

# The Future is Now

Annual Report 2023





## Year in Review

# A Message From Our Leadership



**Amid rapid change in education and our world, one constant is the resilience and dedication of our nation's 3.2 million educators.**

They are why we have spent the past 13 years working to ensure educators can learn continuously, collaborate more intentionally, and maximize their influence on students' lives. But, the job of the educator has rarely been more difficult.

School systems continue to be a source of connection and critical resources in communities. Yet, they face staggering obstacles and volatile conditions caused by historical inequity, the aftershocks of the global pandemic, and evolving social forces.

- **Teachers** are bringing immense passion and care to accelerating and reimagining learning, but most still need better support to do their best work.
- That means too many **students** at the margins are not ready for their next step because they haven't yet had a fair opportunity to learn.

This current moment and the near future pose new challenges: deepening learning loss, growing politicization of education, workforce transformation with the emergence of generative AI, and tightening school budgets as pandemic relief funds expire.

These truths have pushed us to stay nimble, rooted in our values, and, most importantly, accountable to what works. Over the past year, Leading Educators reached critical milestones on our path to **doubling the number of students** we reach by 2025 to 400,000 students each year and **increasing our average effect size** on student learning by 50% in math and English language arts.

Our partners continue to defy national trends and achieve scalable results by going deep on supports for excellent teaching.

- Turnaround schools in **Charleston County School District** have doubled literacy since the pandemic, outpacing state growth and also decreasing the percentage of students in the lowest achievement levels by 11.3%.
- **Baltimore City Public Schools** accomplished double-digit increases in foundational reading skills proficiency last year after developing systemic professional learning and coaching focused on the science of reading. *(continued on next page)*

- Districts in **Detroit, Los Angeles, and Yakima** undertook complex efforts to create systemic alignment and lay the groundwork for continuous learning and exponential impact far into the future.

These are just a few of many partnerships in more than a dozen states that have cultivated fertile ground for real transformation, accomplished through and alongside passionate educators.

At the same time, **research** and evaluation, **innovation**, and **advocacy** efforts—many done in coalition with sector peers—are building a field and the internal capacities necessary to take educational opportunity to new heights.

However, while we've had a tremendous impact with our partners, the shifting policy landscape and rapid pace of technology require us to think bigger and bolder than ever.

We must support the needs of teachers by advocating for more investment in the preparation, resources, and skills they need to deliver better student outcomes. At the same time, we must be at the forefront of innovation to help teachers harness the potential of new technologies—like AI and asynchronous learning platforms—to accelerate instructional improvement and mitigate the risk of malpractice.

Your partnership is critical in making this work possible. As you read this report, imagine what would be possible if we scale what's proven to work and continue to identify new solutions through student-centered innovation.

With appreciation,

**Chong-Hao Fu, Dr. LaKimbre Brown, Laura Meili, Daniel Obregon, Simone Senior, Marishka Winters & Javier Cortez Infantas**

## Our Leadership



**Chong-Hao Fu**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Dr. LaKimbre Brown**  
Chief of Networks



**Laura Meili**  
Chief of Impact



**Daniel Obregon**  
Chief Partnerships Officer



**Simone Senior**  
Chief Operating Officer



**Marishka Winters**  
Deputy Chief of Networks



**Javier Cortez Infantas**  
Deputy Chief of Finance



# Every young person deserves a fair chance to build the life they want.



No matter who they are, where they come from, or how much money their family has, their education should prepare them for their next step and beyond.

Leading Educators exists to help school systems deliver on that promise by ensuring every teacher has the support to **reach new professional heights** and **cultivate excellent teaching** and learning every day.

## MISSION

Leading Educators partners with school systems to build and sustain the conditions, teaching, and leadership to ensure that the students furthest from opportunity succeed in school and in life.

## VISION

Every day, every student experiences excellent and equitable teaching.



# About Us



Leading Educators helps school systems nurture excellence in every classroom. We leverage research on how students learn, what teachers need to excel, and how systems improve to get life-changing results.

**No two school systems are the same, but they can all become dynamic learning organizations where all students and adults are set up to achieve greatly together.**

We draw from our expertise as career educators, coaches, and designers to help educators practice what they teach and plan for the future. We partner with leaders to offer a range of contextualized supports, including strategic advising, ongoing curriculum-based professional learning design and implementation, and coaching to spark transformation at scale.

By building on strengths and bolstering the conditions for educators to succeed, we ensure that transformational leadership, practices, and results endure without us.

## OUR VALUES

**Build on Strengths.** We affirm and begin with the unique and collective talents, experiences, and wisdom of ourselves and others.

**Continuously Learn.** We develop ourselves and others. We apply new learning and deepened self-awareness to our relationships and practices.

**Prioritize People.** We build trust and reflect upon the impact of different perspectives and intersectional identities.

**Disrupt Racial Inequity.** We challenge historical and current gaps in opportunity with a persistent focus on dismantling systemic racism.

