

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

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# EXCELINED IN ACTION

Policies and Progress Across the Nation



SUCCESS IS NEVER FINAL. REFORM IS NEVER FINISHED.

# EXCELINED BOARD MEMBERS



**Dr. Condoleezza Rice, Chair**  
66th U.S. Secretary of State and  
Professor of Political Science at  
Stanford University



**F. Philip Handy, President**  
Chief Executive Officer of  
Winter Park Capital



**Reginald Brown**  
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**César Conde**  
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**Joel Klein**  
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**William Oberndorf**  
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**Charles Schwab**  
Founder and Chairman of  
The Charles Schwab Corporation

“The challenge of fixing our schools  
must be among the most urgent of  
national priorities.”

Governor Jeb Bush | Founder & former Chairman of ExcelinEd





# EDUCATION IS THE GREAT EQUALIZER

## DR. CONDOLEEZZA RICE, BOARD CHAIR

Americans may be divided on many issues, but one issue around which we should all unite is that of high-quality education for our children. It is, I believe, the new civil rights struggle of our time.

The opportunity that turned America into the world's most innovative and dynamic economy is now in jeopardy. Today, 70 percent of people born into low-income households will remain at that income level. We can no longer say that it doesn't matter where you came from; it matters where you are going, because poverty has become an inheritance. This dynamic is not only dragging down our citizens but also compromising our future economic prosperity, global position and national security.

While we can do little to change the circumstances of a child's birth, we can do much to give that child an opportunity to rise above his or her circumstance and succeed in life. That opportunity begins with a quality education.

Education is the great equalizer. Yet all too often our most disadvantaged children are stuck in schools we know will not equip them to succeed. When we can look at zip codes and tell if a child is going to get a good education or not, that is the highest form of inequality for our children.

It doesn't have to be this way. All children – be they rich or poor, black or white, Hispanic or Asian – are born eager to learn. We simply have to put them into a situation where that can happen.

This is the mission of the Foundation for Excellence in Education – to reorganize priorities in our school system and put the achievement of children at the top of the list. We know how to do it, and we know the gains that result from it.

ExcelinEd works with courageous education leaders to focus education policies on students. One by one, states are developing local solutions to a national education crisis. They are making bold changes to ensure students have the skills, teachers and educational choices necessary to succeed. We are proud to support this work.

All children deserve the opportunity to become an American success story. Their futures – and the future of this nation – depend on that opportunity.

Sincerely,  
[Dr. Condoleezza Rice](#)  
[Chair, Board of Directors](#)  
[Foundation for Excellence in Education](#)

*“We can no longer say that it doesn't matter where you came from; it matters where you are going, because poverty has become an inheritance. This dynamic is not only dragging down our citizens but also compromising our future economic prosperity, global position and national security.”*





# EMBRACING NEW REALITIES

## PATRICIA LEVESQUE, CEO

It is the time-honored tradition that each American generation bequeaths to its heirs a stronger and more prosperous nation. We are in danger of becoming the first generation to fall short of that obligation.

The 21st century confronts us with the most competitive global economy in world history. It is a knowledge-based economy, one in which nations that have the best educated, most skilled workforces will dominate.

Our competitors understand this, which is why we are seeing countries in Asia and Europe make strong academic gains on international assessments. Unfortunately, the American response has been stagnation.

Those who defend our current K-12 education system blame poverty for America's dismal results. But, in fact, other nations are doing much better than we are in advancing low-income students, as well as their middle-class and affluent students. We are falling behind across the board.

This failure will never be adequately addressed by adults and unions vested in an outdated and under-performing education model.

The 21st century requires an education system that reflects new realities. By 2023, African-American and Hispanic children will account for 45 percent of all students. Yet right now, these children are reading more than two grade

levels behind their white peers. That achievement gap translates into gaps in skills, college degrees, income and international competitiveness.

Florida recognized that 15 years ago when the state set the same academic standards for all children. Holding schools accountable, sanctioning failure, rewarding success, prioritizing early literacy, giving parents educational choices and including digital technology in education created the path to Florida's success. The state experienced a complete turnaround from what was once one of the worst public education systems in the nation.

From our Florida experience, and similar experiences in reform-minded states ranging from Arizona to Tennessee, we have developed a set of student-centered policies proven to work. They are choice and accountability policies that advance our top students and end the neglect of our struggling students.

