



Seeding Opportunity

Starting and Growing Great Schools
2015-2020

WALTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION



CONTENTS

- OVER 30 YEARS OF LISTENING, LEARNING AND SEEDING OPPORTUNITY 4
- OUR COMMITMENT: EXPANDING ACCESS TO EXCELLENT SCHOOLS 5
- GRANTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS 6
- MEETING THE NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES 7
- SUPPORTING A DIVERSITY OF LEADERS AND SCHOOLS 8
- CREATING NEW PATHWAYS TO COLLEGE AND CAREER 10
- MAKING SCHOOL FACILITIES AFFORDABLE AND ATTAINABLE 12
- SUPPORTING EXCELLENT EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC 14
- LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: THE INNOVATIVE SCHOOLS PROGRAM 16
- CITATIONS 17



Antigua Wilbern
Middle School Principal, Bricolage Academy

“WFF startup funding allowed us to launch Bricolage Middle School where relevant, engaging and rigorous instruction designed to meet the diverse needs of every student happens within a safe, inclusive, equitable, supportive and joyful school community where **everyone is seen, heard and known, and where everyone feels a strong sense of belonging.**”



Chris Terrill
Executive Director, Crosstown High

“The Walton Family Foundation has provided Crosstown High with a great opportunity to chart a new path in Memphis. With a focus on a diverse-by-design approach, we have created an invested and diverse community of learners that truly represents the composition of Memphis. Our focus on developing the whole child through authentic project-based learning has allowed us to understand and recognize each of our student’s strengths and build on them. Our focus on community has allowed our students to begin developing mentors throughout the Memphis community. **None of this would be possible without the support of the Walton Family Foundation.**”



Nigena Livingston
Founder and Head of School, URBAN ACT

“Thanks to the generous contribution from the Walton Family Foundation, URBAN ACT Academy has been able to successfully begin transforming a school that was previously underserved and underresourced into a school with a rich learning community where every child feels a sense of both belonging and purpose. **This gift enabled us to become one of just a few urban schools in our region to immerse students in place-based learning.** In our first year, we [saw] a dramatic increase in our students’ excitement and engagement that often extends beyond our school walls.”



Sharon Aiuvalasit
School Leader, Urban Dove Team Charter School II Bronx

“**The Walton Family Foundation startup grant played a key role in the successful launch of Urban Dove Team Charter School II Bronx in 2018.** The most important thing this grant allowed us to accomplish was the development of our Youth Development department, which is the centerpiece of our school model. Engaging our students beyond academics in the areas of social/emotional health, health and fitness, restorative practices and job training is what allows us to bring our disconnected students back to school. The WFF grant provided the resources we needed to make sure our school was prepared to accept the 110 over-age/ under-credited students in September and help them feel supported and connected.”

Over 30 Years of Listening, Learning and Seeding Opportunity

A great school can put opportunity and a self-determined life in reach for every child, especially those most in need. A great school can make social, economic and personal fulfillment a reality for every child. And a great school can provide every child with the know-how and experience to confidently navigate life's complexities, recognizing that the path to success looks different for every individual.

Our children deserve great schools.

That is why for more than 30 years the Walton Family Foundation has worked in partnership with families, educators, communities and visionary leaders to start and grow more great schools that meet students' fundamental needs, spark a lifelong passion for learning and put them on the path to a fulfilling, productive and joyful life. This retrospective shares what we've learned from these remarkable stakeholders.

When Sam and Helen Walton established the Walton Family Foundation, they sought to create equitable access to opportunity for people and communities. From day one, giving reflected the belief — now reaffirmed by three decades of experience — that often those closest to the problem are closest to the solution.

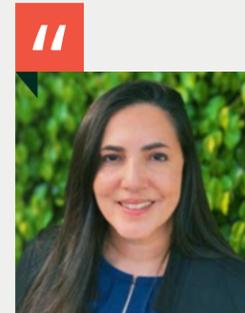
For this reason, the Walton Family Foundation has invested more than \$480 million to support visionary educators and leaders across 40 states in their work to open and grow innovative schools. Now numbering more than 2,500, these district, charter and private schools are created by, for and with the communities they serve. From 2015-2020 alone, the foundation has helped more than 600 schools open that will grow to serve more than 315,000 students.

