



Every School. Every Community.

POLICY PLATFORM FOR THE FUTURE OF LEARNING

California's success and prosperity depends on our public schools' capacity to serve as beacons of light and hope that spark opportunity. Now, more than ever, we can see clearly that schools aren't just about preparing kids for careers but about the health and wellness of entire communities. **Schools are irreplaceable—not just as places of learning, but as community hubs** that provide resources and build connections beyond classroom instruction.

Yet, long before the pandemic began, the zip code you live in dictated the quality of education you receive. It should have never been that way, especially in a state as wealthy as California. And now, amid COVID-19 we continue to see students who live in rural areas, low-income communities, and students of color face the biggest disparities in being able to transition to online learning environments much less meet their basic needs.

As we come together during the pandemic and beyond, we have a critical opportunity to create the schools and the future of learning we need once and for all. **Reinvesting in and rebuilding public education will take all of us leading together. Our Policy Platform for the Future of Learning outlines the urgent actions we need from elected officials and educational leaders to build a transformational, racially just education system built for all of us.** We look forward to partnering with leaders from the Capitol to the grassroots to take care of each student, family, and community in California and usher in the transformation of our schools to foster opportunity, health, and prosperity for generations to come.

The California Partnership for the Future of Learning is a statewide alliance of community organizing and advocacy groups advancing a shared vision of a transformational, racially just education system built for us all. Our work together centers equity, elevates the voices of students and families of color in partnership with educators, focuses on long-term systemic change, and connects to a larger national effort to strengthen public education systems. When the pandemic began, we conducted a statewide needs assessment including the voices of more than 600 students and parents from across 20 California districts which informed the development of this Policy Platform.



**PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
FUTURE of
LEARNING**
CALIFORNIA

1 Center Racial Equity

Inadequate public education funding has been a perpetual and devastating problem in communities of color and areas of concentrated poverty for decades. Real improvement must start with building equity and a lens that looks at race in everything we do in schools, from assessment about needs to decision-making to instruction. A racial equity lens must be applied to each of the demands in our policy platform to truly make an impact.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Center all investments, actions, and collection of data on children and families most impacted** by the pandemic and economic crisis—people of color, particularly Black youth and families;
- **Give additional focus to students of color** who are also English Learners, unhoused, indigenous, undocumented or from mixed-status families, have a disability, live in rural areas, attend alternative schools, or are impacted by the juvenile justice or foster care systems.



2 Prioritize Health & Wellness through Community Schools and More

Relationships are the foundation of every thriving school, and are the key to student success in college, career, and community leadership. In fact, our recent needs assessment that included the voices of more than 600 Californian youth and parents of color, identified support for mental health and building positive relationships for students as the number one priority. Community School models are one innovative and effective way to reimagine public schools as neighborhood hubs for health, relationships, resources, and education for the entire community.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Issue guidance to districts around mental health and social emotional supports** during distance learning, including regular, personal outreach to students and families;
- **Use Federal stimulus funds and state resources to invest in community schools** and other health and social emotional supports and create incentives for districts to reallocate funds and staff from existing resources that are not proven to have educational benefits, such as policing and school resource officers;
- **Require School Climate Surveys** so every district is accountable for improving safety, relationships, empowerment, and conditions of learning;
- **Invest in professional development** for educators (teachers, counselors, social workers) around social emotional learning & mental health.



Community schools are a way to make access to resources more equitable. In this time, stores are out of supplies and families can't access food. Schools that are built around communities could be the place to provide them on top of being a safe place for youth."

- JULISA, EAST SIDE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

“We are the future. What gets decided today and how we move through this crisis will influence how we move forward. They need to center youth voices so we can help create the future—since we are the ones who will have to lead it.”

- LILIANA, LONG BEACH
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



“There are a lot of at risk students who don’t have an adult in the home who cares or is not capable of being there for their kids. They used to get a couple of meals a day at school and now they don’t get that. For some kids, school was the safe harbor. Home is not always a safe place. What is happening with those children and young people?”