I hope you will take the time to read this report, learn more about our agenda and become an advocate for children, as well as our nation's future, in your community and state.

Sincerely,

Patricia Levesque  
CEO, Foundation for Excellence in Education

*"The 21st century requires an education system that reflects new realities. By 2023, African-American and Hispanic children will account for 45 percent of all students. Yet right now, these children are reading more than two grade levels behind their white peers."*



“By challenging students with higher standards, making sure we have honest assessments, shining a light on learning, incentivizing success and letting families select options that best meet the needs of their own children, we’ve witnessed a transformation in education.”

F. Philip Handy | President of ExceleEd Board of Directors and former Chairman of the Florida State Board of Education



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# ABOUT THE FOUNDATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

*Founded by former Florida Governor Jeb Bush in 2008, the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcellinEd) is a national leader in education reform. ExcellinEd is a hands-on, how-to policy and advocacy organization. We design and promote model legislation and provide technical expertise, policy development, implementation strategies and public outreach.*

## MISSION

To build an American education system that equips every child to achieve his or her God-given potential.

## VISION

An education system that maximizes every student's potential for learning and prepares all students for success in the 21st century.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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All children can learn.

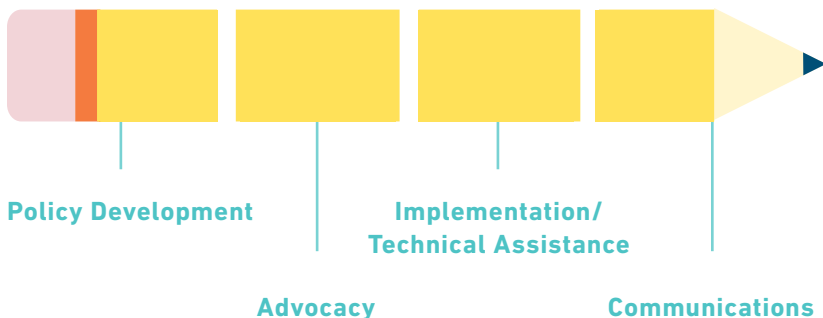
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All children can achieve when education is organized around the singular goal of student learning.

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All children can thrive when they are given the opportunity to choose the learning options best suited to their individual needs.

## REFORM



## APPROACH

ExcellinEd believes all students should graduate from school with the knowledge and skills to achieve their full potential. To accomplish this, ExcellinEd emphasizes policies that, if aggressively pursued, result in a measurable, objective rise in student learning across all student groups.

This is not a single-step process, and we support states as they undertake bold education reform to benefit their students. By providing customized, strategic support to policymakers, state and community leaders, reform advocates, teachers and parents, ExcellinEd aims to inform and advance education policies that improve the quality of education in every state.

## SIGNATURE POLICIES

To achieve a high-quality, student-centered education system, ExcelinEd emphasizes a comprehensive reform agenda. Our formula for student achievement focuses on accountability and choice: measuring what matters, using rewards and incentives to drive behavior and empowering parents and students with choice.

Since no silver bullet will change the course of American schools, ExcelinEd emphasizes a set of signature policies that have changed the course of education in Florida and other states. These policies hold the power to improve learning for millions more students across the nation.



### MEASUREMENT MATTERS

A-F School Grades  
K-3 Reading  
Effective Teachers



### FUNDING DRIVES BEHAVIOR

Rewards for Results  
Incentives for College & Career Readiness



### CHOICE WORKS

School Choice  
Education Savings Accounts  
Vouchers & Tax Credit Scholarships  
Digital Learning  
Course Access



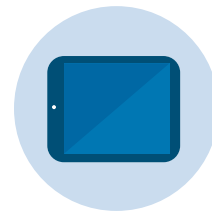
A-F School Grading



K-3 Reading



Education Savings Accounts



Course Access



College and Career Readiness

## NEXT GENERATION REFORM

Always looking forward, ExcelinEd improves and expands signature policies to meet the needs of parents and students across the nation and assist states with policy development and implementation. The next generation of ExcelinEd signature policies includes: **Data Privacy**, **Competency-Based Education** and **Education Funding Reform**.

# 2014: A YEAR OF COLLABORATION

## JANUARY

**Signature Policy Report:** Published *Guide to EdTech Procurement*, the 10th white-paper in the Digital Learning Now (DLN) Smart Series, which has been equipping leaders with models, resources and strategies to implement digital learning since 2012.

