Education
Grantmaking Strategy
December 2021
INTRODUCTION

This report was informed by discussions with grantees, leaders in public education, and a consultant’s analysis of issues and opportunities.

The report will address:

- An overview of the City’s public school system, including its governance and its budget;
- A description of who attends public school, whom the system serves well, and whom it serves poorly;
- A discussion of the opportunity gap—the difference in academic achievement between various demographic groups;
- A summary of philanthropic activity in New York City education;
- Our current guidelines and grantmaking accomplishments;
- Recent developments; and
- Findings and conclusions.

We will then recommend a revised grantmaking strategy for the Education Program.
MOST CITY STUDENTS ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOL

About 1.4 million children attend school in New York City. A small number (120,000, or 8.4 percent) are enrolled in charter schools; just under 300,000 attend private or parochial schools. The remaining 1 million are enrolled in the City’s public schools, where enrollment dropped 4 percent during the pandemic. Regardless of whether this is a short or long-term trend, the vast majority of students attend public schools.

THE CITY’S SCHOOL SYSTEM IS THE LARGEST IN THE COUNTRY

New York City’s Department of Education is the largest school district in the country. It is nearly double the size of the second-largest, Los Angeles Unified School District, which has 600,000 students. The City has 1,606 public elementary, middle, and high schools, 260 charter schools, and a budget of $34 billion. Its large size, combined with a decentralized system of management and oversight, make it difficult to provide an accurate and comprehensive snapshot of its quality—and even harder to effect system-wide change.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The City’s student body is overwhelmingly comprised of students of color. It is racially and ethnically diverse; the chart below captures just some of that diversity.

GOVERNANCE

In comparison with school systems run by most states and localities, the City’s public schools are highly decentralized.

- Appointed by the state legislature, the Board of Regents oversees standards, student performance on statewide tests, teacher and principal certification, school safety, and education spending. But most decisions in the State are left to localities.
- For decades, the City’s schools were run by 32 community school boards and the Board of Education. The elected community school boards made most school policy decisions, from curriculum to discipline.

In 2002, then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg successfully petitioned the State Legislature for control of the City’s schools, ushering in the current system of mayoral control.

- Under this system, the mayor has the authority to appoint the chancellor and make most policy decisions.
- The Panel for Educational Policy, appointed largely by the mayor, reviews and approves the Department’s education policy and spending plans, but has limited power.
- Mayoral control is time-limited; since 2002, the State Legislature has chosen to delegate authority to the mayor for short periods, retaining the power to revisit the decision every few years.

Instructional and operational support for City schools has taken various forms since the onset of mayoral control. Regardless of the form, however, all have left principals with significant discretion over instruction and school budgets.

- Parents and local leaders are invited to participate in school governance via School Leadership Teams and Community Education Councils; unlike the community school boards that existed prior to mayoral control, these groups have little power.

Approximately 160 schools are part of so-called Affinity Networks, supported by organizations such as New Visions for Public Schools, NYC Outward Bound Schools, Urban Assembly, Internationals Network for Public Schools, and CUNY, creating networks that collaborate on curriculum, professional development, and data management as well as initiatives for college advisement and improving school culture.

Although not an official part of the governance structure, the United Federation of Teachers and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators are powerful players in setting school policy; their influence extends well beyond traditional issues of collective bargaining into areas including instruction and school discipline.

Safety services are provided by the New York City Police Department School Safety Division, not by the Department of Education. The Division currently employs 5,000 school safety agents and 200 police officers.
EDUCATION REVENUE

The Department of Education has an annual budget of $34 billion, almost all of which comes from public sources.

EDUCATION SPENDING

Of the $34 billion, approximately 80 percent is spent on operations, including salaries for school, district, and central office staff, and expenses like nutrition, transportation, and materials. The remaining 20 percent covers debt service, pension contributions, and health care contributions.

Department of Education Budget, 2018-2019 (dollars in thousands)

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The City has a separate capital budget for schools, which is managed by the School Construction Authority; that budget is not included in the table above. The capital budget is $17 billion for a five-year plan from 2020 to 2024.
EQUITY IN SCHOOL FUNDING

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are often more expensive to educate. They bring additional challenges and needs to classrooms and schools. These needs are instructional (e.g. staff with expertise in teaching English as a second language), ancillary (e.g. social worker support), and material (e.g. washing machines for homeless students living in hotels).