# Bringing the Promise of Scalable Instructional Reform to Life

To get from the status quo to a world where all young people build the knowledge, skills, and competencies to thrive, every student needs predictable access to:

- Well-trained teachers with high expectations
- Challenging, joyful learning connected to the real world
- Support to own their learning and work toward meaningful goals



**Drawing from context and research, we help states and school systems sustainably address these needs through modular, interconnected supports that produce scalable improvements in teaching, conditions, and student learning.**

## Strategic Advising

We consult with school system and state leaders to design coherent, scaleable support structures that improve instructional quality, adult learning conditions, and system-wide uptake of evidence-based practices.



## Professional Learning

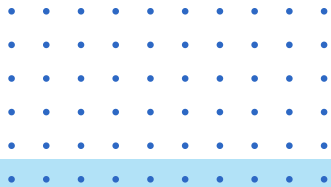
We help school systems level up instruction through curriculum-based workshops, continuous improvement cycles, and train-the-trainer programs designed to bolster ongoing collaboration and sharpen instructional expertise in pursuit of accelerated student learning.

## Coaching & Capacity-Building

We coach senior leaders, school leaders, school-based instructional leaders, coaches, and individual teachers to see theory transfer into individualized practice as they shift toward new and independent ways of working.



# In 2023, We Built Capacity to Accelerate Systemic Change.



For more than a decade, we've helped school systems transform teaching so their students are ready to thrive in a changing world.

In the 2022–2023 school year, we reached:

- **196,000 students**  
89% are students of color; 72% qualify for free or reduced lunch
- **1,275 leaders**
- **13,025 teachers**
- **395 schools**
- **34 school systems**



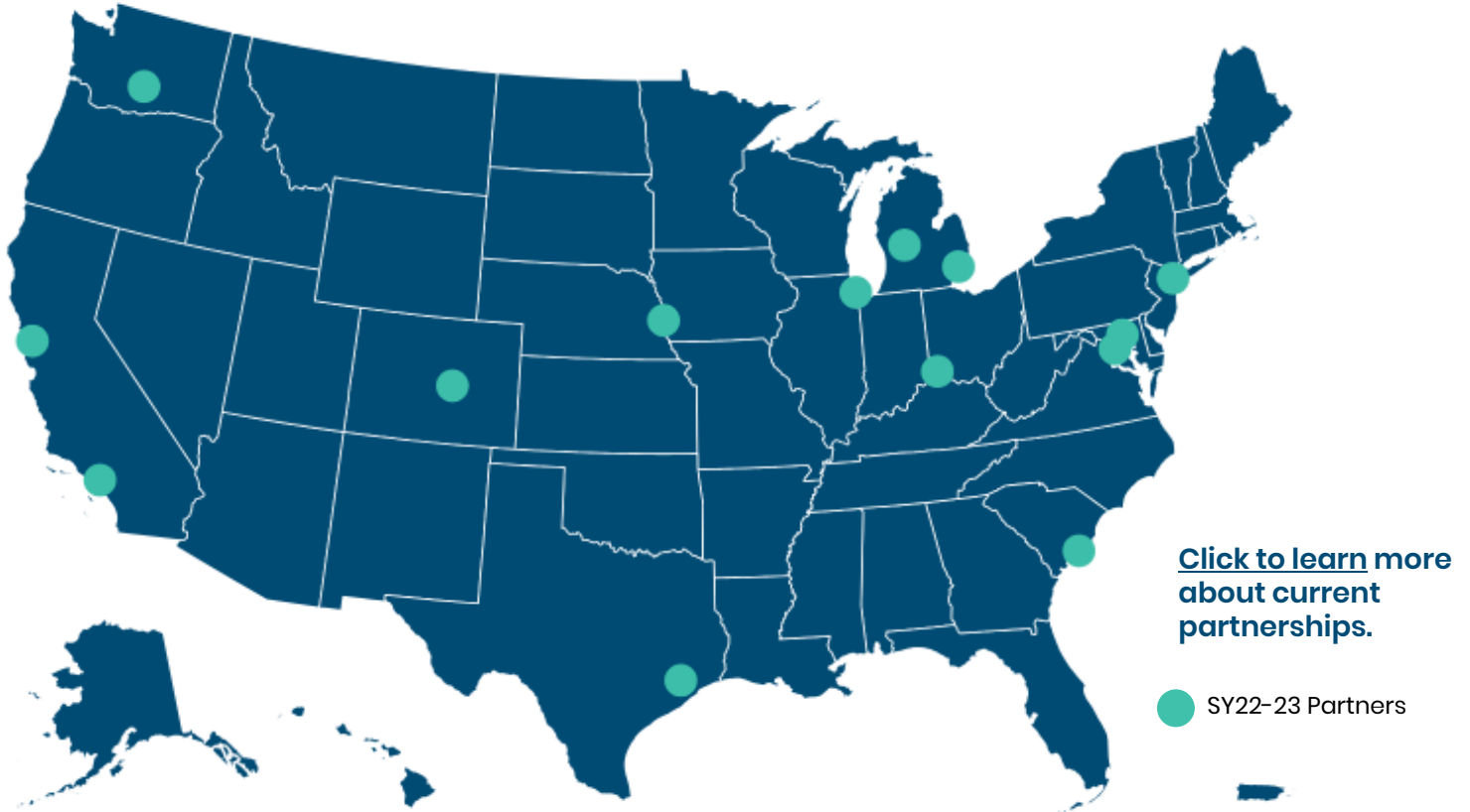
We built up our team and infrastructure to respond to unmet needs and under-tapped opportunities.



