

ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT 2021-22



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A NOTE FROM OUR CEO

Nancy B.
Gutiérrez,
Ed.L.D.



I often ask education leaders, “What kind of school would you want for your own child? Are you creating that school you just dreamt of for your students, and if not, why not?” As a former teacher, principal, district leader, and now, a new parent, I dream of that school for my own son. I dream of a learning environment where he and every single one of his classmates feels connected, respected, embraced and challenged; where they explore and build culture, language, and identity, connecting in both affinity and bridging spaces; where the adults in the building hold each student to high expectations and give them the individualized support and feedback they need to meet those expectations. I dream of a school where each student explores their passions and interests through hands-on maker spaces, and learns to identify,

analyze, and solve real-world problems. I dream of educational spaces that nurture leaders and thinkers for tomorrow.

I truly believe that if we build communities, states, a nation of schools like this, with them will come a new generation of leaders capable of making our society more just and equitable than how they found it.

But these schools do not need to be the stuff of dreams. At The Leadership Academy, our research and experience has shown that strategically and effectively supporting and building the capacity of leaders across a school system will have an exponential effect. A culturally responsive leader will create a climate where culturally responsive teachers across schools and districts thrive, where they create learning experiences designed to meet the needs of every student. »



Nancy discusses Latina leadership in K-12 education with NYC Schools Chancellor Meisha Ross Porter, Senior Deputy Chancellor Marisol Rosales, and Rhode Island Education Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green at NYS Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents' 2nd Annual Summit.

A culturally responsive leader knows that to do this well, central offices need to be transformed in support of schools. System leaders can do this by

1. **Interrogating the system by** examining the historical and institutionalized roots of inequities and racism as main drivers of how a school system is designed and currently operates.
2. **Interrogating self** by demonstrating awareness of complex, intersectional identity markers and their influence in meaning-making as well as decisions and actions.
3. **Interrogating others** by confronting bias-based beliefs, blind spots, and other forms of deficit thinking and builds others' capacity to learn and practice language and behaviors that are responsive to differences across lines of race, ethnicity, language, class, religion, ability, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity.
4. **Repositioning representation & voice** by deliberately centering the voices of historically minoritized students, families, staff members, and community members.

These actions come from our own deliberation on our longstanding Equity Leadership Dispositions coupled with our close work with renowned central office transformation expert Dr. Meredith Honig. For years The Leadership Academy has supported leaders at every level of the system – building aspiring principal programs, cultivating principals' and principal supervisors' skills and knowledge, creating much-needed professional networks for equity officers and principals of color. As we near our 20th year, we are excited to launch and test a comprehensive approach to education leadership development, one that cultivates leaders at every level of one school system so that every student has access to rigorous and engaging learning experiences that prepare them for college, career and civic life. You can learn more about our innovative Culturally Responsive Partnership program in these pages. We urge you to follow along



U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona introduces Nancy's Leadership Journeys session at SXSW EDU.

with our learning as we pilot with districts in Georgia in the coming months.

We do this work proudly for each of our children, for the millions of current and future K-12 students across this nation. We do it to ensure our leaders are leading for tomorrow and do not stay stuck in today's ways. We have a bright future ahead of us if we each are willing to examine and deeply reflect on our lived experiences with school, as students, teachers, and leaders. As leaders if we then embrace and apply our learning — if we are willing to decenter some of the ways we are used to — we can begin to pave a new path forward. Our schools are the nucleus of our communities, and our future depends on them and us. Our babies deserve nothing less.