The federal government, the State, and the City all allocate at least some education funding according to various formulas designed to compensate for the additional costs of serving students who are in poverty, learning English, or disabled.

- The State’s primary funding formula, known as Foundation Aid, accounts for both student need and the amount that a school district raises locally, usually through property taxes.
- The City’s main formula, known as Fair Student Funding, also accounts for student need.

Although these systems were designed to bring additional resources to high-need schools, the City and State failed to fully fund them for decades.

- In 2006, the New York State Court of Appeals found that the State was violating students’ constitutional right to a “sound and basic education” by leaving the City’s schools without adequate funding; the State agreed to a $5.5 billion increase in Foundation Aid to the City but instead made more modest increases.

Some local, state, and federal funding sources do not take student need into account. For example, the City’s Fair Student Funding formula provides additional money not just to schools that serve needy students, but also to “academically challenging high schools with supplementary instruction and assessments, including higher course/credit loads and AP courses.”
SEGREGATION BY RACE AND INCOME

Although the overall student body is diverse, the schools themselves are not. White and Asian students are far more likely to attend schools that are disproportionately white and Asian, while Black and Latinx students generally attend schools that are disproportionately Black and Latinx. Black and Latinx students are much more likely to attend a school where more than 75 percent of students experience poverty than their white peers.

THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

Some of the City’s schools serve students well; others do not. Students at the highest-performing schools tend to be white and Asian; the students at struggling schools are overwhelmingly Black and Latinx.

- While 70 percent of public school students are Black or Latinx, they represent less than 25 percent of students in the Gifted & Talented program.
- Less than 10 percent of students at the City’s eight specialized high schools are Black and Latinx.

Flagship programs have space for only a tiny fraction of the City’s students; even if enrollment were representative of City’s racial demographics—and even if the programs were expanded substantially—they would remain out of reach for the vast majority of students.

The majority of Black and Latinx students attend schools with less experienced teachers and principals, fewer extra-curricular opportunities, and lower achievement scores. High schools serving predominantly Black and Latinx students offer fewer Advanced Placement classes and college advising opportunities and have below-average high school graduation and college-readiness rates.

Although Asian students (in the aggregate) do well on most measures of school success, aggregating such a diverse population hides critical pockets of need.

- Encompassing over 40 ethnicities and dozens of languages, the designation Asian includes students with Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander, and Arabic ancestry.
- Three such communities—Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Arab—are some of the poorest in the City.
- While some Asian students thrive in the current system, others struggle with racially-motivated attacks, inadequate translation services, under-referrals for special education, and insufficient programming for English language learners and undocumented students.
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Much of the data related to student achievement is bad, hampered by frequent changes in policies and instruments that make it impossible to compare scores from year to year. At the same time, experts vigorously debate whether standardized achievement tests are a meaningful measure of student learning. Nonetheless, there are at least three indicia of academic performance that are worth consideration: attendance, reading levels, and graduation rates.

Attendance
School attendance is highly correlated with academic success. From 2000 to 2018, rates of chronic absenteeism—missing 18 or more days of school—decreased by 8 percentage points in the City, meaning that more children are in the classroom and ready to learn. But some 250,000 are still chronically absent, and much work remains to ensure that students show up for school.

Reading
While all subjects are important, reading is a foundational skill; without the ability to read, students in middle and high school have difficulty learning any subject taught using text. But the City’s schools are failing to teach students to read. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—also called the “Nation’s Report Card”—43 percent of fourth graders and 37 percent of eighth graders are reading at a level that is below basic. The City’s performance on this exam has not improved in 15 years.

Graduation Rates
From 2004 to 2018, the City saw a dramatic rise in the overall high school graduation rate, from 54 percent to 80 percent. This translates to about 23,000 more students graduating on time each year. College enrollment increased during this period as well. However, while more students are completing the graduation requirements and enrolling in college, many are not prepared for college. Only 73 percent of graduates in the Class of 2020 met the standards set by the City University of New York for college readiness in English and math, as determined by Regents exam scores and placement tests.
ACHIEVEMENT GAPS

Overall, Black and Latinx students do poorly on standard measures of school success as compared with their white and Asian peers.