We hired **32** new team members and retained **93%** of current staff amid a global “great resignation,” outpacing the typical nonprofit industry average of **81%** retention.

We also launched three new service teams to extend the impact of our collective expertise and institutional knowledge: **Science of Reading Network, Readiness Network, and Network Support.**

Our partners comprise an innovative national network of school systems that are making bold moves to prove that better is possible.



In 2023, we launched our first Science of Reading Network to respond to the national literacy crisis.

Learn More

Led by literacy expert **Dr. Mitchell Brookins**, the Science of Reading Network partners with states, district, and charter management organizations (CMOs) on systemic efforts to scale evidence-based literacy practices and close persistent reading gaps.



# We launched new partnerships in 4 cities in 2023.

Our movement to help school systems realize the potential of scalable instructional improvement in action is building momentum.



## Cincinnati

We are offering systemic professional learning on evidence-based practices in math and English language arts for more than 2,000 Cincinnati Public Schools educators and providing bridge-to-practice coaching at a subset of pilot schools.

*Supported by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.*

## New York City

We are helping the Harlem Community School District systematically implement the HMH Into Reading curriculum in accordance with the groundbreaking New York City Reads initiative.

Supported by Schusterman Family Philanthropies and the Overdeck Family Foundation.

*Additional pilot work focused on the intersection of excellent teaching and technology is supported by The Robin Hood Learning + Technology Fund.*



## Omaha



Omaha Public Schools is partnering with Leading Educators to strengthen instruction in 15 Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) elementary schools so all students are ready for their next step.

## Colorado Springs

We provided accelerated, short-term partnership to Colorado Springs District 11 around implementing and planning for learning in a block schedule, establishing a relationship for future support around conditions for improving learning.

*Supported by the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation.*



# Building on Strengths

While significant technical and policy shifts are required in the education landscape to achieve our mission, we recognize that it's people who bring possibility to fruition.

By launching new teams to support and enhance our localized work, we are setting our teams and partners up for sustainable and human-centered success.



## Readiness Network

The **Readiness Network** provides strategic advising and lighter-touch support to school systems to establish the conditions for more robust and coherent instructional improvement efforts in the future.

## Network Support

**Network Support** looks across all partnerships to codify promising practices, new delivery models, and implementation innovations to continue developing our client-facing teams.

In a highly fragmented and localized education system, this ensures that our partners benefit from being part of a national network.

## We consistently exceed partner expectations.

Our impact is not only apparent in changes in teacher practice, student learning, and conditions alignment. It's also evident in how our partners view the quality of the support we provide.

# 100%

of surveyed partners agreed or strongly agreed that their partnership met their goals in 2023. This reflects our commitment to providing exceptional, contextualized support.

Several senior district and school leaders shared:

**64**  
Net Promoter Score

*"Leading Educators has been instrumental in building understanding of improvement science methods and facilitating teachers and instructional leaders to implement them."*

*"I have seen teachers in my building speaking to and advocating for equitable practices in my building. I have seen teachers implement the process of orthographic mapping due to learning from LE. The results have shown in student data."*





# Our Impact

We're building a record of unparalleled, sustainable results.



# Our Rigorous Impact is Rare in the Emerging Instructional Reform Field.



## Evidence Matters

Leading Educators has consistently achieved industry-leading results.

Last year, this progress continued despite national narratives of lagging pandemic recovery.

Few professional development providers can speak to results beyond teacher satisfaction. That's not good enough.

**We use robust evaluation tools and rigorous analysis to see change across a coherent theory of action so partners know how to build and sustain learning infrastructure that will keep producing value without us.**

## Impact Highlights from 2022–2023

### Student Learning

Three 2023 studies found that student growth in LE-supported schools surpassed average district or state growth, **closing 26% of opportunity gaps.**

Before partnership, the average standardized score in the partnerships studied was about -1 standard deviation, in the bottom 14% of the population



### Teaching Quality & Leadership

**73% of classes were observed offering grade-level curricular materials,** compared to just 26% in ELA and 42% in math nationally.

When students do not have access to high-quality, grade-level tasks and texts, they may miss out on building-block concepts and fall further behind. Quality materials take out the guesswork for teachers about what to teach and how.



### Conditions for Improvement

Across partnerships, **82% made meaningful progress** in improving their learning conditions. These conditions are key to ensuring research and theory translate into changed practice.

# Looking at data from 2011–2023, Leading Educators achieves rare, significant results for students in big and small urban districts.

## Overall, six quasi-experimental, practical studies

show promising evidence that Leading Educators' systemic approaches to instructional improvement accelerate learning.

### Student Learning

Schools gained **6–11 months of additional learning** in two studies.

Change in Mean Standardized Score in ELA in Charleston Schools



Change in Mean Standardized Score in Math in Charleston Schools



100% of Charleston schools supported by Leading Educators in ELA surpassed their 2019 (pre-pandemic) state scores in 2023

After a robust multi-year partnership that involved curriculum adoption, systemic professional learning, coaching, and leadership capacity building, turnaround schools in **Charleston County School District** reversed a multi-year decline and matched or exceeded district growth. Growth for these schools represents **5–9 months of additional learning in ELA** and **4–11 months in math**.