## FEBRUARY

**Thought Leadership:** Participated in the Pew Trust/Common Sense Media's event in Washington, D.C., *School Privacy Zone Summit: Protecting Student Data from the Classroom to the Cloud*.

## JULY

**National Spotlight:** Partnered to build an education coalition to shape the public dialogue and advance the modernization of E-rate.

**Signature Policy Report:** Published the second white paper of the year, *Leading in an Era of Change: Making the Most of State Course Access Opportunities*, which has already impacted state policy in Missouri and Illinois.

## AUGUST

**National Spotlight:** Presented at the National Conference of State Legislatures Legislative Summit in Minneapolis on K-3 reading.

## SEPTEMBER

**Signature Policy:** 700 Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts awarded in Florida three months after being signed into law.

## OCTOBER

**Open Letter:** Authored an open letter to parents, calling on state and local leaders in Florida to focus on fewer, better tests.





## MARCH

**Signature Policy Report:** Released the *2013 DLN Report Card*, which measures state policies on digital learning.



## APRIL

**Twitter Landmark:** Surpassed 10,000 @ExcelinEd Twitter followers.



## JUNE

**Anniversary:** Celebrated the 15th anniversary of Florida's A+ Plan for Education, which remains the foundation of Florida's reformed education system and ExcelinEd's model for state-based reform.

**Task Force:** Co-chaired the Aspen Institute Task Force on Learning and the Internet, which released *Learner at the Center of a Networked World*. The final report provided support for E-rate reform, competency-based learning, higher state standards and strengthening student data privacy.



## MAY

**Report:** Published *A Framework for Selecting Quality Course Providers at Competitive Prices* in coordination with students in the Stanford University Public Policy Program; experts consulted included Nobel Prize winning economist Alvin Roth.

**Collaboration:** Convened the multi-state Course Access Coalition with Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Texas, Virginia and Utah to share experiences, best practices and explore the creation of an online course reciprocity agreement.



## NOVEMBER

**International Event:** Convened a record-setting number of attendees at the 2014 National Summit on Education Reform.

**Capacity Building:** Began production of *EdPolicy Leaders Online*, a series of free massive open online courses designed to spur education reform.

## DECEMBER

**Prize Challenge:** Announced the winners of the My School Information Design Challenge to reimagine school report cards. The Challenge sought the help of designers to transform complex school performance data into a user friendly and effective report for parents, policymakers and the public.