- While school attendance has improved for all racial and ethnic groups, Black and Latinx students are still more than twice as likely as white and Asian students to be chronically absent.
- Only 17 percent of the City’s Black fourth graders and 18 percent of Latinx fourth graders scored at or above proficient on a national reading exam, compared to 41 percent of their white peers and 46 percent of their Asian peers. These rates have remained static for many years.
- The City has made the greatest progress in closing the racial gap in graduation rates; however, white and Asian students still have graduation rates that are 15 percent higher than their Black and Latinx peers.

Students with Disabilities

- Nearly one in five New York City public school children—about 200,000—is diagnosed with a disability, making them eligible to receive special education services. Most of those students are in integrated settings, meaning they spend the majority of the day with students who do not have disabilities.
- New York is the only city in the nation that has a segregated district for students with disabilities. About 25,000 students attend District 75, which provides instructional support for students with significant challenges such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, cognitive delays, so-called emotional disturbance, sensory impairments (such as blindness), and multiple disabilities.
- Students of color, boys, and students from low-income neighborhoods are more likely to be placed in segregated settings, and specifically in District 75, than their white and better-off peers with similar disabilities.
- Outcomes for students with disabilities are poor. Students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended, more likely to be chronically absent, and more likely to score low on achievement tests (even if they do not have an intellectual disability) than their typically developing peers.
Homeless Students

- Almost 10 percent of elementary school-aged children—or more than 111,000 students—experienced homelessness in 2020, up from 6.4 percent a decade earlier.
- Students in temporary housing have worse educational outcomes than their stably housed peers. Outcomes are particularly bleak for students living in shelters. During the 2015-2016 school year, 53 percent of students living in shelters missed the equivalent of one month of school, and only 15 percent scored proficient in reading.
- Homeless students are overwhelmingly concentrated in the poorest communities and are disproportionately Black and Latinx.

English Language Learners and Students with Interrupted Formal Education

- English language learners comprise 13 percent of public school students, or 149,000 students. English language learners who enter the system in grade school—and get the support they need—have some of the best outcomes of any students. Nonetheless, English language learners as a whole have substantially worse drop-out and graduation rates than their peers.
- Few programs meet the needs of students who enter the system after 9th grade. In particular, the City lacks a coordinated approach for students with interrupted formal education—those who are below grade level in their home language due to inconsistent or interrupted schooling prior to their arrival in the City.
- Some 4,200 recent immigrants aged 14 to 21 have never enrolled in school at all.
WHAT DRIVES EDUCATIONAL INEQUITIES?

Racism—unfavorable treatment of non-white students is a hallmark of the City’s schools.

- Studies show that teachers, consciously or not, often have lower expectations for Black and Latinx students, and that low expectations can lead to lower performance.
- Researchers have concluded that that the City’s schools underserve and underestimate Black and Latinx parents and their children.

Instructional quality—teacher experience and turnover are highly correlated with quality instruction.

- In the City, schools with students who are primarily Black, Latinx, and/or low-income have higher teacher turnover, more uncertified teachers, and fewer teachers with master’s degrees than schools with students who are primarily white and better off.
- In District 31, which occupies all of Staten Island and where only 58 percent of students are economically disadvantaged, teacher turn-over is eight percent. In comparison, Harlem’s District 5, which is overwhelmingly Black and Latinx and where 82 percent of the students are economically disadvantaged, has a teacher turn-over rate of 29 percent.

School discipline and policing—the School Safety Division is, on its own, one of the largest police departments in the nation, with 5,000 officers; there are more safety agents in the City’s schools than guidance counselors and social workers combined.

- The system’s reliance on suspensions and arrests to manage student behavior often impedes the success of Black and Latinx students. Even after accounting for other factors, suspended students have weaker attendance, course completion rates, and standardized test scores and are more likely to drop out than their peers.
- Although the number of students arrested dropped 60 percent over the past ten years and suspensions were cut in half, Black and Latinx students, low-income students, and students with disabilities are still suspended and arrested at higher.
- Almost one-third of police interventions in school are related to student mental health crises; from 2016 to 2020, police responded to a total 12,050 incidents in which a student in emotional distress was removed from class and transported to the hospital for psychological evaluation—termed a “child in crisis” intervention. Black students and students in District 75 are dramatically over-represented in these incidents.
Curricula designed for white students—students perform better when they can see themselves and their communities reflected in the curricula.

• Across the City, schools and teachers often use curricula that fails to take in account the astonishing diversity of the student body or to help students learn about and grapple with issues of race and ethnicity.