## Tier 1 Evidence

A rare randomized control trial by the RAND Corporation found that Chicago educators significantly increased student achievement in one year after receiving support from LE.


When comparing achievement to control schools, an average teacher became **more effective than two-thirds of teacher peers** at increasing student test scores.



These kinds of results are outliers. By comparison, **only 6% of all studies reviewed by What Works Clearinghouse** meet standards for rigorous research and **show positive, significant results**.

At a time of many unknowns in the field, we're committed to producing and sharing practical research that meets the highest standards.



A photograph of two young women in a workshop setting, focused on assembling a LEGO Mindstorms robot. The woman on the left is wearing a dark jacket and is adjusting a green gear on the robot's mechanism. The woman on the right is wearing a pink hoodie and is also working on the robot. The robot is a custom-built assembly with various sensors, gears, and a motor. In the background, another person is visible, also working on a similar robot. The scene is lit with warm, indoor lighting, creating a focused and collaborative atmosphere.

# Research & Innovation

We're expanding upon our record of results with new offerings.



# Building the Capacity to Innovate for Future Needs

Leveraging catalytic philanthropic investment, we built a new Innovation function and developed a multi-year innovation agenda focused on future needs in education, society, and the workforce.

Leading Educators aims to be at the forefront of addressing several critical developments that affect students' opportunities and teachers' effectiveness, including the emergence of generative AI, race and class disparities in STEM access and achievement, outsized spending in the education technology market without strong impact data, and ongoing challenges with school staffing.



In 2023, two key developments emerged: the **Value Add of Technology on Teaching** framework and a new **science offering** connected to OpenSciEd.

## Science Offerings

The global pandemic and advances in artificial intelligence have demonstrated that knowledge in **science and mathematics** will be increasingly crucial for societal well-being. That's why it is imperative to close existing gaps in access to STEM learning and STEM careers among students at the margins.

We built internal capacity to expand Leading Educators' core offerings into science and secured funding to launch an OER Science Adoption network in partnership with OpenSciEd.

*The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation has been a key philanthropic partner.*

## Value Add of Technology on Teaching

Leading Educators developed the **Value Add of Technology on Teaching (VATT) framework** with teachers, school and system leaders, researchers, and experts from around the globe to answer the question, "With limited time and so many edtech tools to choose from, how are you supposed to know which will actually make a difference?"

Funded by Google for Education, the VATT outlines practices educators can use to harness the power and promise of technology in instruction to do more, do better, and do new. This work led us to publish new research, develop interactive tools, and present to global leaders alongside ASU+GSV, Google, and WestEd.

The VATT is the first of several significant investments Leading Educators is making in strengthening technology use, understanding edtech efficacy, and adapting learning for future needs.



**Learn more at [valueedtech.org](https://valueedtech.org).**

# Looking To The Future: Research & Innovation

**Despite \$18 billion in national spending on professional learning each year, rigorous evidence of real impact for students is scarce.**

Educators depend on knowledge about what works, but identifying promising practices is rigorous, complex, and time-consuming work that is often difficult for school systems to pursue. In 2023, we worked to meet this need with practical evaluation that sought to illuminate which instructional factors affect student outcomes.



**Knowing that the future is changing rapidly, Leading Educators remains doubly focused on how to best close present gaps in opportunity while building toward a more fair and just future.**

## Long Term Study

We used cutting-edge analytic approaches and newly available datasets to submit a multi-city study assessing the continued impact of Leading Educators teacher leadership programming two years later to the Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, engaging in peer review.

## Tulsa Analysis

We completed a mixed-methods analysis of a six-year partnership with Tulsa Public Schools that focused on scaling a curriculum-based professional learning system. This study provided rigorous evidence of impact on teacher retention and social-emotional outcomes.

## Ongoing Research

We launched two new studies exploring 1) processes for using data to contextualize professional learning and how involvement in these processes influences the perception of quality and utility, and 2) what supports enable teachers to better use cognitive science findings around students' sense of belonging to deliver better critical feedback to students.

As school systems face tough choices about where to invest and what to sustain ahead of an expected fiscal cliff, we're determined to ensure our partners build capacity for enduring, demonstrable results.



# Building the Field in Coalition



## RPPL Studies: 2023–25 Portfolio

May 2023



While research shows that effective professional learning (PL) can improve teacher practice and student outcomes, as a field, we have struggled to develop teacher learning opportunities that translate into improved student outcomes at scale. To meet these challenges, we must accelerate our learning about PL and expand our understanding of what works, what doesn't, and why.

RPPL outlined a **learning agenda** when we launched our work together in the summer of 2021. We are building out a portfolio of studies grounded in the focus areas of the learning agenda that will come together to provide insights into how to scale effective PL in key areas of practice. The studies represent our collective action towards this agenda.

If successful, the studies will help us and the field understand what works in PL and lead PL providers to align their practices/models to our evidence-based findings. Our goal is to transform teacher learning and practice to ensure that all students—especially those from historically marginalized groups—learn rigorous content and thrive in equitable schools.