- TERRY, DEL NORTE COUNTY
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

3

Engage Families and Students as Partners in Learning and Decisions

Schools don’t work for too many of us, because our voices haven’t been centered in conversations about what our schools and communities need. We have an unprecedented opportunity to engage students, educators, and families to lead the way in designing new approaches for distanced learning and when we go back to school.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Recognize students and families as essential assets and leaders** within our school communities;
- Issue guidance to districts to **prioritize student and family engagement** in co-creating plans for the return to school, developing the 2020-2021 budget including federal and state funds, and finalize the LCAP;
- Collaborate with community advocates to **support new family and student engagement strategies** rooted in shared decision-making that bolster student learning;
- Require districts to **publicly set goals and accountability** for engagement of students and families (e.g. percentage of under-represented students and families reached);
- **Create student task forces** to work with local, state and higher education leaders to solve the unique challenges facing upperclassmen and college students.

4

Invest in a “Restorative” Approach to Learning Loss

As schools prepare to return to the classroom, our actions must repair both short- and long-term harm caused by the crisis. We can’t simply plan to return to the status quo; instead we have the opportunity to reimagine California as a place where every student goes to an amazing school if we start to fully invest in them with a focus on equity and inclusivity for all. Students, their families, and educators must be the architects of this new path forward.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Fund summer school, extended learning time, and extra tutoring** with an emphasis on social emotional wellness, and mental health support;
- **Create statewide and local task forces** that includes the voices of students, families, and educators to address the long-term impacts of learning loss;
- **Provide professional development on trauma-informed practices**, building trusting relationships, and adopting anti-racist norms, including how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted Black, Latinx, undocumented, and Asian communities and how to provide culturally competent support to these communities;

(4. Invest in a “Restorative” Approach to Learning Loss cont.)

- **Invest in counseling for every senior and junior** to help them navigate their future;
- **Focus on healing and re-engagement** rather than punitive approaches towards grading, attendance, and school discipline.

5 Provide Universal, Permanent Digital Access for All

Even before learning went online, the digital divide experienced by families of color impacted our children’s ability to learn. In recent weeks, great strides have been taken to connect young people with hot spots, computers, and internet access. Moving forward, digital access should be a universal and permanent right for every Californian, similar to other public utilities.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Declare access to internet and devices a basic educational right** under the terms of the Williams Settlement and make these resources permanent, inclusive, and non-punitive;
- **Invest in digital infrastructure**—in consultation with local communities—in rural regions and other areas in the state with barriers to digital access;
- **Ensure every student, family, and educator is supported and prepared** to use technology to learn and teach from home.

6 Ensure Local Accountability for Quality, Equitable Learning

With California schools through the transition to distance learning, it is time for the State to evaluate our progress and hold Districts accountable so that no students are left behind.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- Conduct a **statewide assessment** to hear from students, families, and educators on how distance learning is rolling out and how districts are serving students most impacted by this crisis;
- Share bright spots from the assessment for **cross-district learning**;
- Take action to **address districts and charters** that are not meeting state equity obligations.

“Giving students a computer is not enough. We need support for how to do online learning as well as the tools to do it properly. The shift happened too quickly especially for students who didn’t already have these tools and skills.”

- DESHAE, FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



“I fear the achievement gap will widen during this time. Parents who have to work don’t have the capacity to oversee their students’ distance learning during school hours and many lack the knowledge to support their children with 21st century skills. Parents and students need training on devices as well as support for social and emotional skills.”

- SHAKIRA, PARENT LEADER, WEST CONTRA COSTA SCHOOL DISTRICT

“When teachers come and go we lose the strong connections students need to feel safe and comfortable at school. We can struggle and fall behind in our classes. We can become overwhelmed and not know who to turn to for assistance. We can check out and go through an entire day without talking in class or connecting with an adult. By investing in teacher support and retention, we are investing in one of our students’ most important resources so that every student has a caring and supportive adult in school.”

- JIAWEN, STUDENT,
OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL



“Things are getting worse for families.”

