technical challenges of schooling safely in person and effectively in virtual classrooms, and the adaptive work of shifting educators' beliefs and mindsets in ways that help them see the systemic inequities they need to work toward dismantling in order to better serve every student.

Meanwhile, we sharpened our focus on the "how" of building more equitable schools. Our last several years of work with schools and school systems across the country have taught us so much about the leadership practices needed to disrupt systemic racism and create learning environments intentionally built for every child. What this work boils down to, we've realized, is culturally responsive leadership. A culturally responsive leader recognizes the impact of institutionalized racism on their own lives and the lives of the students and families they work with and embraces their role in mitigating, disrupting, and dismantling systemic oppression.

With our deepened sense of what culturally responsive leadership looks like, we changed our name to The Leadership Academy and adopted a new look and the tagline, "Empowering leaders. Transforming schools for every student." As we continue to grow as a national organization, we want to ensure that our brand reflects the essence of our work, so we removed "NYC" from our name. We strongly value our roots in New York City and lean on all that we have learned from our years of ongoing work there. At the same time, we are deeply invested in continuing to expand our reach across the country. We spread our work to our 37th state and continued to deepen our partnerships, such as with the state of Massachusetts where we are helping develop a diverse pipeline of aspiring superintendents.



Nancy B. Gutiérrez, Ed.L.D.





We are forging a way of developing culturally responsive leaders by practicing what we preach, and offering professional learning experiences aligned to the core tenets that will shape our strategic direction for the next five years:

- **Honor context.** Rather than try to squeeze communities into a set way of doing things, we partner with school system teams to meet the needs and priorities of their community.
- **Center cultural responsiveness.** To have sustainable impact, we intentionally integrate culturally responsive leadership into the design of all our professional learning programs and resources. Work around race and equity is not an add-on but must be named, made a priority, and integrated.
- **Transform leadership behaviors.** Making and sustaining transformative change, like dismantling inequities, requires adaptive leadership and adaptive change. We support leaders in learning how they might need to alter their own long-held beliefs, mindsets, and behaviors, in ways that benefit their schools, and to create and maintain systems of excellence that support members of the entire school community to do their own learning and growing.
- **Take a systemic approach.** We strive to work with leaders and their teams across all levels of the system, including strategic planning support, training for leaders, follow-up coaching, and capacity building. To move practice and make the work sustainable, you need this multi-pronged approach.
- **Follow the through-line.** We work with leaders to understand how their day-to-day leadership moves impact the instructional core.

As we go into a new year replete with challenges, our values remain strong and steady. We are eager to continue to learn, grow, and adapt. We thank you for joining us on this journey.

As writer June Jordan reminds us, “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.”

Adelante,

Nancy B. Gutiérrez, Ed.L.D.