Systems designed for English-speaking parents—approximately 40 percent of public school parents have limited English proficiency.

• These parents struggle to access basic information about their children’s schools, like attendance requirements and school closures; navigating procedures like requesting services for students with disabilities is even harder.
• Although schools are required to provide translation services, parents speak 154 different languages, and few schools have the resources to meet parents’ translation and interpretation needs.

School assignment procedures—the City has embraced school choice, but few children are in a position to research and apply to schools on their own.

• Students with caregivers who speak English, have access to the internet, are knowledgeable about the system, and are well-connected often gain access to the most desirable placements, while students with caregivers who are unable or unwilling to navigate the school choice process attend struggling schools.

A history of underfunding—in order to close the achievement gap, low income students need higher per pupil spending than their peers.

• In 2022, the City and State will fully fund the formulas for supporting needy students for the first time in history.
• Assuming that those formulas are adequate, it will nevertheless take years before students and schools reap the full benefit; only students in the class of 2035 or later will enjoy increased per pupil funding for the entire course of their education.

Housing—many of the City’s best performing schools are in neighborhoods that are geographically inaccessible to most low-income families of color.

• Due to residential segregation, families in low-income neighborhoods of color often have less access to services—from libraries to tutoring companies—that help children prepare for and succeed in school.
EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all aspects of the education system.

- The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented disruption to schools. All instruction was remote from April 2020 to the end of the school year; summer school in 2020 was also remote. During the 2020-2021 school year, many schools offered a “blended” option, which allowed students to attend school in-person one or more days a week. Nonetheless, the majority of the City’s roughly one million students — about 600,000 — opted for fully-remote learning. The City’s schools fully reopened for the 2021-2022 school year.
- The City kept very little data about which students or schools were fully-remote versus blended, and even less about the quantity and quality of remote instruction; the City did not require teachers to provide live or recorded classes and many students received little instruction.
- During remote learning, students in the shelter system had the lowest attendance rate of any student group: just 76 percent. Attendance rates also dropped significantly for English language learners and students with disabilities. While these student populations were already absent more frequently than their peers prior to the pandemic, disparities have grown even worse this year.

The pandemic made inadequate access to technology an emergency.

- Thirty percent of the City’s households do not have a broadband subscription, and almost 18 percent—more than 1.5 million New Yorkers—have neither a mobile nor a broadband connection.
- When the City responded to the pandemic by moving to remote instruction, students without a broadband connection struggled to participate. Some attempted to participate using their smart phones or the WiFi-enabled tablets distributed by the City, but tablets are not adequate devices for middle and high school students, and the cellular service was often insufficient to stream programs like Zoom.
- At the outset of the pandemic, none of the City’s family shelters provided WiFi to residents; in fall 2020, Mayor de Blasio pledged to remedy this; in a lawsuit brought by the Legal Aid Society, the City stipulated that it would wire all of the family shelters.
- Even after the pandemic abates, internet access will remain vital to academic success. For example, the City’s mandatory high school application process is accessible only online, and the City plans to require remote learning on snow days. And teachers increasingly require students to perform work online using web-based tools like IXL (math), RazKids (reading) and Vista (foreign languages).
CURRENT OPPORTUNITIES

After a 30-year battle, in 2021 the state fully-implemented Foundation Aid to distribute state aid in an equitable manner, based on student need.

- Under the new state funding formula, the City’s schools will get an estimated additional $1 billion a year.
- The bulk of these funds will go to schools that serve the largest numbers of students who are in poverty, homeless, disabled, and/or learning English.

Mayor Bill de Blasio’s flagship educational programs are the expansion of Pre-K and 3-K.

- In 2014, Mayor de Blasio created the Universal Pre-K program, expanding the number of seats for four-year-olds from 19,000 to 70,000.
- In 2017, the mayor started 3-K for All, which will serve 40,000 children in fall 2021; the City used one-time federal pandemic recovery funds to support the 2021 expansion, raising concerns about sustainability.

Prior to 2019, most of the City’s early childhood programs were run by the Administration for Children’s Services. In 2019, Mayor de Blasio consolidated all early childhood programs under the Department of Education, providing new opportunities for creating a coherent system of education and support for children ages 0 to 5.

The Universal Literacy initiative—particularly the use of literacy coaches—has helped improve early reading skills.