Our learning agenda's areas of focus within PL include:

1. Increasing Teacher Engagement
2. Accelerating Skill Development
3. Sustaining Long-Term Enactment of New Practices
4. Improving the Conditions for Adult Learning

We have grounded our learning about these design features of PL in three areas: **equitable teaching practices**, the use of high-quality **instructional materials (HQIM)**, and **supportive classroom environments**. To date, the majority of our studies incorporate HQIM/curriculum-based PL and we have been most attentive to equity.

Our learning agenda also describes how we will introduce **planned variation** in our design features, advance our **data collection & measurement**, and build a collaborative **research infrastructure** in order to achieve the aims of RPPL.

### Studies by Learning Agenda Focus Areas



## Research Partnership for Professional Learning

As a founding member of the Research Partnership for Professional Learning, we engage in cross-sector research to build the knowledge base about what allows professional learning to translate into improved student outcomes at scale.

Last year, we co-designed a study with RPPL researchers, programmatic staff, and input from a partner district to explore how PL organizations can effectively tailor PL offerings to school-level needs. The findings we published in spring/summer 2024.

Collectively, we are working to build a portfolio of studies grounded in a shared learning agenda that will come together to provide insights into how to scale effective PL in key areas of practice.

[Read about the portfolio of studies.](#)

## Researching Wise Feedback with Stanford University

Critical feedback is a key part of the learning process, but it can feel hard to receive for students and adults alike.

That's why Leading Educators worked with researchers from Stanford University to develop and evaluate the six-part Wise Feedback Professional Development Learning Series. This teacher-facing intervention draws on social-psychological theory and research to provide teachers with concrete strategies for delivering critical feedback.

Over two phases of iterative development and evaluation, we found strong proof-of-concept. Participants had overwhelmingly positive reactions to the learning series and endorsed it as a valuable professional development experience.

In Phase 3, we aim to refine the learning series further and conduct a full, large-scale randomized control trial (RCT).

This RCT will experimentally assess the effectiveness of the learning series for improving teacher-student relationships; improving student motivation, engagement, and performance; and reducing racial achievement gaps in academic outcomes.

"I feel [the series] created a more positive connection with my students. It forced me to be more intentional and give everyone attention, so I feel like kids who normally fall under the radar felt seen."

Phase II participant





# Partnership in Action

Sowing the seeds for a  
more fair and just future.



Partnerships in Action

# Charleston: Getting Results Through a Coherent Instructional System



11 schools

4,230 students

363 teachers influenced

280 teacher leaders, school leaders, and district leaders directly supported

Bridges Mathematics, Illustrative Mathematics, EL Education

**Charleston County School District is on the rise despite a national education crisis due to strategic investments in helping teachers and students continuously learn.**

Three years into an ambitious turnaround initiative known as Acceleration Schools, Charleston County School district saw significant improvement in math and ELA learning, countering national declines.

- **100% of schools** supported by Leading Educators in ELA surpassed their 2019 (pre-pandemic) state scores in 2023, maintaining progress through focused work on instruction.
- The average yearly growth for Acceleration Schools matched the growth of all other schools in the district in ELA at 21 points per year. In math, Acceleration Schools students achieved double the growth rate of other schools at 13 points per year.
- Half of the Acceleration Schools were removed from the state improvement list.

## Behind the Change

To ensure all students can access the rich talents and plentiful opportunities that Charleston County offers, the district's 2019 strategic plan named a mounting imperative to close gaps in students' experiences.

As a result, CCSD launched, Acceleration Schools, a comprehensive, multi-year school turnaround effort focused on serving the community's most vulnerable schools. Acceleration Schools brought in Leading Educators as a key partner on instructional infrastructure and leadership priorities.

CCSD and Leading Educators have built a dynamic improvement system that allows teachers to practice their craft continually, adjust to using high-quality instructional materials, and receive targeted mentorship. Unlike traditional one-off professional development days, this effort has built true capacity for continuous improvement, and students are achieving at unprecedented levels.





## THEORY OF ACTION

**Acceleration School district leaders** will set a vision, establish staffing, and determine professional learning priorities for continuous improvement in math and ELA.

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School-based **coaches** will be supported to lead ongoing professional learning on effective math and ELA instruction for teachers at Acceleration Schools.

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Then, **teachers** will be able to teach their curricula with fidelity using pedagogical moves that support asset-based, culturally responsive classroom environments and data that can inform decisions about helping students to reach rigorous and grade-level goals.

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**Acceleration Schools students** will be exposed to high-quality, rigorous, grade-level materials and have a deep understanding of, confidence in, and love of reading, writing, and math.

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If these behaviors take hold and outcomes are reached, the larger district stands to learn how to effectively accelerate math and ELA learning and scale effective supports for teachers to grow their professional practice.

**Kristen Lewis**, an ELA instructional coach at Morningside Middle School, shared:

**“Morningside was the only middle school in South Carolina that was removed from the state improvement list. But our first reaction, outside of being super excited, was, ‘Oh my goodness, does this mean we're not going to be an Acceleration School?’ because of the support, the building of our capacity, and the empowerment of teachers.**

**It has built so much confidence throughout our building that we don't want to go back to feeling unsupported. We still have much to do and more room for growth, but we always want to have this experience.”**

Acceleration Schools’ partnership with Leading Educators has centered around implementing a research-backed instructional improvement approach, curriculum-based professional learning.