This report shares some of the learnings and successes of these schools — not simply to celebrate these achievements, but in the hope that they inform and inspire similar efforts throughout our country.

More high-quality schools, rooted in the needs of their communities and a passion for translating education into lifelong opportunity, will prepare more children for success in their future careers and in life.

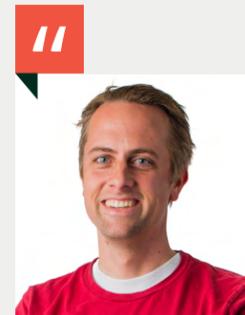
Together with other philanthropies and the teachers, leaders, parents and students we serve, the Walton Family Foundation is humbled to help more children and communities achieve what our country has promised them — an equal opportunity to pursue the American dream.

Our Commitment: Expanding Access to Excellent Schools



“Before we opened, it was essential we create time and space to meet with and learn from the communities we [sought] to serve. Our planning grant from the Walton Family Foundation allowed us to meaningfully convene a core group of seventh- and eighth-grade students monthly to engage them in having a say in our school design. Each meeting engaged future students in thinking about what high school should be, and what they hope We the People will be for them.”

— **Anita Ravi, Founder and Executive Director, We the People High School**



“Many innovative ideas die because they run out of funding. With the Innovative School startup grant, we iterated on our informal microschool concept, built processes to help us grow and now work with families across over 200 Prenda microschools to meet the unique needs of students and communities.”

— **Kelly Smith, Founder and CEO, Prenda School**



“Our students are part of a community where they are known, loved and valued by peers and adults. They are challenged to not only reach their academic potential, but also to stretch their ability to form positive relationships, while developing their unique voice in the world.”

— **Jared Francis, Principal, DREAM Charter High School**

To meet the evolving needs of students and ensure every child can access a high-quality school, the foundation continues to support excellent new schools created with the needs of their communities at the heart of each school's design. It is our hope that these schools can inspire and inform additional efforts throughout the country to prepare even more students to thrive not only in high school and college, but also in their careers and civic life.

Our investments in increasing the availability of excellent schools include:

- **Starting and expanding high-quality public charter schools and reducing barriers to their development, such as inequitable access to facilities.**
- **Supporting public and private schools that embrace accountability and autonomy.**
- **Helping create more diverse and innovative approaches, recognizing that children learn in different ways and have unique educational needs.**
- **Growing the ranks of teachers and educational leaders of color.**
- **Supporting programs that bridge from high school to postsecondary education and careers.**

In the end, what we seek are better possibilities and more equitable opportunities for all children, as they prepare and learn to make their way in the world. Thus, we measure our impact not by the number of schools we support, but by the number of children who emerge from our nation's education system with the tools they need to realize a fulfilling life rich with opportunity.



Grants to Support Schools and Students

SINCE 1997
WE HAVE SUPPORTED STUDENTS, EDUCATORS AND COMMUNITIES IN

More than
2,500 schools

Totaling more than
\$480 million

In 40 states
and the District of Columbia

BETWEEN 2015 AND 2020
WE HAVE GIVEN STARTUP FUNDS TO

More than
600 schools

Totaling more than
\$155 million

To ultimately serve more than
315,000 students

Meeting the Needs of Communities

Creating more high-quality schools that meet the needs of a wider range of children must start with listening to students and their families. “We shouldn’t design schools in a vacuum – we should be designing our schools around the needs of a community,” urges Russ Altenburg, founder of Los Angeles school incubator Reframe Labs. “The most successful schools we’ve seen have been those with an idea and then they validate their assumptions with parents and community partners,” agrees Caitrin Wright of Silicon Schools Fund. In that spirit, the foundation seeks out educators and community members to design schools that are responsive to local needs and cultures.



PUENTE, 2018 Grantee
Public Charter School
Boyle Heights, CA

People United to Enrich the Neighborhood Through Education (PUENTE) Learning Center has been listening to the needs of Latinx families in East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights for nearly 35 years. In 2002, PUENTE Charter School became the first new school in Boyle Heights in decades, serving transitional kindergarten and kindergarten. A startup grant from the Walton Family Foundation helped PUENTE raise additional capital for expanding the campus so it can serve grades 2-5 in the years ahead, including new classrooms and an enrichment lab for after-school activities.