OUR IMPACT

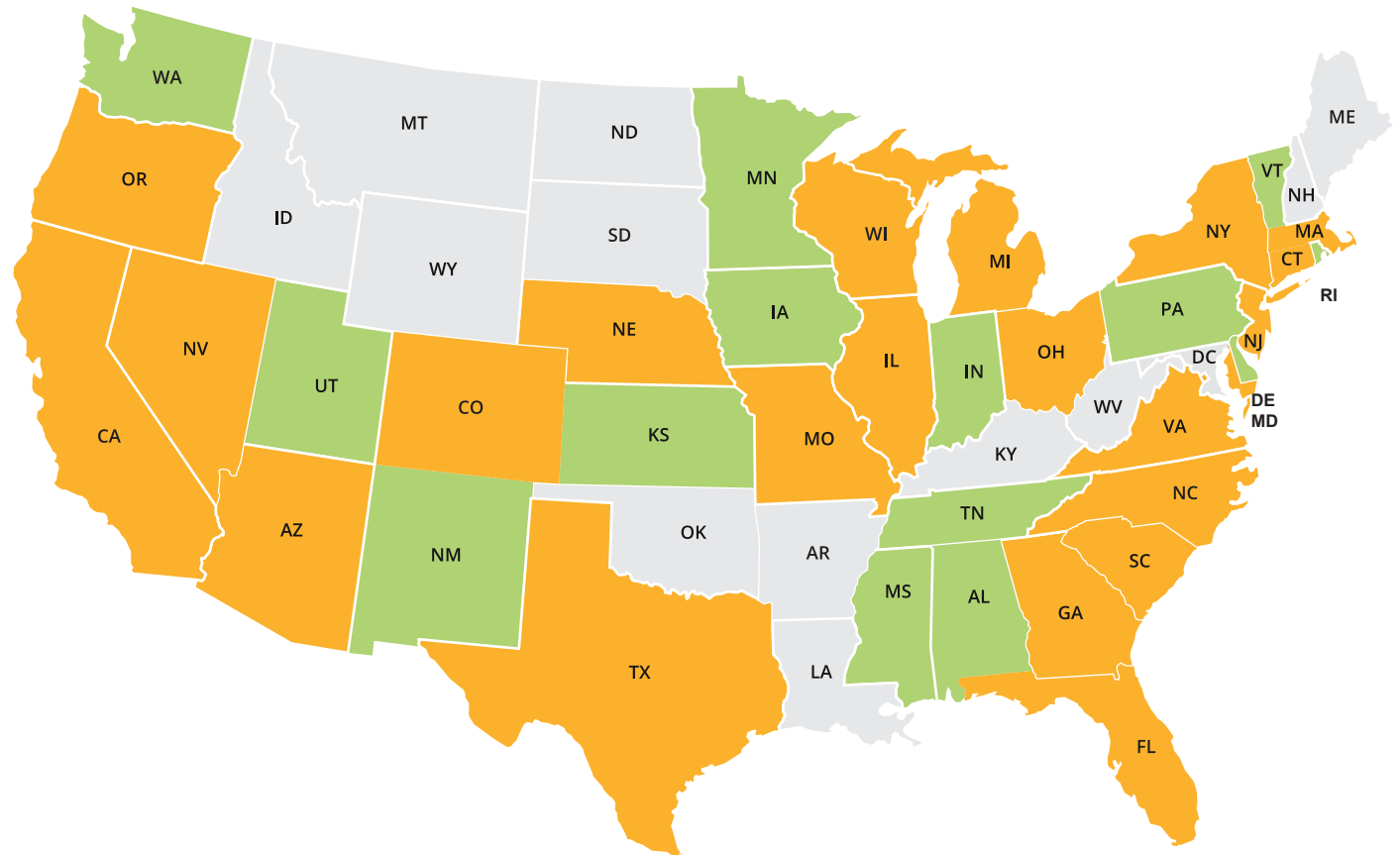
JULY 2019 –
DECEMBER
2020

2,080
LEADERS
SUPPORTED

92
SCHOOL
SYSTEMS

20
STATES

3 MILLION
STUDENTS
REACHED



96% of participants expressed
interest in attending future
sessions with The Leadership Academy

94% of participants said the
session they attended
developed their equity leadership skills

9/10 Likelihood of
recommending
The Leadership Academy to
a colleague

2020 | 23 States

Prior to 2020 | 14 States

ALL-TIME DATA

8,000

LEADERS SUPPORTED

213

SCHOOL SYSTEMS

37

STATES

7 MILLION

STUDENTS REACHED



In leaders' own words:
What they gain from The Leadership Academy

high quality impactful
growth equity focus
networking self-reflection
culturally effective
responsive learning
staff expertise



Leadership Academy 2025: Our strategic plan



North Star:

We develop and support education leaders on the school, system, and state levels, empowering them to transform their leadership in ways that accelerate learning for every student.

The Leadership Academy's work over the next five years will focus on three strategies for supporting schools systems in making change in classrooms and across school systems.

Driver 1: Link school leadership to culturally responsive classroom practices.

We will pioneer programs that develop leaders' capacity to create and foster culturally responsive practices and in turn improve the instructional core. Culturally responsive leaders develop a coherent and aligned culturally responsive curriculum and instruction that supports all students in accessing and achieving rigorous college- and career-ready academic standards. By 2025, we will have supported the capacity building of 10,000 school leaders in ways that enable them to implement culturally responsive practices that are accelerating learning for their 2.5 million students.

Driver 2: Support system-level leaders in developing a comprehensive approach to dismantling inequities and transforming student learning.