Unlike the traditional professional development workshops or one-time programs teachers commonly experience, this strategy builds lasting structures, expertise, and habits that support ongoing and frequent collaboration to build content-specific and standards-aligned teaching practices. Simply put, teachers gain the capacity to become experts in “what” and “how” to teach well. The benefit is that systemic improvement continues to build beyond the duration of the partnership.



## Key System-Level Changes

Key shifts at the system level have changed the support around teachers, allowing for more frequent collaboration, greater alignment between quality materials and the lessons teachers provide, and more targeted individual support from coaches.

Conditions	From	To
HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULA	Teachers were using various resources with inconsistent quality, with teachers spending the majority of planning time finding lessons, activities, etc. This creates variability in students' learning and leaves their opportunities to chance.	Now, high-quality curricular resources are in place for math and ELA, allowing for consistency around what and how teachers teach across classrooms.
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES	Professional learning took many forms and uses with variable relevance to the knowledge and skills students are expected to master for future success.	Now, educators have weekly PLCs for math and ELA knowledge and practice development, focusing collaboration on the core work of teaching.
PLANNING	There was limited planning time, resulting in stress and feelings of isolation.	Educators have 300 minutes of weekly planning time and 60 minutes of collaborative PLC time.
COACHING	Schools had one general instructional coach for the entire staff, making it more challenging to get support around content-specific knowledge and practices.	Now, Acceleration Schools provide 1 ELA coach and 1 math coach at every school, offering more target support.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Teachers had optional district professional development.	Now, there are quarterly PD workshops for all AS ELA and math teachers, so everyone is moving in the same direction.



LEADERS TO LEARN FROM

# Jacqueline Haynes

Associate Superintendent  
for Acceleration Schools

**Jacqueline Haynes**, the Associate Superintendent for Acceleration Schools came into her role with big job. Finding support that would address root challenges and scale was a necessity. She shares,

“I think this is the **first time I've ever seen professional development work so seamlessly**. The teachers go back, principals are present, APs are present, and our district office is present. There's that throughline.

Now, I have other principals and other teachers who want support from Acceleration Schools, and it's all because of the great professional development that is given by Leading Educators.”

## HEAR FROM MS. HAYNES



**Jacqueline Haynes**

Associate Superintendent for Acceleration Schools



Partnerships in Action

# Building a System for Literacy to Flourish in Baltimore City Public Schools



28 schools

9,000 students

1,188 teachers influenced

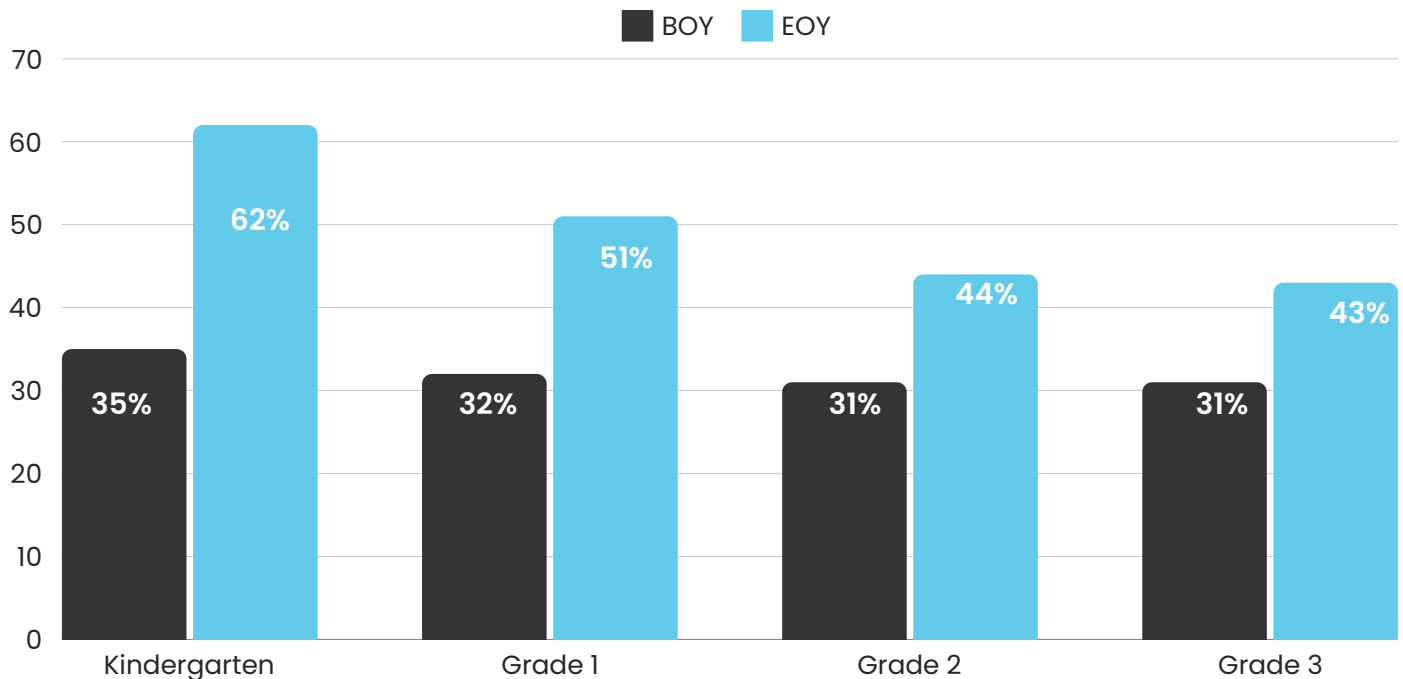
48 teacher leaders, school leaders, and district leaders directly supported

Wit & Wisdom Heggerty Foundations

As national momentum builds around the science of reading, Baltimore City Public Schools' partnership with Leading Educators offers a powerful example of what is possible for students when educators have the support to build ongoing expertise in how students learn to read and write.