Adelante,

Nancy B. Gutiérrez

strategic PLAN



Two years ago, we created TLA 2025, a five-year strategic plan that drives our work toward one North Star: Developing and supporting education leaders on the school, system, and state levels, empowering them to transform their leadership in ways that accelerate learning for every student. We identified five drivers to get us there, around which we center all our work:



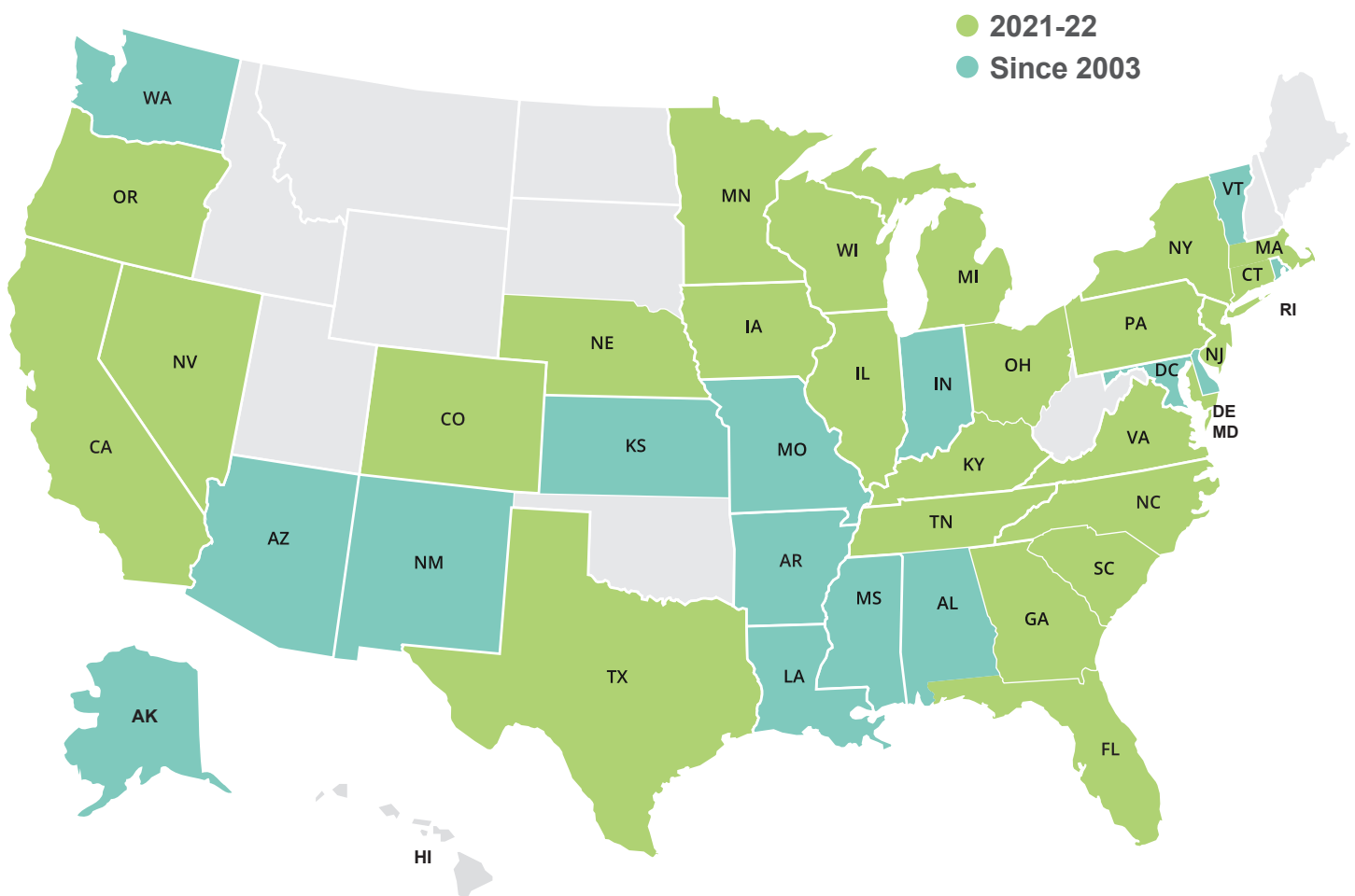
We believe making systemic change requires working at both the school and district levels and creating and sharing a research-driven platform for developing leaders. To that end, in 2021-22, we launched **Culturally Responsive Partnership: Leaders cultivating systems by, with, and for every student**, a pilot initiative for innovating and learning the combination of interventions at the school and system levels that will create sustainable culturally responsive change in classrooms. Specifically, we aim to learn and share with the field:

- 1 What school leaders need to do for teachers/staff to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy,
- 2 What district offices need to do to create the conditions for school leaders to do these things, and
- 3 What support is most needed and effective in facilitating the transformation this work requires

This pilot leans on Yrjo Engestrom's research on Expansive Learning and National Equity Project's Liberatory Design Mindsets to support leaders in examining current practices, identifying the values and assumptions that underlie them and where they feed into inequities, and determining how to build foundations for new and better systems. This approach will guide leaders in listening to those most affected by current systems to understand how they operate and where they fall short, and to chart a path for creating more culturally responsive classrooms, schools, and school systems. We begin this pilot in Atlanta Public Schools.

OUR impact

Where **we** work



Since our founding in 2003, we have supported nearly **12,000** school and school system leaders who work in **300** school systems across **39** states and reach **9** million students.



Who do we support?

In 2021-22, we supported 1,600 education leaders who work in 113 school systems and 52 education organizations, state education departments and charter networks in 26 states and Washington, D.C. These leaders collectively reach **3.87 million students.**

67%

are school leaders

22%

are district leaders

10%

are foundation/
program staff/other

Who do our partner leaders support?

Many of the schools and school systems we support serve larger than average minoritized communities.

	The Leadership Academy	U.S. school system system average
% Students of color	78%	54%
% Students learning English as a new language	18%	10%
% Students with disabilities	23%	15%
% Economically disadvantaged	64%	48%

Impact of learning

Leaders say their Leadership Academy professional learning experience grew their ability to build staff capacity, influence teachers' instructional practices, and improve school climate.

After only one year in partnership with us,
participants reported a:

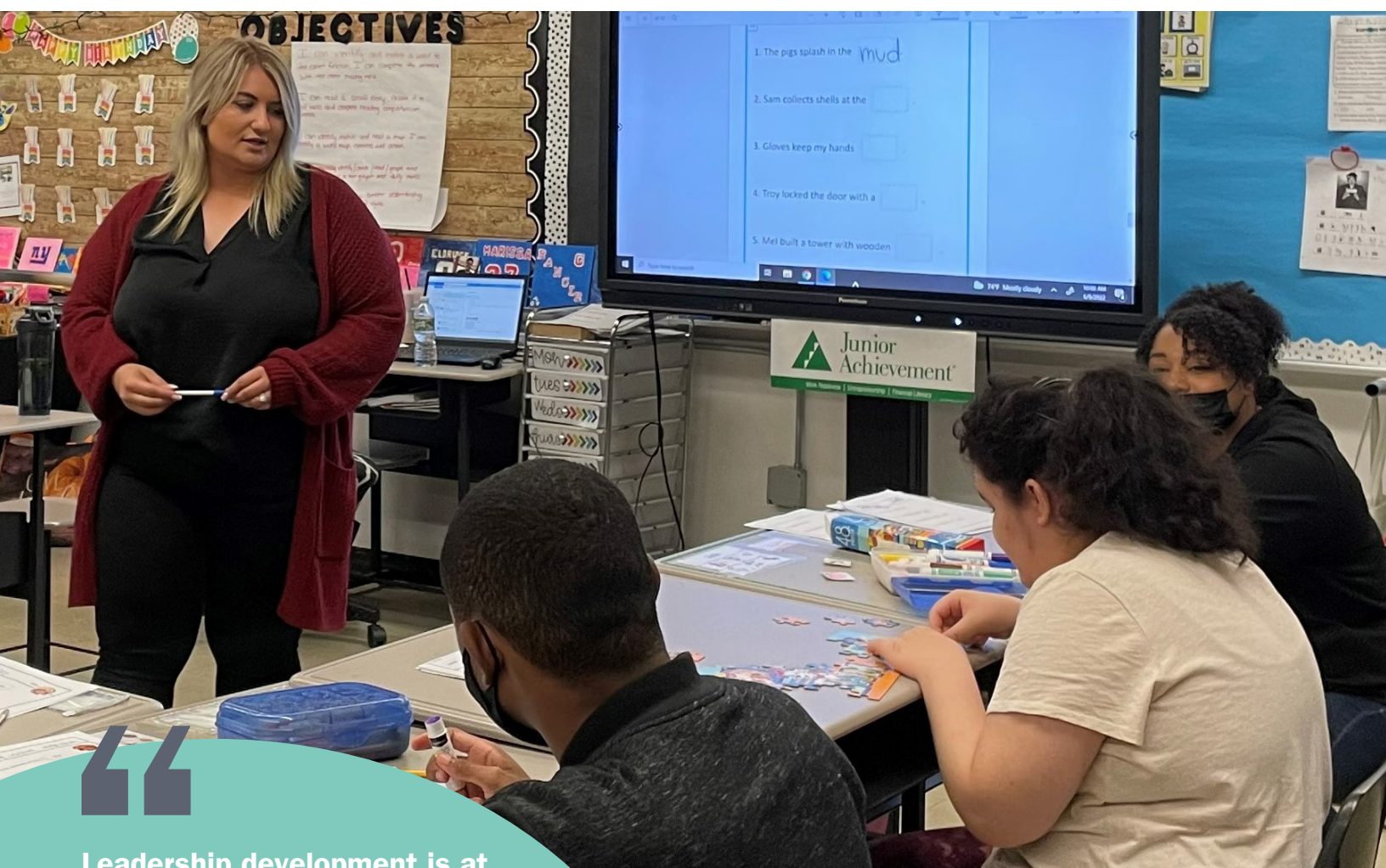
- **46% increase** in their effectiveness in providing staff professional learning opportunities to develop culturally responsive practice knowledge and skills; mentoring staff to enhance their skills; and creating structures that encourage collaboration and collective action.
- **56% increase** in their ability to empower teachers to select rigorous, culturally responsive instructional materials; observing for and providing feedback on culturally responsive instruction; designing curriculum that incorporates students' backgrounds; and monitoring disaggregated student and school outcomes.
- **52% increase** in their ability to cultivate and communicate a shared vision of high expectations for all; building partnerships with students and families; and providing space for student voice.



Linking school leadership to culturally responsive classroom practice



We directly supported more than **1,000 school leaders**, from aspiring assistant principals to principals, in 2021-22.



“

Leadership development is at the heart of the work that we do at Yonkers Public Schools, and being able to partner with The Leadership Academy, that understands the work, but more importantly uses research as the driving force for the work, is so instrumental to moving the agenda here in our schools.”

► Superintendent Dr. Edwin M. Quezada,
Yonkers Public Schools

Guided by our Framework for Culturally Responsive Leadership, we are pioneering programs that develop leaders' capacity to create and foster culturally responsive practices and in turn improve the instructional core. Culturally responsive schools have support systems, structures, and routines that prioritize and focus the alignment and coherence of culturally responsive curriculum, high-quality instructional materials, instructional practice, and assessment to support all students in accessing and achieving rigorous college- and career-ready academic standards.