- Begun in 2016, the Universal Literacy program aims to ensure that second grade students read at grade-level by 2026.
- The program recruited reading coaches with expertise in research-based reading acquisition techniques, provided these coaches with additional training, and ensured that every school was matched with a coach to support kindergarten, first, and second-grade teachers.
- An evaluation conducted after the second year of the initiative found that, on average, students whose teachers worked with a literacy coach improved their reading scores more than those whose schools were not assigned a coach. The difference in improvement was small but statistically significant.
The City is attempting to address the segregation of Black, Latinx, and very low-income students into low-performing, under-resourced schools—and their underrepresentation in the system’s flagship programs.

- In 2021, the City instituted open (not contingent on grades or test scores) admissions at almost all middle schools; as a result, the fifty most selective middle schools increased offers to low-income families by 7 percent and to English language learners by 4 percent.

- The City recently ended a long-standing preference for residents of District 2 (which includes Manhattan’s wealthiest neighborhoods) for some of the City’s most sought-after high schools. As a result, 60 percent of offers went to students eligible for free lunch this year, compared to 47 percent last year.

- A handful of districts, most notably District 15 in Brooklyn, have had success with voluntary efforts to better integrate their elementary and middle schools.

- In late 2021, Mayor de Blasio announced that the City would overhaul the Gifted and Talented program; in contrast, Mayor-elect Eric Adams has said that the City will keep the current system in place.

The City is designing a universal math and English curriculum that will reflect the diversity of the student body.

- In spring 2021, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that the City will invest $200 million to create and implement new English and math curricula that reflect and value the racial and ethnic identities of its students.

- Known as the Mosaic curriculum, it will include modules for grades Pre-K through 12, and be ready for classrooms by fall 2023; schools must either use the universal curriculum or seek a waiver.

- The City announced the Mosaic curriculum at a time when there is both a resurgent national movement for racial justice and a mounting national movement to prohibit teaching school children about racism or so-called critical race theory.
PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITY & PRIORITIES

In 2018, foundations provided more than $550 million in education-related grants in New York City. However, the vast majority of this funding is spent outside of the public school system.

- Three of the largest funders make grants almost exclusively to yeshivas, totaling $30 million in spending.
- Several of the largest funders primarily make grants to charter networks, or individual private or parochial schools, totaling almost $100 million in spending.
- The National Philanthropic Trust and Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund distribute grants from Donor Advised Funds, totaling $100 million in spending; the majority of these grants are to charter and private schools.

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Total elementary/secondary education grants for the Trust includes both competitive grants and grants made from Donor Advised Funds.

Outside of charter schools, major foundations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation are focused on teacher training, school leadership, and curriculum development.
THE TRUST’S EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM

From 2011 to 2021, The Trust’s competitive grants program made $20,193,800 in grants to strengthen the City’s public schools.

The grants:

- Won fair and adequate State funding for the City’s schools, particularly those that serve large numbers of students in poverty, disabled students, and English language learners.
- Reformed school discipline (with substantial funds from our youth development program), cutting the rates of suspension and school-based arrests in half by revising the disciplinary code, helping schools revamp their procedures, and supporting the development, evaluation, and expansion of restorative justice and mediation programs.
- Improved services for newly-arrived immigrant students, from the way the City greets them at school enrollment centers, to the quality of instruction for English language learners with interrupted formal education, to their safety from immigration enforcement while at school.
- Assisted tens of thousands of families in navigating the school system by informing them of their rights and helping them obtain appropriate school placements, special education services, bilingual and English as a Second Language instruction, and transportation, and by helping them avoid suspensions and expulsions.
- Supported a successful grassroots campaign to adopt citywide math and English curricula that reflect and value the racial and ethnic identities of the student body.
- Helped students in homeless shelters access WiFi for remote learning while schools were closed due to the pandemic.

**Almost half of grant funds (46 percent) supported projects to improve service delivery.**

- 39 percent of the funds supported research, policy, and advocacy.
- 12 percent supported fellowships, scholarships, and awards.
- 3 percent supported projects for planning and program development or strengthening organizational capacity.
In addition, in other program areas The Trust:

- Improved arts education for students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Worked with the Department of Education to test a model of inclusive education—one that has proven to help students with autism—with students who have behavioral disabilities.
- Expanded access to school-based health clinics.
- Won access to free school lunch for all students; since the start of universal free school lunch, at least 30,000 more students are eating school lunch every day.
- Ensured that youth have access to quality workforce and summer employment opportunities.