“We do comprehensive parent outreach to bring in components of our students’ personal lives and build on what they know in order to help them grow,” says Jerome Greening, who has been principal of PUENTE Charter School for a decade. Today, many of the English language learners who started at PUENTE in transitional kindergarten are on track to be reclassified as fluent in English, and nearly two-thirds of students are achieving at grade level or above on interim Measures of Academic Progress assessments from the Northwest Evaluation Association.



Empower Community High School
2018 Grantee | Public Charter School
Aurora, Colorado

“As a kid, I loved school, but as an adult and as a teacher, I hate what school does to kids,” says Wisdom Amouzou, a teacher and social entrepreneur who emigrated as a child from Togo in West Africa to the diverse refugee community of Aurora, Colorado, where students come from 130 different countries and speak 160 different languages. As an adult, Wisdom began to bring together Aurora’s students, parents and other community members to imagine a new possibility. Over the last few years, he began to pilot centers in local high schools that engaged students in new ways.

Empower offers its students a project-based curriculum grounded in their own cultural identity. **“Our students will leave high school with an appreciation of our pluralistic society and a strong understanding of who they are – not just the trauma their ancestors went through, but also their strengths,”** says Amouzou. Students and parents met twice a month to design the school and its curriculum, incorporating interviews with families that had been opting out of Aurora Public Schools to attend schools in Denver, as well as observations from site visits to other high schools that are successfully serving diverse students.

MILESTONES

- 1997** Made first startup grant
- 1998** Made first grant to KIPP
- 2001** Building Excellent Schools launches
- 2005** Made first grant to Charter School Growth Fund to support the growth of high-quality public charter schools to serve 300,000 students by 2026
- 2006** Launched the Charter Startup Grant Program
- 2009** Made first grant to a school district – Denver Public Schools – to support high-quality school growth
- 2012** Made startup grants to 226 schools, the most in a single year to date
- 2013** Made first grant to the Charter School Growth Fund Emerging CMO program to explicitly support the growth of schools led by people of color
- 2015** Launched five-year strategic plan focused on growing high-quality public charter, district and private schools
- 2016** Launched the Building Equity Initiative to make it easier and more affordable for public charter schools to find, secure and renovate facilities
- 2017** Supported the expansion of Duet, a college and career support program that began at Match Public Charter School
- 2017** Launched the Innovative Schools Program
- 2018** Through the BEI, launched the Equitable Facilities Fund and the Facilities Investment Fund to transform the facilities lending market
- 2020** Issued groundbreaking public bonds through the Equitable Facilities Fund and the Facilities Investment Fund

Supporting a Diversity of Leaders and Schools



A one-size-fits-all education has never worked for most students, especially our most vulnerable. To realize the vision of an excellent school for every child, the Walton Family Foundation believes all voices and options must be a part of education decision-making. We specifically believe that a larger percentage of the teachers and leaders at both the school and system level must be representative of the communities they serve, and that great schools can take all forms and governance structures — public charter, district and private.

FINDING AND SUPPORTING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

To address the diverse needs of students and communities, we must source and nurture more ideas from more leaders, starting in their earliest stages. That's why the Walton Family Foundation supports organizations with the expertise to recruit and support emerging education entrepreneurs. Among these are 4.0 Schools, Reframe Labs and the Emerging CMO Fund at the Charter School Growth Fund. These endeavors help innovators and organization-builders refine their focus and skills and prepare them to open strong new schools and education organizations.

For example, 4.0 Schools was founded in New Orleans but has since expanded to New York City. The organization offers a range of support, from the "Essentials Fellowship" to help aspiring school founders clarify their ideas and conduct small test runs of their concepts, to "Tiny Fellowships" for those ready to plan, run and evaluate a pilot program to further hone their approach. "If we're going to rethink school for the 21st century, we need to rethink how we create schools," says 4.0 CEO Hassan Hassan. "Our goal is to reduce the risk of creating new schools by vetting promising concepts at a small scale with willing families and students who provide high-frequency feedback to school leaders before they build a full-scale school."¹

Schools Designed for the Community, by the Community



DREAM High School, 2018 Grantee Public Charter School | Harlem, New York

With deep roots in the community's youth development efforts, DREAM Charter School is affiliated with the nonprofit Harlem RBI. The K-8 public school engages parents as partners and provides students with opportunities to collaborate – from Socratic seminars that emphasize group discussion and project-based learning to after-school sports and clubs.