HIGHLIGHTS

Principals of Color Collective

Now more than ever, principals of color need safe spaces and community to heal from the isolation, frustration, and trauma of leading through a pandemic and a racial reckoning. After all, principals of color comprise only 20% of school leaders across the country. That's why The Leadership Academy this year launched The Principals of Color Collective, a “by-us, for-us” initiative that provides the space and training for principals to support other principals and create equitable schools for their students. Each month, more than 165 principals and assistant principals from across the country convene in a virtual small group setting to explore self-generated discussion themes such as racial healing, leading through a pandemic, and building and sustaining equitable schools. Leaders also have unlimited access to an online platform for resource-sharing and discussion. In 2023, members of the Principals of Color Collective will have the opportunity to facilitate their own cohorts, helping grow the reach of the Collective into its second year.



By sharing our experiences, we are helping one another tap into the power of our stories and lead from that power, rather than struggle with the burden of isolation. That shift has been crucial to my ability to gather the community around our students, to form important partnerships, and to help strengthen our village so we can truly ensure every child excels.”

► Otis Kitchen, *Principal, Town and Country Elementary School, FL*



HIGHLIGHTS

Aspiring principals

Developing aspiring principals is foundational to The Leadership Academy's work. It was what we were founded to do nearly 20 years ago. Since our beginnings building an aspiring principal program for New York City schools, we have supported 17 districts in 11 states and Washington, D.C., in creating APP programs. In 2021-22, we supported aspiring leader programs in Lexington County School District One; DC Public Schools; Buffalo Public Schools; Portland Public Schools, OR; and Yonkers Public Schools in NY. We began designing programs with Omaha, NB, and Martin County, FL, that are launching this year.

“

Every single family, every single child, every human being has a story, and it's our job to find out what that story is, so that we can meet the needs of every student that we have in our building.”

► Assistant Supt. Erik Wright, Yonkers Public Schools, and NYC APP Cohort 1 alum





HIGHLIGHTS



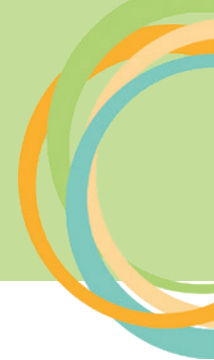
Chicago Public Schools Aspiring Assistant Principals Institute

Throughout the 2021-22 school year, The Leadership Academy supported the Chicago Public Schools in its design and delivery of the Aspiring Assistant Principals' Institute, a three-tiered program focused on developing culturally responsive instructional leaders and practices within the schools. Eighteen aspiring leaders participated in virtual professional learning and received mentoring from assistant principals to prepare them for CPS leadership roles. Mentors engaged in their own learning by exploring problems of practice and strengthening coaching skills. Shortly after completing our program, one graduate became the first to receive an assistant principal position with Chicago Public Schools.

“Building my skills as a culturally responsive leader with The Leadership Academy has been vital to my daily work of analyzing and evaluating programs for my students and families and making sure our students have equitable access to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. More than ever, I see the impact and importance of working toward expanding access to early college and post-secondary opportunities.”

► Tasha Henderson, *Early College and STEM Program Manager, Chicago Public Schools*

Developing a system-level approach to dismantling inequities



We directly supported **350 school system leaders** in 2021-22.



To shift practice in ways that are sustainable, change must be systemic. In 2021-22, we provided targeted professional learning and capacity building at the school and central office levels to address inequities. As part of that, we provided executive coaching; launched a national working group for school system Equity and Diversity Officers; and continued to support the West Michigan Leadership Academy. We supported districts in conducting audits of their systems, from enrollment to budgeting to staffing, to ensure they are designed

to give access and opportunity to every child. We also partnered with The District Leadership Design Lab at the University of Washington, led by Dr. Meredith Honig, to support the Central Office Transformation for Equity Network in taking a culturally responsive stance when leading central office transformation. Participating districts include Montgomery County Public Schools; Long Beach Unified School District; West Contra Costa School District; Highline Public Schools; Des Moines Public Schools; and St. Paul Public Schools.