- JESUS, ORGANIZER, POMONA
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

7

Meet the Needs of Educators During and After the Pandemic

With students at home, Californians around the state are recognizing the vital and difficult job that teachers undertake every day. We need to channel this recognition to win policies and practices and recruit and retain fully prepared teachers and provide jobs with living wages, good benefits, and resources for ongoing learning and development.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- Provide teachers with an adequate living wage, smaller class sizes, and support for social emotional health so that Districts can **recruit and retain excellent educators** that reflect the diversity of students;
- **Ensure teachers have the tools and training** they need to feel safe and supported returning to the classroom;
- Build on pre-COVID investments in **teacher training and professional development**;
- **Prevent the loss of teaching positions** during forthcoming recession.

8

Address Basic, Urgent Needs of Students and Families

Schools are more than just places of learning. When the schools shut down, millions of families were cut off from their community and safety net overnight. For the health and vibrancy of all communities, now is the time to work creatively and collaboratively across systems to address long standing structural inequities—first to meet the immediate needs of our community, and then to adopt policies which can repair and prevent further harm.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA:

- **Safe and stable places for students to live.** In addition to freezing evictions for tenants, families need relief from rental and mortgage payments, and emergency housing and services for more than 370,000 unhoused students across the state;
- **Repeal Proposition 209** and provide agencies the ability to use race-conscious strategies in creating a California for all;
- **Free, accessible testing and quality health care for all**, regardless of immigration status, housing status or income, including for those who are incarcerated, detained or in group homes;
- Ensuring all Californians can access **paid leave and unemployment benefits** regardless of their immigration status or workplace;
- **Relief** for small businesses and community-based organizations;
- Universal, **free childcare**, early learning, nutritional and financial resources for families with young children;
- **Keeping families together** and reuniting those that have been separated by Incarceration, detention or face separation by threat of deportation.

9 Support Whole Child Early Care and Education

Access to high quality early care and education creates a strong foundation for a lifetime of success. Policy and budget decisions must include high-quality early learning opportunities for our youngest students and address the needs of the early childhood education workforce, many of whom are low-wage earners and are serving children of color and Dual Language Learners.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Establish the Department of Early Childhood Development** that includes an office of equity to collect and apply data by race to drive results and allocate dollars to improve child outcomes;
- **Protect and expand early care and education access** through stability in payment for providers along with hazard pay;
- **Support the early learning workforce** through developing specific competencies and funding professional development for those serving Dual Language Learners;
- **Ensure supports for the Family Child Care Home and Family Friends and Neighbor** sector to school.

10 Fund our Schools Starting with Schools & Communities First

Though California is one of the wealthiest of the United States, we are in the bottom third of the nation in education funding. This insufficient commitment to funding public schools has serious repercussions including in this crisis. This is the moment for us to go all in and invest to fulfill the promises of real equity, opportunity, and justice in our public schools.

WE CALL ON CALIFORNIA TO:

- **Pass the Schools and Communities First** ballot initiative in November 2020;
- Maintain school funding at pre-COVID levels, and **protect supplemental and concentration grants** in particular;
- **Apply an equity funding formula** that prioritizes highest need students for all funding sources (federal, state, local) and protect LCFF and other funding for highest needs students and schools during budget reduction decisions;
- **Adopt a strategy for fully funding schools** over the next 7 years beginning with Schools and Community First;
- **Use federal COVID-19 funds to supplement, not replace, state dollars** to support a restorative approach to learning loss.

“A lot of children and parents of color don’t have access to high-quality early care and education. Because of the pandemic, a lot of people are not working, and they won’t be able to go back to work if they don’t have child care, especially if our children return to school. We need to invest in early child care to provide families a high-quality education throughout the pandemic, and invest in early childhood education staff like myself to support deeper relationship building with families and children.”

- MYEISHA, PARENT LEADER & ECE TEACHER, OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



“Schools and Communities First is the solution to get our schools and communities out of scarcity and into abundance. 40% of the money will go to local school districts—that would mean students will have more counselors and health centers as well as better access to computers. The other funds will go to our local governments and communities, which means my city can have access to food, clinics, and more affordable housing which many folks I know don’t have access to during this crisis.”

- ANGEL, STUDENT, OAKLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Thank you! We appreciate the individuals and organizations who led our statewide needs assessment and collaborated to create these recommendations:

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SHARED STORY TABLE

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THE POLICY PLATFORM FOR THE FUTURE OF LEARNING WAS DEVELOPED BY:



With additional support from:



futureforlearning.org/california-partnership

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