Students saw double-digit gains in foundational skills on DIBELS 8 after the first year of a multi-pronged partnership focused on professional learning for educators on the science of reading.

## City Schools BOY vs. EOY '23 Foundational Skills Proficiency





## BEHIND THE CHANGE

City Schools is partnering with Leading Educators to cultivate teacher expertise in the science of reading so that all students have access to effective foundational skills instruction.

The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of research about how proficient reading and writing develop, why some students have difficulty, and how teachers can most effectively assess and teach. Few teachers are initially trained in scientifically-based reading instruction during their teacher preparation programs, so they unknowingly enter the classroom well-intentioned but inadequately prepared to teach kids to read.

Leveraging a Maryland LEADS grant, City Schools launched a **Science of Reading Fellowship** with Leading Educators supporting the scoping, design, and initial facilitation. This fellowship focuses on two pathways: one for teachers, where participants receive ongoing professional development and coaching, and another for facilitators of adult learning.

Additionally, Leading Educators is designing **systemic professional development** for all K-5 teachers in the district, grounded in the five pillars of reading, with a specific emphasis on vocabulary and comprehension.

## THEORY OF ACTION

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If **system leaders** design, implement, and monitor intensive and ongoing professional development grounded in the Science of Reading for ALL teachers

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And **teachers** use a common understanding and framework for literacy teaching and learning from kindergarten through high school to make strategic instructional decisions,

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Then **students** will master reading skills early and continue to develop them as they move up through the grades.

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If these behaviors take hold and outcomes are reached, the larger district stands to learn how to effectively accelerate math and ELA learning and scale effective supports for teachers to grow their professional practice.

Leading Educators first began working with Baltimore City Public Schools in 2019 to enhance professional learning centered on the ELA curriculum, Wit & Wisdom. By 2022, a shift towards foundational literacy emerged.

City Schools identified a need for more systemic support. In the first year, fellows and participants responded positively as fellows began table-facilitating systemic professional development (PD) days for literacy educators across the district. This led to the trial of another initiative: supporting Fellows in leading 'extension sessions' on the recent systemic PD day material at their respective school sites.





Leading Educators designed "extension session" materials and provided coaching to fellows as they prepared for their sessions. The feedback from the 10 fellows who conducted these sessions was once more overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the necessity for City Schools to establish a dedicated district-to-school professional learning and coaching system.

Baltimore City Public Schools has established a connected learning trajectory, supported by continuous coaching to ensure systemic professional development translates into enhanced classroom practices. The district's focus on literacy coaching and its dedication to utilizing top-notch curricular resources reflect a practical and iterative approach to tackling literacy issues.

**LEADERS TO LEARN FROM**

**Megan MacFeat**  
Science of Reading  
Fellow & Literacy Coach

**Megan MacFeat**, a Science of Reading fellow and district literacy coach, says the transformation is visible.

"I was in a classroom recently, and the reading interventionist was commenting on a sound that a student was producing. He was saying how that sound feels in his mouth and whether it's voiced or unvoiced, and she's like, 'Yes, good. You're paying attention to your articulatory gestures.'

I was like, 'Oh my gosh, he is paying attention to his articulatory gestures!' These are third graders in a reading intervention group. And so **I think I just see [a change] day to day when I'm in those conversations that the teachers are having with the students.**"

**HEAR FROM MRS. MACFEAT**



Partnerships in Action

# Oakland Unified School District is Rooted in Reading



49 schools

18,000 students

1,617 teachers influenced

6 district leaders directly supported

EL Education

In 2023, Leading Educators concluded a two-year partnership with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to build and implement a strategy for curriculum implementation efforts focused on realizing the community's deep investment in the right to read.

Following a robust curriculum review process involving community input, OUSD partnered with Leading Educators to launch a curriculum-based professional learning system. District leaders and coaches received an average of 22 hours of sessions, 30 hours of coaching, and 14 hours of support building conditions, and district coaches led 30 hours of learning at their schools.

**Katrina Jones**, a Teacher on Special Assignment (TSA) at Burckhalter Elementary, says the value of the support received is evident. "We are all seeing the value of this curriculum and the aligned support: Every teacher is committed to supporting literacy for every student. Our work is already feeling more powerful and more successful."

**After the partnership, OUSD's ELA achievement gap with all other California schools decreased by 27%. The gap represents 7-13 months of additional learning for students.\***

Score Gap in Standard Deviation between OUSD Schools and the Rest of the State



These findings are notable, as the district performed substantially below the state average to start. Additionally, these results were achieved as many districts across the country were struggling with pandemic-related learning loss.