HIGHLIGHTS

Equity audits

When Dr. Tauheedah Baker-Jones became the Chief Equity and Social Justice Officer for Atlanta Public Schools, she said no one was naming the root causes of many of the challenges in their schools. After establishing her new office and engaging in an equity audit with The Leadership Academy, “people are talking about equity across the organization,” she said. “The audit design team helped people have a dialogue about deficit mindsets and inequities between Black and brown students that I had not seen before.” Atlanta was one of 11 school systems and education organizations for whom we led an equity audit in 2021-22. Through these audits our team collectively supported 126 equity committee members; co-facilitated 79 focus groups of 429 community members; and surveyed 613 community members. Over the last two years, we have supported 20 equity audits in 15 different states.



These audits are intended to help school communities understand where inequities lie in their school system, what’s causing them, and what steps they can take to address them. We lead districts through a data collection process targeted to a district’s needs and areas of concern. We then analyze and present the data in ways that allow stakeholders to identify policies, practices and behaviors that may be contributing to gaps in outcomes and access for key groups of students.

Within a few months of their audit, leaders in Chelsea Public Schools in MA made several changes based on their audit findings:

- Offered professional learning to all staff before the start of the school year to build a common

understanding and shared language around culturally responsive education.

- Worked with the district’s Director of Human Resources on strategies for diversifying the district’s staff.
- Supported high school Black, Latinx and LGBTQ+ students in creating student affinity groups.
- Reviewed the district’s student handbook with an equity lens to better align it with the district’s values.
- Ensured all teams are using The Leadership Academy’s Portrait of a Culturally Responsive School as a guide to identify gaps, self-reflect on biases, maintain high expectations, and provide adequate support for all students.



The equity audit was necessary for us to capture an additional voice of our community.”

► Aaron Jennings,
Equity, Diversity, and
Excellence Officer,
Chelsea School District, MA



HIGHLIGHTS

Principal supervisors

Principals are better able to lead culturally responsive schools when they have supervisors who are focused on coaching, not compliance, and who put instructional leadership at the center of their work with principals. In its 7th year, the Culturally Responsive Principal Supervision program (formerly called Foundations of Principal Supervision) offers principal supervisors hands-on learning on the history of racial inequity in American education. They establish a personal “why” for their work as principal supervisors and develop an understanding of what culturally responsive and equitable practice looks like at the classroom, school, and district levels. They analyze data with attention to the diverse cultural and

learning needs of students; develop a strategic support plan aligned to a culturally responsive theory of change; and learn how to be capacity builders of school staff.

In 2021-22, we supported 80 leaders: 20 principal supervisors from 10 school systems came together as a national cohort; 45 leaders from 13 districts met as part of our Texas-based program; and 15 leaders from three districts in Missouri convened. We also supported principal supervisors in Columbus, OH, and Portland, OR. These leaders all join our growing network of more than 200 principal supervisors working in 61 school systems across 23 states.