Not all of The Trust’s grants were successful. Some projects that did not go as expected include:

- An effort to create a searchable website to help families learn about their high school options failed when the City contracted with a technology firm that was not equipped to handle the scope of the data. The City later created a searchable website using alternative funds.
- A study of the impact of school choice on students in the homeless shelter system was derailed when researchers failed to account for the challenges of recruiting and maintaining contact with families in crisis.
- A program to improve literacy for foster children ran into trouble when the grantee was unable to find reading tutors who were willing to travel to the neighborhoods in which the children resided.
- An initiative to provide enhanced summer instruction and enrichment activities for students in the Bronx yielded mixed academic results and was discontinued when the City changed its summer programming priorities.
THE BROOKE ASTOR FUND FOR NEW YORK CITY EDUCATION

The Brooke Astor Fund for New York City Education added more than $35 million to The Trust’s education grantmaking and helped 65,000 young children become better readers.

- Established in 2013, the Astor Fund’s purpose was to improve the reading skills of disadvantaged students in kindergarten through fifth grade attending high-poverty City schools.
- The Fund was time-limited; the final funds were spent in 2021.
- In 2013 and 2014, the Fund issued two open requests for proposals to identify nonprofits working with City schools to improve young children’s foundational reading skills, such as oral language, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Between 2013 and 2021, with guidance from an advisory panel, The Trust awarded $36,110,000 in grants to a wide range of nonprofits that provide direct services to students and training to teachers to improve classroom instruction.

Astor grantees improved teaching practice and reading outcomes. According to Metis Associates, the Fund’s external evaluator, each year:

- the number of students in participating schools reading at grade level increased by 10 to 20 percent;
- 94 percent of participating students showed improvement in their reading skills from pre-to-post-tests; and,
- participating teachers frequently used proven techniques to improve student’s oral language, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.
Grants from the Astor Fund helped:

- Develop, test, and scale novel research-based models, including Early Reading Matters, a teacher training and coaching program developed by Teaching Matters; Ready Readers, an after-school reading enrichment model; and ReadWorks’ Article A Day, an online reading program that helped tens of thousands of teachers and students with remote reading instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Expand proven early reading programs, such as World of Words, to school districts with low reading performance.
- Create and spread the use of a digital student data tool to inform classroom instruction and help school administrators provide targeted supports to students and teachers to improve reading performance.
- Map the so-called “K-3 NYC Reading Improvement Sector” to assess the effectiveness of nonprofits working with schools to improve reading outcomes, and develop a framework to help school administrators choose literacy partners wisely.

We have learned that:

- Improving reading outcomes in the early grades is essential to narrowing the racial achievement gap.
- Research-based reading strategies and practices implemented at scale at the school, district, and system level can improve reading outcomes in kindergarten through third grade.
- Communities of practice among grantees and the Department of Education can help them address issues; think more strategically about program efficacy, scalability, and sustainability; and leverage their expertise and influence to advance systemic change.
FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS

The success of the City’s students is closely tied to the welfare of the City’s low-income communities of color.

- As with social determinants of health, conditions in the places where people live, work, and play affect educational outcomes. Many factors that affect student performance are outside the mandate of the education system, including economic stability, racial inequality, housing, and access to healthcare.

- Access to technology—a computer, the internet, and the know-how to use them—is now necessary for academic success but is not provided by the school system and is beyond the means of many families.

All 1,600 schools must be good schools.

- There is a growing consensus that the most sought-after schools should be better integrated by race, ethnicity, and economic status, but little consensus on how to achieve that goal and strong opposition from families and alumni who view access to elite schools—and to a high-quality education more generally—as a zero-sum game. But selective programs represent a tiny fraction of the system; for that reason, school reform efforts must consider the quality of teaching and learning of all 1,600 schools.

- After decades of pressing for fair and adequate funding, in 2022, for the first time ever, all schools will receive the full amount owed under the State and City formulas designed to account for the additional costs of educating students who live in poverty, are learning English, and have disabilities. But adequate funding alone is no guarantee that schools will meet the needs of disadvantaged students. The City must now ensure that the additional funding is spent on programs that help educators improve outcomes for underserved students.