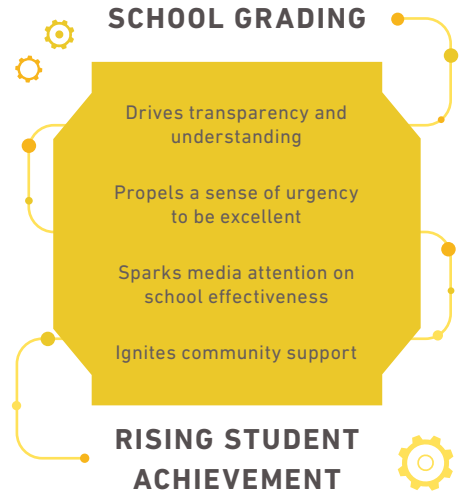
# THE “TOUGH LOVE” OF SCHOOL GRADING

## SIGNATURE POLICY: A-F SCHOOL GRADING

*A transparent, objective, easy-to-understand school accountability model.*

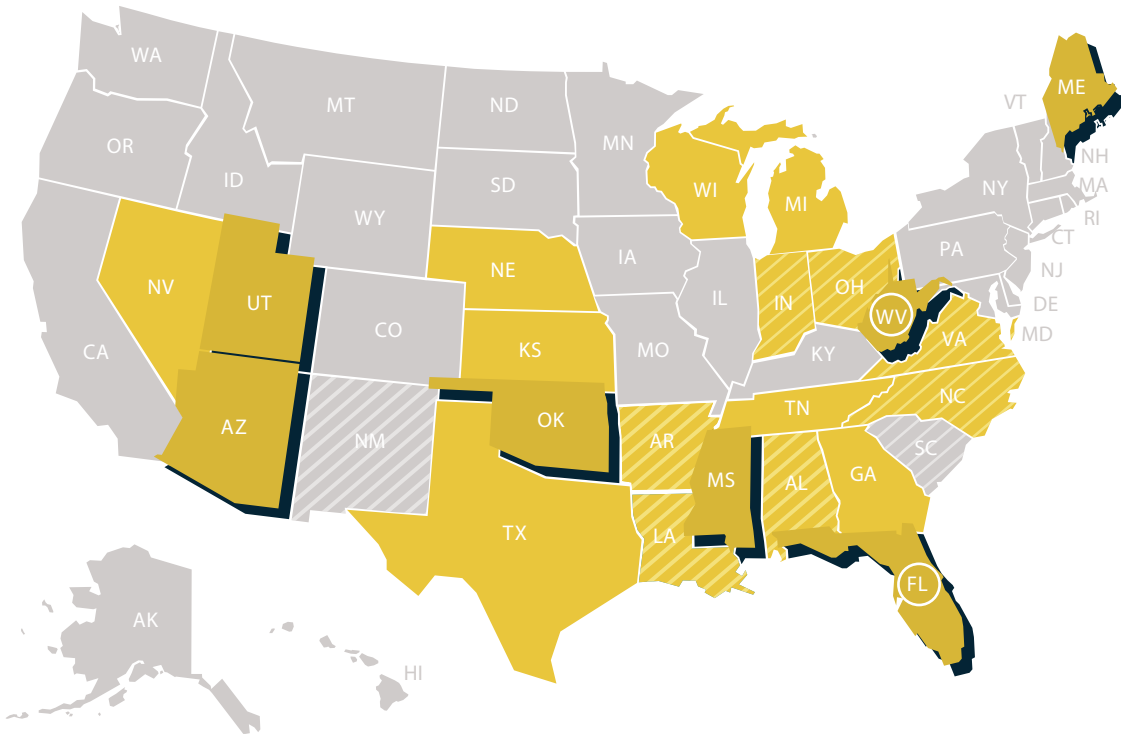
Most states use vague labels, such as “satisfactory,” “orange” or “Level 1,” to rate schools instead of offering parents, policymakers and the public transparent, objective information about school effectiveness. In 1999, Florida made the revolutionary decision to grade schools on an A-F scale just like students – no further explanation needed.

Behind the simplicity is a data-driven system of accountability. ExcelinEd promotes an A-F School Grading policy that measures what matters: overall performance, graduation rates and student progress, with extra focus on struggling students. School grading works by holding all schools to the same high standards and transparency, and clearly communicating that information to parents.



## ENGAGEMENT MAP | A-F SCHOOL GRADING

- 2014 ExcelinEd Engagement
- Policy with Room for Improvement
- Comprehensive Policy
- Policy Strengthened or Passed in 2014



“Transparency and accountability are not easy pills to swallow, especially for those being held accountable. But positive things will happen when schools organize around the singular focus of student learning.”

Joel Klein | CEO of NewsCorps’ Amplify and former Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education



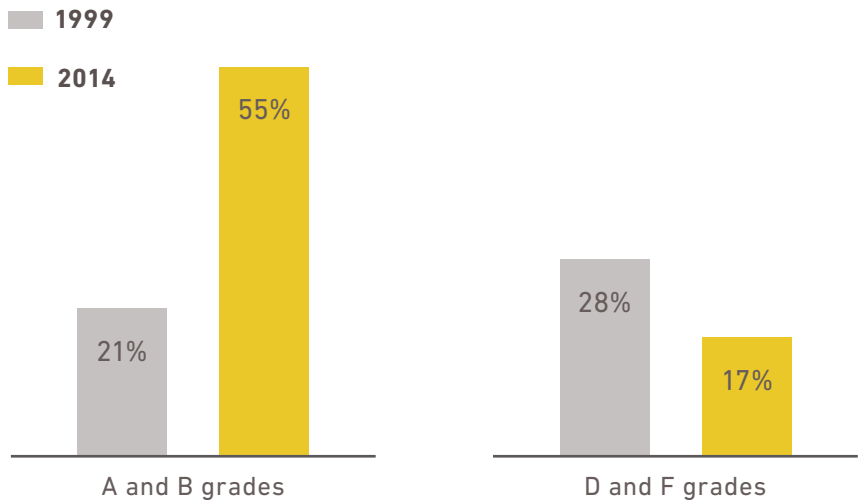
## STATE ACTIONS

In 2014, ExcelinEd worked in 22 states on A-F School Grading.