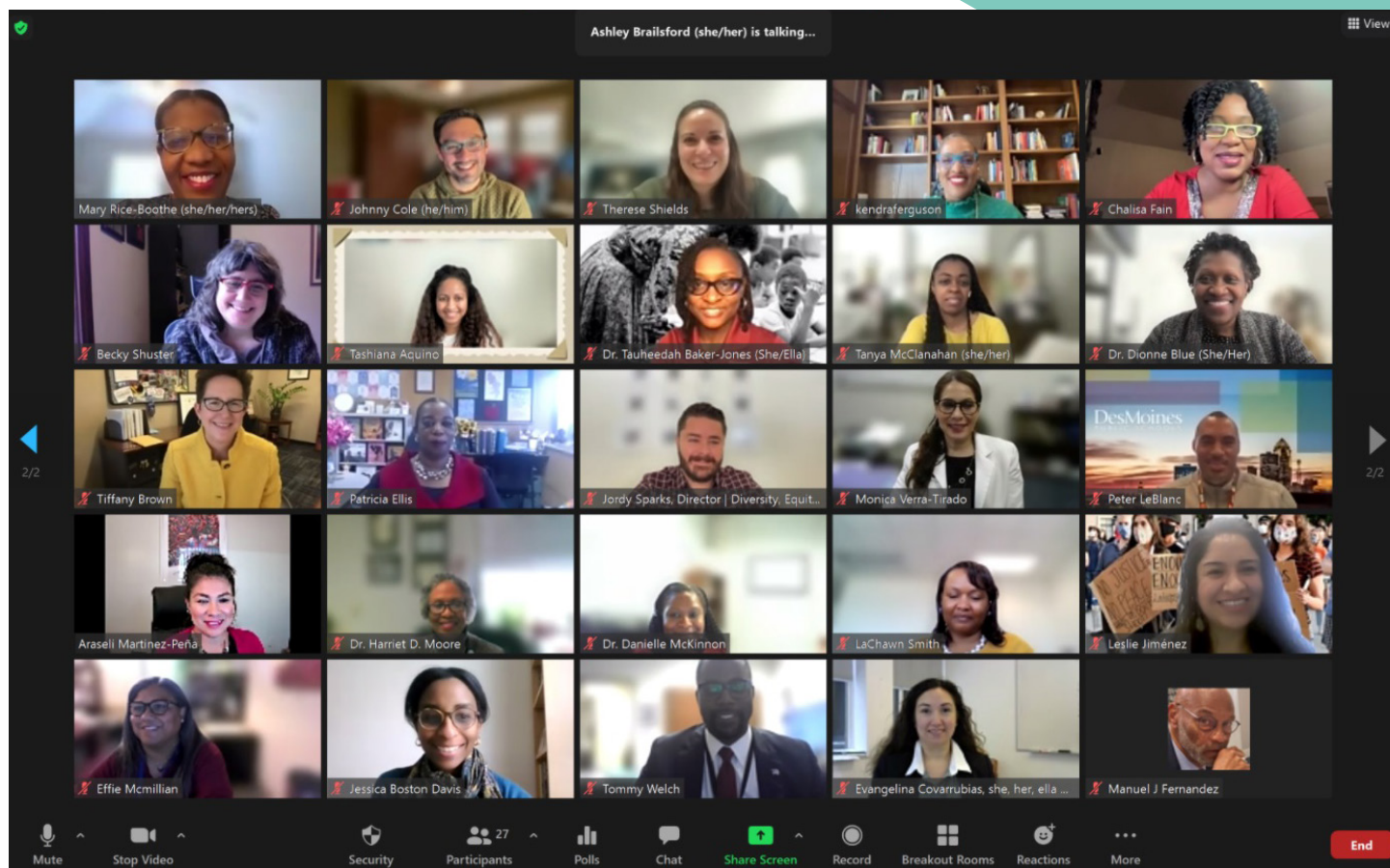
HIGHLIGHTS

Equity Officers Collective

To meet the needs of the growing number of Equity Officers in school systems across the country, we established this collective to create space for participants to address problems of practice, share personal experiences, and pool collective expertise. In addition to supporting one another, this group of 33 leaders from 28 school systems is building a suite of open-source tools and resources for leaders.

“The Equity Officer Collective has been nothing short of amazing. The connections and insight across multiple states, the diverse lived experiences and similarities in work challenges, and the empowerment and education poured into us by the facilitators remind us of the contribution we are making to ensure positive change and success for all.”

► Danielle McKinnon, PhD,
Director of Equity and
Diversity, Brevard Public Schools





HIGHLIGHTS

Influence 100

For Leahy School Principal Ethel Cruz of Lawrence, MA, the superintendency once seemed like an unattainable goal. Cruz's perspective shifted, however, thanks to Influence 100, a leadership program created by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in partnership with The Leadership Academy that aims to develop a racially and ethnically diverse group of education leaders in the state.