Through the range of offerings, students learn how to excel on their own and as a team. The outcome? "There's a reliance on one another and performance that you couldn't accomplish on your own," explains Eve Colavito, DREAM's Chief Education Officer.

In 2018, DREAM received a foundation grant to support a new charter high school, run by principal Jared Francis, who grew up in the neighborhood as the son of an educator. Says Francis, "We believe we are creating powerfully literate young people who will graduate prepared to leverage their academic, social and emotional skills to promote a more just and fair world."

Edison School of the Arts, 2018 Grantee Autonomous District School | Indianapolis, Indiana

In 2017 Indianapolis Public School 70 transitioned to become an autonomous school with help from the Walton Family Foundation. In doing so, the city's longstanding arts magnet school – newly dubbed the Edison School of the Arts – became an Innovation Network School. With this status, school leaders are granted greater authority over staffing, curriculum, budget and calendar – bringing these decisions closer to the students they serve.



As a public school open to any child regardless of geography, Edison draws students with varying abilities from diverse neighborhoods. The school regularly brings in specialists from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., to work with teachers on integrating the arts into academics. This has led to unique instructional methods, such as using theater to enhance English Language Arts and incorporating creative movement into STEM learning. As a result, according to Edison teachers, students are more excited about learning and retaining information better. "Some of the most challenging students have become some of the most engaged through the process of arts integration," says principal Amy Berns.



Cristo Rey de la Salle, 2016 Grantee Private School | Oakland, California

At Cristo Rey de la Salle, nearly 90 high school freshmen and more than 60 sophomores are accessing an affordable work-study private school for an average of \$50 per month in tuition, with the rest offset by philanthropic and corporate partners. Students benefit from teacher mentors while using self-paced online learning tools and participating in hands-on projects all built

around the skills they will need in the workplace. Additionally, more than a dozen businesses – including major employers like Chevron, Kaiser Permanente and Deloitte – offer work-study opportunities to students, who are compensated for their efforts.

"We're trying to remove obstacles, so our students have a fair shot at success," says Principal Ana Hernandez, who herself attended an Oakland public school and was the first in her family to go to college. "Using their personal experiences can be a motivation for them to realize their worth, to choose their opportunities and to challenge themselves."

Creating New Pathways to College and Career

Although more students than ever are graduating from high school and entering college, just half of young adults out-earn their parents at the same age (compared with 9 out of 10 adults born in 1940).² There is too often a profound disconnect between education and employment in our country, with a clear gap between the skills our students acquire in school and the ones our economy demands. With jobs, companies and entire industries changing at a rapid pace, education no longer ends with a high school or college degree. It is now a lifelong process.

To help students navigate these pathways and access greater opportunities throughout their lives, the Walton Family Foundation partners with dozens of organizations, foundations and employers across the education and workforce landscape to seek solutions that can help close the gap. Our investments include supporting the development of breakthrough school models that more seamlessly bridge education and employment. Through our many collaborations, **we aspire to move beyond traditional educational benchmarks and toward the end result that matters most: economic mobility for more Americans.**



Build UP, 2018 Grantee | Private School | Birmingham, Alabama

Located in the formerly booming steel community of Ensley in historic Birmingham, Alabama, Build for Urban Prosperity (Build UP) is a creative private high school that brings together education, workforce development and community revitalization. Build UP's students, predominantly from low-income backgrounds, leverage state tax credit scholarships and earnings from paid apprenticeships to attend the school while they restore the area's many abandoned homes. Students spend half the day in the classroom and the other half learning alongside skilled tradesmen to rehabilitate homes.

"The young people involved in the program are highly motivated and interested in doing nontraditional things," says program director Ruben Morris. "I think the added incentive of students being able to participate in the apprenticeships will also build motivation."³ Build UP's students will graduate with not only a high school diploma, but experience and accreditation in the construction industry, an associate's degree in their chosen field and the opportunity to access zero-interest loans to own one of the homes they helped restore.