To shift practice in ways that are sustainable and raise achievement for all children, change must be systemic. We will support school systems in addressing inequities by providing targeted and aligned professional learning and capacity building across the school and school systems levels. With this comprehensive approach, we will help districts conduct equity-focused audits of their systems, and we will partner with coalitions of



stakeholders like parents, community members, and state leaders to build district leaders' capacity to listen to and address multiple perspectives and experiences. By 2025, 10 of the districts we support will be implementing this comprehensive approach and will have successfully diminished one or more systemic inequities for more than 300,000 students.

Driver 3: Create and share a research-driven leadership platform for systemic change.

We are committed to sharing our expertise broadly to support the disruption of inequities in many of the 14,000 school systems across the country. To do this, we will expand access to our research-based approach to culturally responsive leadership development so that leaders whom we do not directly support can learn from and apply it to their own context, and so that policy makers can consider the impact of this work and the policies needed to expand it. We will do this by sharing stories of our work with districts in action, presenting at conferences, and circulating tools and resources. We will invest in research to test and refine our approach to developing strong culturally responsive leaders. By 2025, we will have helped define the practices that are the foundation of equitable school systems and have a research-based, externally validated model for developing equity-focused education leadership that we have shared widely with education leaders across the nation.



OUR WORK

FOUNDATIONS OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISION |

Principals are facing the biggest challenges of their careers. As they support their teams and students and families to navigate the uncertainty of the upcoming year, they too need a strong support system. Principal supervisors are critical for helping principals be the leaders their school communities need. In Foundations of Principal Supervision, now in its 6th year, participants unpack the role and impact of the principal supervisor; build their capacity as instructional leaders to support culturally responsive practice; learn to leverage a coaching approach and professional learning to build capacity of principals as culturally responsive leaders; analyze data to support planning, decision making and feedback. This year, in addition to our national program, we developed a Texas-wide Foundations for 35 principal supervisors from 11 school districts: Arlington, Austin, Cypress Fairbanks, El Paso, Fort Bend, Garland, Katy, North East, Pasadena, Plano, San Antonio. This program is supported by The Wallace Foundation.

Principal supervisors have a responsibility to understand the unique demands placed on campus principals. The training with The Leadership Academy offers a unique opportunity for supervisors to learn what culturally responsive and equitable practices look like at the campus, classroom and district levels, and how to develop strategic support plans that drive continuous learning for principals."

— Cypress-Fairbanks ISD Assistant Superintendent for School Leadership Christina Cole

FOUNDATIONS PROGRAM IMPACT |

108
principal supervisors

36
school systems

21
states

1,900
principals reached

2.2 million
students reached

96%
say they can apply what they
learned to their role

95%
were satisfied with the
training they received

COVID-19 RESPONSE |

The Covid-19 pandemic required more professional learning, not less. So we converted all of our services to virtual, crafting and fine-tuning the most effective ways to deliver adult learning online. Our expert facilitators coached leaders through virtual classroom observations, team meetings, professional learning communities, virtual lounges, and coaching conversations with their team members. We created new tools to support that work and converted existing tools to virtual.

“The pandemic has highlighted inequities in our systems and institutionalized practices that have and continue to marginalize and discriminate against groups of people. I appreciate the facilitated support in moving our systems thinking around class, race, language, etc.”

WISCONSIN URBAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE |

The leadership institute started in 2018 as a collaboration among the 5 largest districts in Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of



Public Instruction. The Leadership Academy has built the capacity of the districts' coaches to support principals in identifying and addressing inequities in their schools. In each cohort we supported more than 20 principals as they explore their biases, work with their teams to approach school policies and practices with an equity lens and conduct and test an action research project.

For one principal in Cohort 2, a close examination of his school's attendance and discipline data led him to pilot an empowerment group for Black and Latinx students who were being disproportionately suspended. The young men in the program learned to develop self-advocacy skills, and their school attendance as a group rose by 3% and suspensions dropped by 11%. Participating principals created racial equity coalitions among their leadership teams, used tools to establish a common understanding of equity practices within classrooms, and developed new strategies for engaging families. By collaborating with the state and a Wisconsin-based organization, The Leadership Academy is building the capacity of leaders to continue this work moving forward.

“I learned a lot about myself and how to think deeply about all students in my building. I think all leaders across the state should be required to experience this opportunity.”