- For school choice to provide meaningful opportunities to all students, the City must develop methods for identifying and assisting students whose caregivers are unable to navigate the Gifted and Talented, middle school, and high school application processes.

School leaders are change agents.

- In a system that gives individual schools significant discretion, it is critical to develop capable school leaders who are dedicated to the success of underserved students, and who understand how to build the capacity of their teachers and staff.
• Similarly, it is crucial to develop compelling, affordable, evidence-based programs that school leaders will adopt voluntarily.

• The City’s schools are poorly-equipped to support student wellness, and too often rely on school security agents to handle student mental health crises, particularly when the students are Black, Latinx, or disabled. But schools that implement evidence-based restorative justice programs, student support services, and other alternatives to traditional discipline are able to lower their suspension rates while maintaining—and sometimes even improving—student safety and academic achievement.

Quality instruction requires investing in educators.

• The City’s elementary schools still fail to impart foundational skills such as reading and arithmetic to a significant percentage of their students. Schools need data, models, curricula, and professional growth opportunities that support proven methods of instruction and that provide tiered intervention for students who need additional academic help.

• It is not enough to adopt curricula that reflect and validate the diverse identities of the student body; schools and educators need support to teach those curricula with sensitivity and confidence.

Public schools are inherently political.

• Although the mayor has controlled the City’s schools since 2002, tension remains between those who favor a centralized system and those who think that policy decisions should rest with local communities. However, most experts favor mayoral control given the difficulty of holding local communities accountable for results. Importantly, the centralized system has the potential to make it easier for organized groups of parents, students, and advocates to press the mayor and the Chancellor to make system-wide policy changes.

Most philanthropy supports charter, parochial, and private schools.

• Foundations that invest in elementary and secondary education overwhelmingly support charter, parochial, and private schools; little funding is available for programs, research, capacity-building, or advocacy to improve public schools even though they serve the vast majority of the City’s students. In particular, few foundations support targeted efforts to improve public education for students of color and students who are disabled, English language learners, or living in transitional housing.
RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATION

The goal of The Trust’s Education Program is to ensure that New York City’s public schools provide all students with the opportunity to reach their full potential, and to graduate prepared for college and work. The Trust will support projects that focus on system-wide improvements and reforms that advance equity, narrow the opportunity gap, and create safe and supportive learning environments. We will:

1. **Expand opportunities and improve academic outcomes for students who are inadequately served by the City’s public schools for reasons such as poverty, race, disability, lack of English proficiency, and homelessness, with a focus on projects that can be adopted by numerous schools or at the district level.** The Trust will support projects that:

   - demonstrate programs and instructional approaches that have the potential to meet the learning needs of underserved students, with support from school leadership and/or the Department of Education;
   - support the adoption of research-informed programs to increase foundational skills in the early and middle grades, such as higher-order reading skills and arithmetic;
   - equip educators to use data to monitor student progress and provide and track targeted interventions;
   - increase access to high-level coursework, Advanced Placement classes, college classes, and early college programs for low-income students of color;
   - expand emotional and social support as well as academic, college, and career advisement, in schools with high numbers of underserved students;
   - increase retention of qualified teachers and leaders in high-poverty schools, including educators and leaders of color, through approaches including coaching, peer-to-peer learning, and communities of practice; and
   - ensure that all families and students have the necessary information and assistance to navigate the school choice process.
2. Promote policy advocacy and organizing to ensure that local and state policies affecting the programming, personnel, budget, priorities, and leadership of the City’s public schools account for the needs of all students, particularly those who have historically been inadequately served. Priority will be given to projects that:

- promote the use of high-quality, culturally-inclusive approaches and curricula as well as aligned professional growth opportunities for educators;
- contribute to safe and supportive school environments, and reduce reliance on suspensions and police intervention.
- increase access to technology—including computers, broadband accounts, and the skills necessary for their use—for economically-disadvantaged students; and
- help underserved students and families advocate for school policies that meet their needs.

3. Collect and share data on the state of the system, service gaps, student and parent preferences, and the potential and actual impact of policy choices. We will support:

- research projects that seek to answer practice and policy questions with implications for high-quality teaching and learning in the City’s public schools, with a focus on inquiries concerning underserved students.

Because our focus is on system-wide improvement and reform, The Trust will not fund:

- individual public or private schools, or charter schools; or
- programs that involve limited numbers of students or schools.