IDEA Health Professions, 2018 Grantee | Public Charter School | Austin, Texas

In the heart of Austin, a new school launched in the fall of 2019 aiming to bridge the gap between students' academic and economic needs and the community's challenges. More than three-quarters of Texas counties have fewer than one physician per 1,000 residents.⁴ What's more, although minorities comprise more than half of the state's population, just 15% of Texas physicians are Latinx or Black.⁵

With its unique focus on building a pipeline of more diverse health care professionals while anchoring student learning in real-world skills, IDEA Health Professions is the first K-12 school of its kind in the country. Its inaugural class of grades K-2 and sixth grade will begin learning about the medical field right from the start, studying emergency services, veterinary skills and dentistry alongside traditional subjects like reading, math and science. The students also will see health care in action through site visits and projects. In later grades, students will choose among health care electives like public health, anatomy and physiology as they begin to chart their own unique path and apply what they've learned through volunteer work and internships.

"There is a discontinuity between the socioeconomic profile and racial and ethnic identity of many patients and their medical professionals," explains Cameron Cook, the principal of the college preparatory program for grades 6-12. "We want to make sure that these students can one day be the top health professionals serving their own communities."

"We want to make sure that these students can one day be the top health professionals serving their own communities."

Making School Facilities Affordable and Attainable

One of the most significant barriers that public charter schools face is identifying and securing facilities. Less than half of all states that allow charter schools provide them with a per-pupil facilities allowance,⁶ and opportunities to share space with district schools are rare. On average, public charter schools spend 10% of their funding on facility-related costs⁷ — not including the countless hours and resources spent addressing these issues.

The foundation wants to make it easier for school leaders to find a space where teachers can teach, and students can learn. In 2016, WFF announced its Building Equity Initiative. It includes two transformative lending funds that alleviate the time and energy educators spend on facilities, so more resources can go directly to students and teachers.

The Equitable Facilities Fund

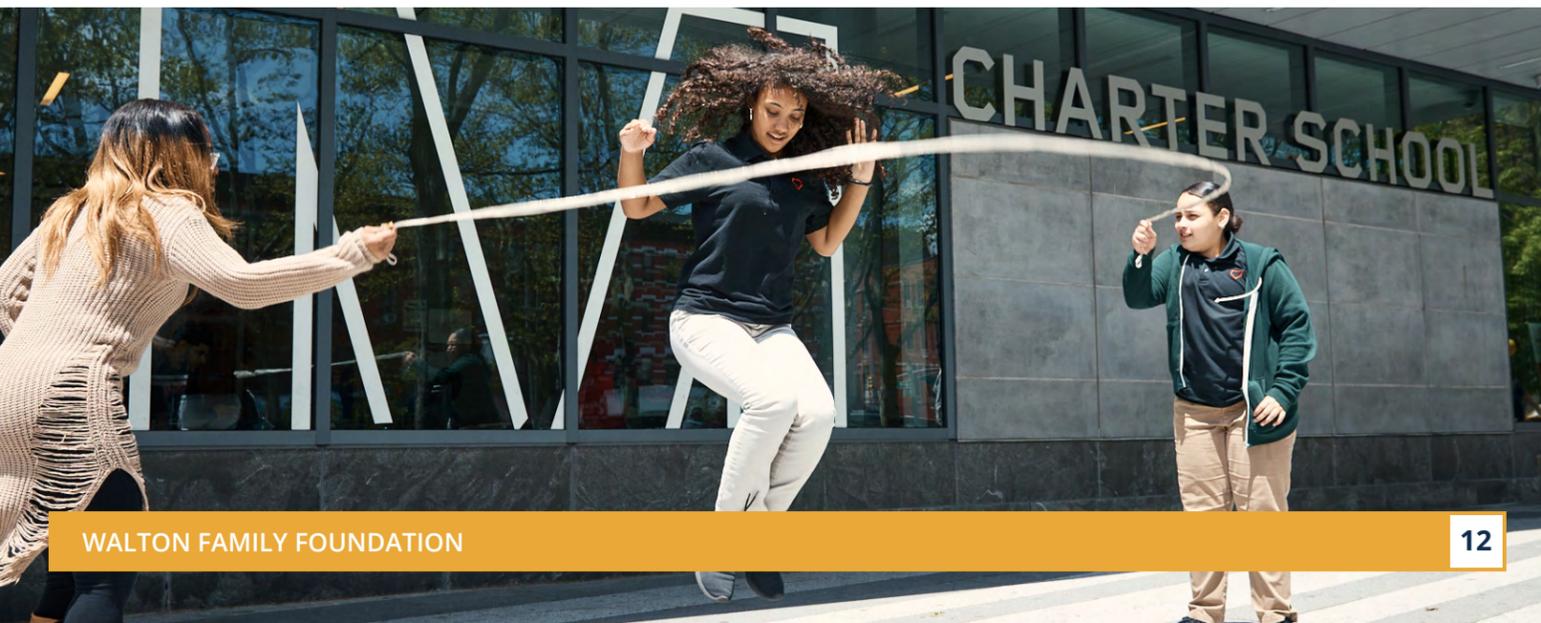
is a nonprofit revolving loan fund that provides long-term facilities financing for schools looking to establish permanent roots. Similar to a very low interest home mortgage but with no reserve fund requirements, **these loans can save participating schools millions of dollars** over the life of the loan — allowing them to put more of their money to work for students.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.EQFUND.ORG