THE HOLDSWORTH CENTER |

Our partnership with the Holdsworth Center is a core part of the center's work to help build the capacity of districts across the state to invest in their human capital. The primary focus of our work this year is building the capacity of staff to facilitate equity focused content on their own through the use of affinity groups, training and coaching. Our professional learning

“The Leadership Academy pushed our teams to become clear about how our inner work will impact the institutional and structural work in our schools and districts. The readings, conversations, and real-world examples have pushed me to reflect on the role I play in my work and family. We must use our voice to name what others refuse to name and face injustices head on. Texas school leaders are more perfectly imperfect after these sessions and will continue to sway in and out of the conversations, actions, and commitments to eliminate systematic racism. We will not fail!”

— Katy Roede, Chief of Schools, Aldine Independent School District

sessions with 150 leaders from 13 mid-sized districts focus on how to identify and begin to dismantle inequities in their school systems. Using the Leadership Academy’s equity leadership dispositions as a guide, the participating principals and superintendents and their teams reflected on and discussed the inequitable systems and policies in their districts and tackled a school-based problem of practice. Participants also explored their own biases, privilege, and identity through affinity groups, sharing their racial narratives, and 1-on-1 coaching sessions.

DES MOINES |

We began working with Iowa’s largest school district in 2018 and have supported 71 associate principals and a dozen directors of activity and equity, helping them develop their culturally responsive leadership through equity-focused instructional walkthroughs and coaching in schools. They are strengthening their own coaching skills, learning to help principals give effective feedback to teachers and leading teams committed to dismantling inequities in classrooms and across schools. We supported district leaders in developing and holding a series of virtual

town halls to gather community member, staff, and student feedback on racism in the school district. The district immediately used feedback to create new positions to support school leaders of color across the district and create teams and accountability structures to move the next steps forward.

“The partnership with The Leadership Academy is critical to not only the success of Des Moines Public Schools in terms of continuing to challenge our own individual and collective dispositions and systemic mindsets, but also because they validate when the work is really hard. They are in the arena with us.”

— Des Moines Public Schools Associate Superintendent Matt Smith.

PORTLAND, OR |

Our work with Portland has evolved and expanded over the last year. We began by supporting their principal supervisors and the deputy superintendent who supports them. The principal supervisors attended our Foundations of Principal Supervision program. The team then engaged us to help launch an aspiring principals program. The district remarkably got this program off the ground amidst Covid-19, protests for social justice, and wildfires, serving eight aspiring leaders in the first cohort, three of them leaders of color as diversifying the leadership pipeline is a priority. We have also begun working with Portland to develop a three-year induction academy for new principals, an opportunity funded in part by The Wallace Foundation and in partnership with the National Urban League. We



will support the development of the curriculum and aligned assessments and will make sure there are systems and processes for sharing with other districts. We will also help with succession planning and support principal supervisors in strengthening their communication with induction academy participants. Other Oregon districts are expected to join this effort as it gets underway.