## THE DIFFERENCE IS VISIBLE

Students are learning their letters faster. In School Year 2022–23, 80% of Kindergarteners knew their letters by January. Students didn't meet that threshold in the previous school year until April.

More students met their growth goal in 2022–2023 across all grades. The number of students who were using evidence-based text increased by 20 percentage points in just 4 months.

**Faris Jabbar**, principal at La Escuelita Elementary, sees firsthand how students are responding to the curriculum. He says, "We see our progress in the students themselves. They want to show how much they've grown and are excited about becoming stronger readers."

## THEORY OF ACTION

If **District Leaders** establish a vision for a scalable, coherent, curriculum-aligned professional learning system and provide adequate support for schools to establish the conditions to implement the vision,

Then **Literacy Coordinators** can support **Teachers on Special Assignment (TSAs)** to effectively lead content-specific, job-embedded professional learning for teachers and coach them toward their personal and school-based goals.

Then **teachers** can develop the knowledge, pedagogy, and confidence to teach literacy to their students in an asset-based, culturally responsive way that leads to student mastery of grade-level content and a greater sense of student self-efficacy.

If these behaviors take hold and outcomes are reached, the larger district stands to learn how to effectively accelerate math and ELA learning and scale effective supports for teachers to grow their professional practice.

## LESSONS LEARNED

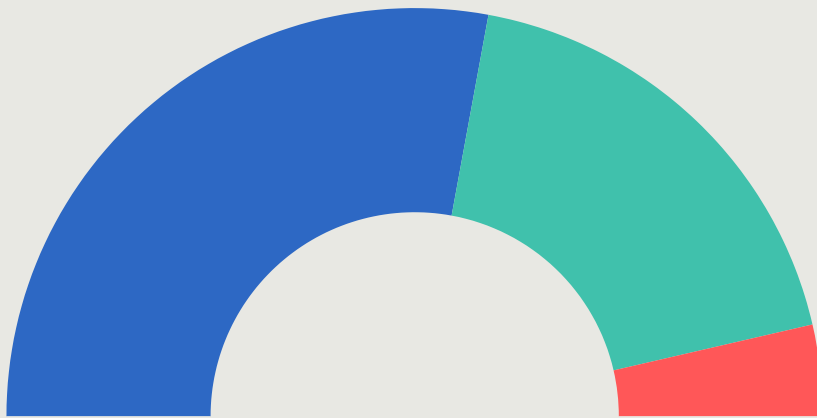
- Curriculum internalization matters. Improvement in ELA standardized scores was larger for pilot schools who had participated in an initial training led by the curriculum provider in 2020–21 and engaged in additional sessions led by LE in 2021–22.
- Intensity of engagement with professional learning matters. Improvement in ELA standardized scores was larger for pilot schools with high to mid engagement in year two

More rigorous statistical methods found large, positive, and statistically significant effects of OUSD curriculum implementation and other district-level improvement strategies on ELA standardized scores. As expected, these effects were larger for schools with higher engagement, though the difference between the effects was not statistically significant.

As the district looks ahead to the remainder of School Year 2023–24 and the following years, they are focusing on deepening implementation, supporting teachers, and closing achievement gaps.

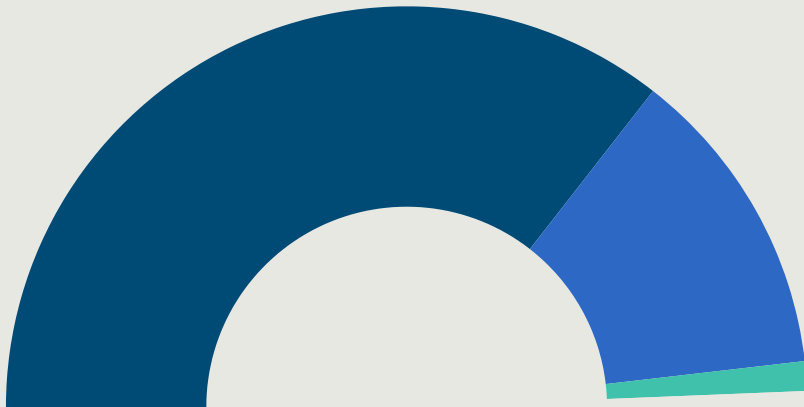
# 2023 Financials

Leading Educators is deeply committed to using fiscal management best practices to maximize the value of critical public and philanthropic resources.



## Revenue

- \$8,783,295 Service Revenue
  - \$5,823,556 Unrestricted Contributions
  - \$1,137,811 Restricted Contributions
- Total: \$15,744,700**



## Expenses

- \$11,739,668 Program Services
  - \$4,171,408 Supporting Services
  - \$393,621 Fundraising
- Total: \$16,729,236**

Our impact and operations strategies work together to ensure sustainability and efficiency in delivering responsive support to school systems in historically under-resourced communities.

We are fortunate to have maintained consistent growth, even amid national pandemic-related downturns, while holding true to our values, mission, and exceptionally high standards for impact.



# Our Supporters



Our work to help partners define a path for systemic change, design more meaningful support around teachers, and ensure every student excels would not be possible without our philanthropic supporters.

On behalf of our staff, we thank you for your belief in our mission.



*Continued on next page*



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