The Facilities Investment Fund

is an innovative private-philanthropic partnership with Bank of America that is managed by Civic Builders and provides **affordable five-year loans for new construction or renovations**, either for single-site schools or public charter school networks.

LEARN MORE AT WWW.CIVICBUILDERS.ORG/FIF



Building Equity Initiative Impact

Since launch, approximately **\$470 million** in low-cost loans committed through the Equitable Facilities Fund and Facilities Investment Fund have empowered over **fifty schools** across the country to find, secure and renovate permanent facilities. These schools will grow to serve more than **45,000 students** — and **save tens of millions of dollars over the next 30 years.**

A \$9 million EFF loan will allow Village Tech Schools in Duncanville, Texas, to build the second phase of its permanent campus for 1,100 students in grades PK-12. “The philanthropic component of this investment coupled with the lower interest rate translates into real savings on facility costs for our school,” says David Williams, CEO of Village Tech Schools. As a result, the school will save more than \$80,000 annually.

The Soulsville Charter School in Memphis, Tennessee, will use a \$10.3 million EFF loan to refinance existing debt. The low-cost EFF loan will save Soulsville more than \$155,000 annually, allowing the school to deploy more funds in critical areas, such as college and career counseling and preparation for more than 600 students in grades 6-12. “[These] efforts allow us to keep placing even more emphasis on the quality of education the instructors and staff provide every day,” says Ross Hurst, Chief Financial Officer of the Soulsville Foundation.

While it prepared to access the Texas Permanent School Fund, **Great Hearts Academies used a \$13.1 million FIF loan** to construct a new school that will eventually serve up to 1,400 K-6 students. Because there are no prepayment penalties, Great Hearts Texas can refinance at the appropriate time at no additional cost. The \$300,000 savings will be put back into the classroom and into improved teacher compensation.

In Indiana, KIPP is using an \$8.7 million FIF loan to help open its first Indianapolis high school. KIPP Legacy High School is the first new high school to open in the underserved Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood in over a generation, and it will grow to serve 500 students by 2023. “While building a new school is about providing a high-quality option for students in Indianapolis, it’s also about investing in the Martindale-Brightwood neighborhood,” says Andy Seibert, Executive Director, KIPP Indy Public Schools.

Supporting Excellent Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The central question we asked related to immediate relief was: How can we ensure children keep learning?

For students, families and educators across the country, 2020 was a year of unprecedented educational challenge, spurred by a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic. At its peak, the coronavirus forced a near-total shutdown of in-person learning, affecting more than 55 million students in 124,000 U.S. public schools.

The ongoing disruption to schooling caused by COVID-19 knows no economic, demographic or geographic bounds. Everyone is struggling to adjust to at-home learning, but the disproportionate burden is felt by those most vulnerable. As we navigate a new school year with tens of millions of students still learning in environments that look very different from previous years, there is new urgency to the Walton Family Foundation's mission of increasing access to a lifetime of opportunity – a mission that starts with an excellent education.