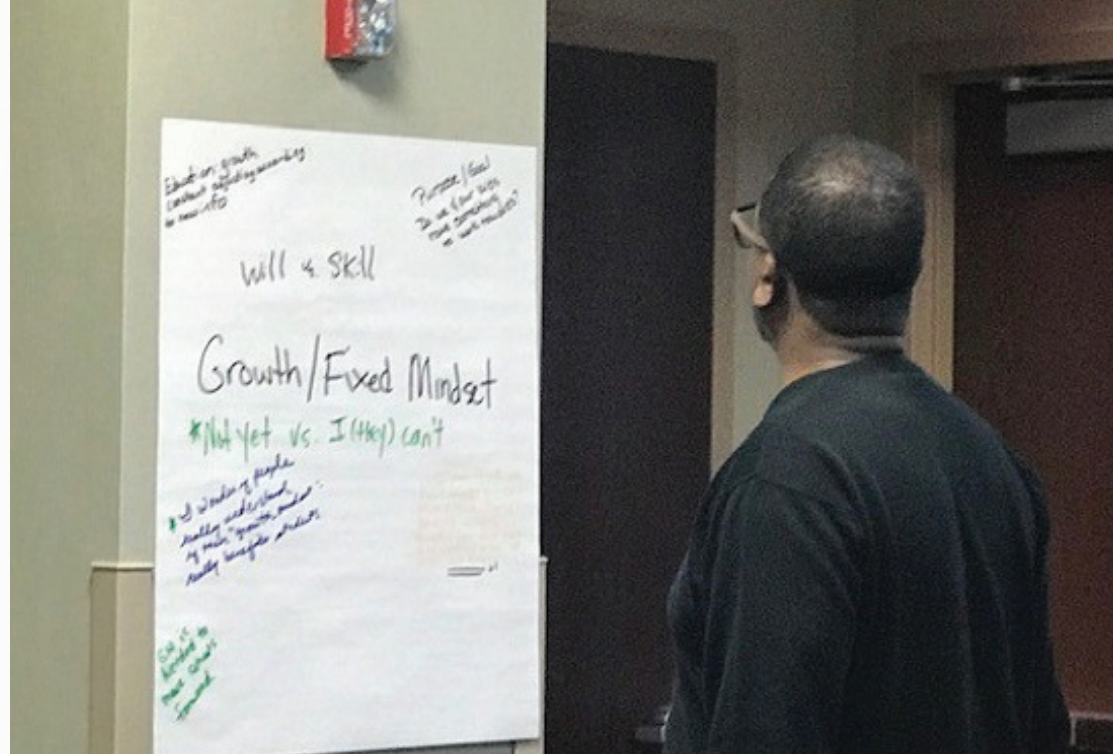
WEST MICHIGAN LEADERSHIP ACADEMY |

Since WMLA began in 2018, it has supported the development of school leaders across six districts who reach more than 11,500 students. Through a cohort-based professional learning network and individualized leadership coaching, WMLA Fellows develop the skills and dispositions necessary for culturally responsive school leadership, including the ability to confront systemic inequities and engage and inspire their school communities in envisioning and enacting the structures, systems, and practices required to achieve equitable outcomes for all students. WMLA is supported by the Doug and Maria DeVos and Steelcase Foundations.

“WMLA has changed my life. It changes the way I see the world and the way I view myself as a leader. It has changed the way I do business in terms of big things like goal setting and small things like everyday interactions with staff and students.”

“I learned the value of cross-racial facilitation when doing equity professional development, as well as some strategies to continue moving thinking forward and embracing discomfort in the service of dismantling all forms of white supremacy.”

— Lorna Fast Buffalo Horse,
Director, Multiple Pathways
to Graduation, Portland
Public Schools



INFLUENCE 100 (MA) |

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education selected The Leadership Academy to support and develop a racially and ethnically diverse cohort of aspiring district leaders. This initiative is part of an effort to create more culturally responsive districts and promote better outcomes for students of color. During the two-year engagement, The Leadership Academy has worked with state education officials to develop an equity-infused leadership curriculum focused on building the skills needed to effectively lead school systems, with a focus on identifying and addressing inequities such as those based on race, class, and among English language learners. Fellows are examining the history of inequities in the U.S. and in Massachusetts specifically, and reflect on how that history has resulted in today's inequities.

Seed funding for the two-year fellowship was provided by the Education Leaders of Color Boulder Fund.

“We have a dual need to grow our pool of school system leaders to better reflect the students they serve, and to ensure that they have the skills to oversee school systems that meet the learning needs of every one of our students. The Leadership Academy has the skills and track record to build the capacity of our leaders to lead districts to become more culturally responsive and to engage in intentional strategy development and execution around diversifying our educator workforce.”

— Dr. Ventura Rodriguez, Senior Associate Commissioner
at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary
and Secondary Education

SHARING EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE

We shared our experiences and ideas on policy and practice in education publications, including The74, Education Week, and District Administration magazine.

Our organization leaders shared culturally responsive leadership experiences and resources on more than 50 webinars and as keynote speakers, engaging in deep conversations with such leaders as Education Trust CEO John B. King Jr., former Denver Superintendent Susana Cordova, Prof. Meredith Honig, DMG CEO John Kim, and NYS Superintendent of the Year Roberto Padilla, the first Latino leader selected for this honor.