In 2021-22, 24 education leaders from 15 school systems across MA graduated as the first cohort of the two-year program. The fellows benefited from:

- A network of strong **relationships** and learning from other fellows and experienced leaders from across the state.
- **Tools, resources and activities** that contributed to their



professional development and their work as effective leaders in their districts. They received support bringing an equity lens to all aspects of the superintendency including budgeting, working with school committees, strategic planning, and impacting the instructional core.

- **Action research projects** which created valuable real world learning opportunities and a chance to transform

practices in their districts. For example, in her project, Cruz laid the groundwork for a bilingual, bicultural teacher pipeline by surveying the district's paraprofessionals to identify their financial, childcare, transportation and professional learning needs. The district then partnered with a local college to create a program targeted at helping paraprofessionals become certified teachers.



I know a lot more about myself now and how to both be an ally and lead the work in my district. I have garnered so much strength and courage."

► Julie Stanley, Principal, Athol-Royalston Middle School, Influence 100 alum

Creating and sharing research-driven leadership approach

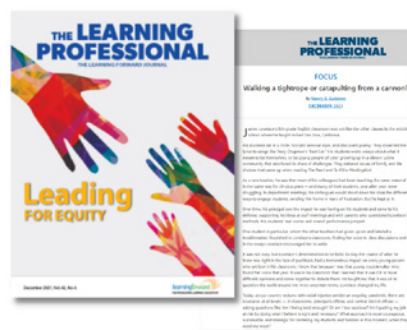
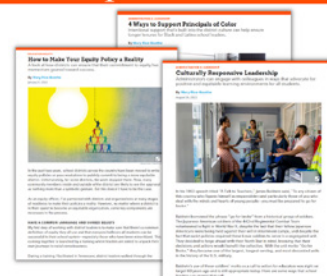
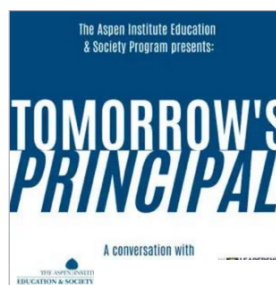
We are committed to sharing our expertise with as many leaders as possible to support the disruption of inequities in systems across the country. To do that, we expanded access to our research-based approach so that leaders whom we do not directly support can learn from and apply it to their own context, and so that policy makers can consider the impact of this work and the policies needed to expand it.

HIGHLIGHTS

We were invited to join **Research Partnership for Professional Learning (RPPL)**, a consortium of research scholars and education-focused nonprofit organizations seeking to learn what makes professional learning stick with educators. RPPL is based at the Annenberg Institute at Brown University.

The Leadership Academy and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, together with leaders from four universities, received a \$3 million grant from the **U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES)** to create and validate research-based tools that school leaders can leverage to understand and cultivate culturally responsive practices. In 2021-22, the team began building rubrics to be tested in schools and a toolkit to help educators use those rubrics.

Our team spoke on 52 panels and delivered 15 keynote addresses. We were featured in eight podcasts, published five op-eds and eight blogs and produced 18 videos showcasing different aspects of our work. We are thrilled that more people are visiting our website and using our resources with their teams – website traffic has grown by 80% since 2020 and our free tools and resources have been downloaded nearly 7,000 times.



Becoming a more equitable organization



To deliver on our vision, it's essential that our own organizational culture, behaviors, and actions reflect the intentionality and commitment to equity that we bring to our work with clients. We are committed to actively honing our efforts to be an equitable organization with a set of core values and expectations that support our everyday efforts to create an inclusive environment for every staff member, especially our Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and People of Color colleagues. We did this in 2021-22 by defining what it means to be an equitable organization; maintaining and enhancing opportunities for learning, healing, and community building through affinity groups, staff development opportunities, retreats, external coaching and partnerships with external organizations including FACE Race, Lora Cover of coLeague, and the Remote DEI Collective; and finalizing new equitable policies related to parental leave, attire, and flex time.



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.

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