In the midst of the pandemic, the foundation deployed an additional \$25 million in funding to address short and long-term impacts to education. The central question we asked related to immediate relief was: How can we ensure children keep learning? The answer was not simple and touched everything from food security to internet connectivity to high-quality online assessments that help educators keep kids on track.

Additional resources were deployed to support educators in the transition to distance learning, expand access to online education platforms and close the homework gap, which affects up to 13 million students who do not have access to internet or devices to meaningfully learn at home. Resources were deployed to support researchers as they track long-term data on educational outcomes during the pandemic.

To date, the foundation has supported thousands of schools, educators, families and students with these funds.



North/Phillips School of Innovation, 2020 Grantee | Autonomous District Microschool Northside, North Carolina

Student interests drive project-based and personalized curriculum at The North/Phillips School of Innovation, a microschool designed by local leaders to meet the unique needs of students in their rural county. For its 30 8th and 9th graders, the school focuses on social-emotional support and building identity and self-confidence among its rural, low-income students. **Supported through the foundation's Innovative Schools Program, North/Phillips serves as a cutting-edge example of what is possible for other rural communities.**

When the pandemic hit, North/Phillips received a COVID Emergency Grant from the Walton Family Foundation. North/Phillips leaders used the additional support to create in-person learning pods for students without internet. In each pod, students meet with two educators at a community location where they engage in socially distanced schoolwork and receive academic and behavioral interventions. The grant also helps fund advocates who can assist in connecting pod parents with community resources. Additionally, the grant supports after-hours work, compensating teachers who do targeted intervention with high-need students and those who cannot log on during the day.

San Antonio Foundation for Excellence in Education, 2020 Grantee District Foundation | San Antonio, Texas

When COVID-19 hit the local community, students and families in San Antonio not only lost in-person learning, but meals provided at school. To help ease the burden, the San Antonio Foundation for Excellence in Education sprung into action to support students and families with remote learning and food security challenges. Currently, 90% of schools in the San Antonio Independent School District qualify for Title I funding, and more than 50% of district families make less than \$20,000 per year.

Through support from the Walton Family Foundation and local funders, **the San Antonio Foundation has been able to provide 4,000 hotspots to connect low-income families to the internet and offer meals to 9,500 families across the city five times a week.**

Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School, 2020 Grantee Autonomous District School | Indianapolis, Indiana

When the opportunity arose to create an Innovation School in the Indianapolis Public School District, the Thomas Gregg Elementary School community had a bold idea: create a new educational model with a governance structure that made the school directly accountable to the families it serves. Following hundreds of hours of community planning, the Thomas Gregg Neighborhood School opened its doors in the fall of 2018. The school now boasts a longer school year and personalized local resources to help families feel safe, healthy and supported. This has resulted in the school jumping from an "F" grade to an "A" grade in just three years, according to the Indiana State Board of Education.

True to its model, the school's response to COVID-19 began with family outreach. When school buildings closed down in the spring of 2020, educators at Thomas Gregg used their Walton Family Foundation COVID Emergency Grant to go door-to-door delivering backpacks, devices, schoolwork and supplies to all students' homes. As the school worked toward in-person learning, school leaders put funds toward ensuring safe physical spaces. Masks, safety equipment and technology all helped create socially distanced classrooms.

Looking to the Future: The Innovative Schools Program

In 2018, the Walton Family Foundation launched the Innovative Schools Program to find and support educators with new ideas about how to rethink education so it better serves students and communities. Since then, more than 800 teams of educators and community leaders have expressed interest in the program, and 85 were invited to apply with their fresh ideas challenging today's notion of how schools must look and feel. Importantly, the proposals focused predominantly on student populations that were not being served by traditional school models. Through a review process that included expert external reviewers who work in school design, and in-depth interviews with founding teams, the foundation has supported 23 schools over three rounds of the program.