VISIONARIES

A documentary film on The Leadership Academy premiered on public television last fall. Part of **The Visionaries**, an award-winning public television series hosted by acclaimed actor Sam Waterston, the program takes you inside two school districts to see up close how The Leadership Academy partners with school systems to support and develop culturally responsive leaders and educators. Selected from hundreds of nonprofit organization applicants from around the world to be part of the 12-part series, The Leadership Academy shares the story of its work in Des Moines Public Schools, IA, and Lexington County School District One, SC, where The Leadership Academy staff has been partnering with school and district leaders to take a comprehensive approach to identifying and disrupting systemic inequities. Viewers spend time in classrooms and professional learning sessions, and hear directly from students, teachers, principals, and district leaders. The 27-minute program also includes interviews with former New York City Schools Chancellor and Leadership Academy founder Joel Klein; The Leadership Academy President & CEO Nancy Gutiérrez; and several Leadership Academy alums including NYC Executive Superintendent for Manhattan Marisol Rosales, Leadership Academy Chief Access & Equity Officer Mary Rice-Boothe, and Leadership Academy Executive Vice President Michele Shannon.

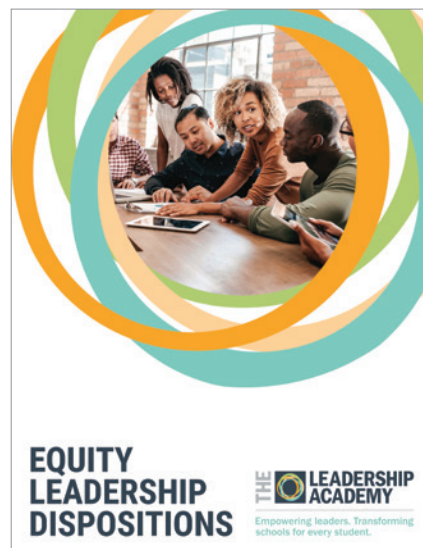
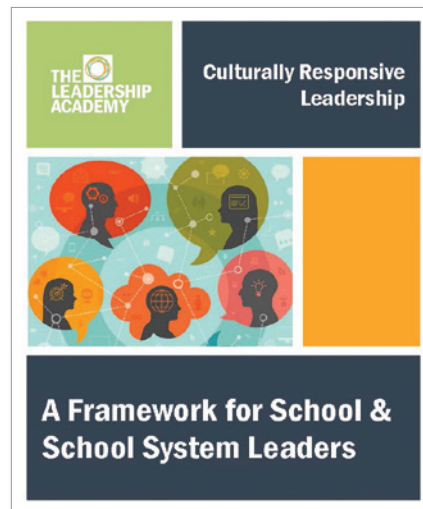
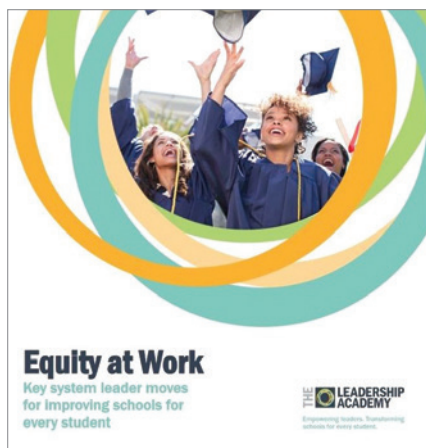
The development of this film was generously funded by The Wallace Foundation, The Carson Family Charitable Trust, and American Reading Company.

“Transforming schools to be culturally responsive is challenging but essential work. The best way to share with school systems what this work can look like and the impact it can have on students and educators is to show the work in action. This Visionaries program gives unique insight into the effort, conversations, and challenges leaders are grappling with as they become more culturally responsive.”

— CEO Dr. Nancy Gutiérrez



RESOURCES AND TOOLS



FUNDERS AND PARTNERS |

The generosity of our partners and funders makes it possible for us to dedicate our efforts to supporting and developing school and school system leaders across the country. We are humbled and grateful for their support.

American Reading Corporation
Bainum Family Foundation
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10-27 46TH AVENUE, 1ST FLOOR
LONG ISLAND CITY, NY 11101
www.leadershipacademy.org
[@LeadershipAcad_](https://twitter.com/LeadershipAcad_)
contactus@leadershipacademy.org