**CICS Boy's Lab, 2018 Grantee
Microschool | Chicago, Illinois**

**Watsonville Prep, 2018 Grantee
Public Charter School | Watsonville, CA**

Academic prospects for young, Black males are limited in today's school system. Black boys – particularly those from low-income urban communities – fall significantly behind in academic achievement when compared to their white peers. Less than 60% of Black males graduate from high school on time,⁸ and just 36% of Black men who enroll in college complete their degree within six years.⁹

Chicago educator Dr. Richard Glass has a unique perspective on why this crisis exists – and fresh ideas about how to address it. “I think the achievement gap is artificial,” says Dr. Glass. “It comes from teacher belief systems in many cases, with excessive discipline procedures and low expectations in the classroom.” To address this, Dr. Glass opened Boy's Lab, a nimble microschool incubated within the Chicago International Charter School (CICS) in Chicago's culturally rich but economically distressed Auburn Gresham neighborhood. Boy's Lab is designed as an inquiry-based program that taps into students' natural curiosity in order to build the academic foundation and social maturity they need to succeed in secondary school and beyond.

In the central California town of Watsonville, home to many immigrant farmworkers and their families, less than 20% of students graduate from a four-year university.¹⁰ To help equip more English language learners and students from low-income communities for a better future, nonprofit charter school network Navigator Schools opened its third K-8 campus in Watsonville with 180 students in grades K-2.

True to its name, Navigator puts students in charge of organizing their own learning. At Navigator's first two schools in nearby Gilroy and Hollister, this engaging approach has helped students – who are predominantly Latinx and from low-income backgrounds – outperform the state average in both reading and math assessments.^{11,12} “When you step into the classroom, there is a balance of joy and rigorous academics like I'd never seen before,” says Watsonville Prep Principal Andrea Hernandez.



CITATIONS

- ¹ “We need you to build the future of school,” April 2017 (Medium) <https://medium.com/future-of-school/we-need-you-to-build-the-future-of-school-53131fd0a209> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ² “The Fading American Dream: Trends in Absolute Income Mobility Since 1940,” December 2016 (Opportunity Insights) <https://opportunityinsights.org/paper/the-fading-american-dream/> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ³ “Principal of Build UP Ensley brings workforce development experience,” August 26, 2018 (Birmingham Times) <https://www.birminghamtimes.com/2018/08/principal-of-build-up-ensley-brings-workforce-development-experience/> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ⁴ “The Physician Workforce in Texas: An Examination of Physician Distribution, Access, Demographics, Affiliations, and Practice Patterns in Texas' 254 Counties,” April 2015 (North Texas Regional Extension Center) <https://dfwhcfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/mhaNTREC2015studyfinal.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ⁵ “Can Texas's Physicians Be as Diverse as Texas?,” July 2017 (Texas Medicine) <https://www.texmed.org/StudentDiversity/> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ⁶ “Facilities Funding for Charter Public Schools,” September 2016 (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools) 2 https://www.publiccharters.org/sites/default/files/migrated/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/facilitiesfundingsnapshot2016_FINAL9262016.pdf (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ⁷ “5 Things to Know About Charter School Facilities,” September 2018 (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools) <https://www.publiccharters.org/latest-news/2018/09/18/5-things-know-about-charter-school-facilities> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ⁸ “Black Lives Matter: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males,” 2015 (Schott Foundation for Public Education) 7 <http://blackboysreport.org/bbreport2015.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ⁹ “Completing College: A National View of Student Completion Rates – Fall 2012 Cohort,” December 2018 (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center) 14 <https://nscresearchcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/SignatureReport16.pdf> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ¹⁰ “Watsonville City-CA California Education Attainment Charts,” 2018 (TownCharts) <https://www.towncharts.com/California/Education/Watsonville-city-CA-Education-data.html> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ¹¹ “School Performance Overview: Hollister Prep,” 2018 (California School Dashboard) <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/35674700127688/2018> (accessed November 10, 2020).
- ¹² “School Performance Overview: Gilroy Prep,” 2018 (California State Dashboard) <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/reports/43694840123760/2018> (accessed November 10, 2020).

*“There is a balance
of joy and rigorous
academics like I'd
never seen before.”*

**Andrea Hernandez,
Watsonville Prep
Principal**

WALTON FAMILY
FOUNDATION



waltonfamilyfoundation.org



[@waltonfamilyfdn](https://twitter.com/waltonfamilyfdn)