- **Passed Policy:** West Virginia
- **Strengthened Policy:** Florida
- **Guided Implementation:** Florida, Mississippi, West Virginia
- **Supported States:** Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin

## REAL RESULTS

For 16 years, A-F School Grading based on students’ academic success has shined a bright light on the effectiveness of Florida’s schools. During that time, the state has raised the bar on what it takes to earn an A, B, C, D or F eight times, making the standard far more rigorous.



*“We all need feedback to help us improve, and when schools earn a low grade, it matters. The bottom line is that A-F grading is universally understood.”*

Brenda Duplantis | Florida member of the Multicultural Education Alliance and mother of three boys



# READING IS THE GATEWAY TO SUCCESS

## SIGNATURE POLICY: K-3 READING

*A comprehensive reading intervention policy that begins in kindergarten and ensures that students are prepared for success before moving on to fourth grade.*

From kindergarten through third grade, children learn to read. Then in fourth grade, they read to learn. The ability to read opens doors and opportunities that every child deserves. Children who are not reading proficiently in third grade are four times more likely to dropout or fail to graduate from high school, according to a 2011 report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For poor black and Hispanic students, the likelihood increases to eight times.

ExcelinEd's comprehensive K-3 Reading policy was developed to ensure all students enter fourth grade with the foundational reading skills they will need to learn, graduate and succeed.

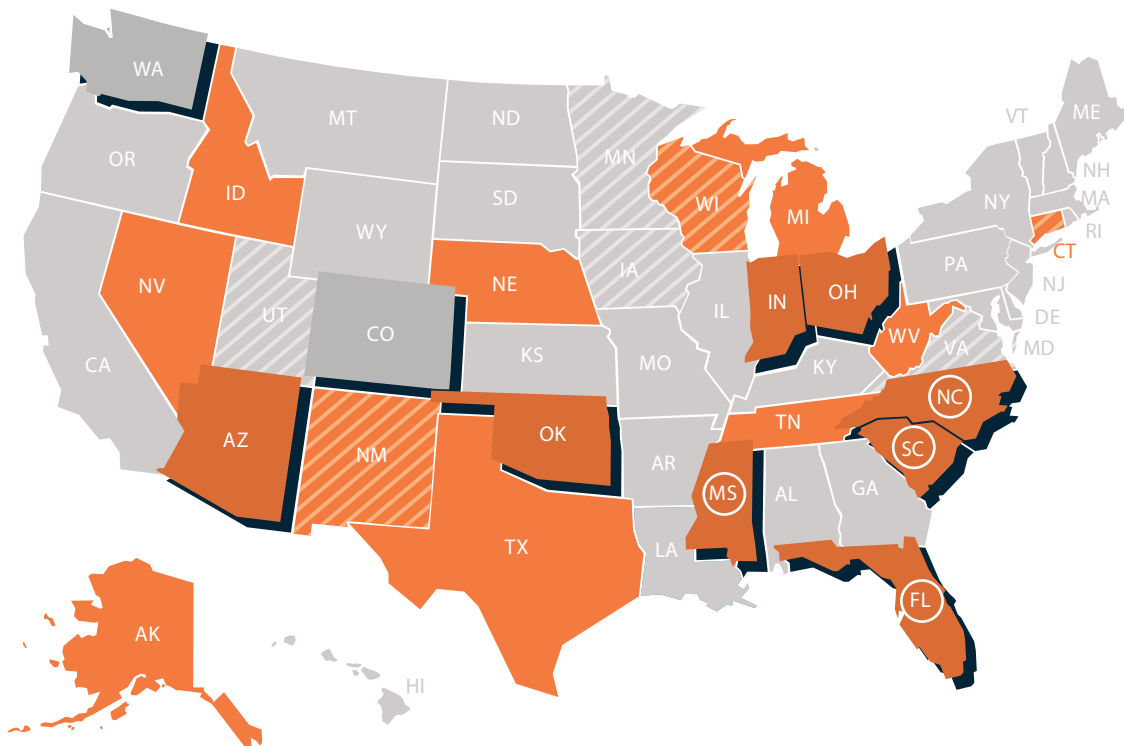


**7 OUT OF EVERY 10**

prison inmates can't read above a fourth-grade level.

## ENGAGEMENT MAP | K-3 READING

- 2014 ExcelinEd Engagement
- Policy with Room for Improvement
- Comprehensive Policy
- Policy Strengthened or Passed in 2014



“Learning to read is a prerequisite to success. We must ensure our children have opportunities to succeed, or we rob them of their potential.”

César Conde | Executive Vice President at NBCUniversal



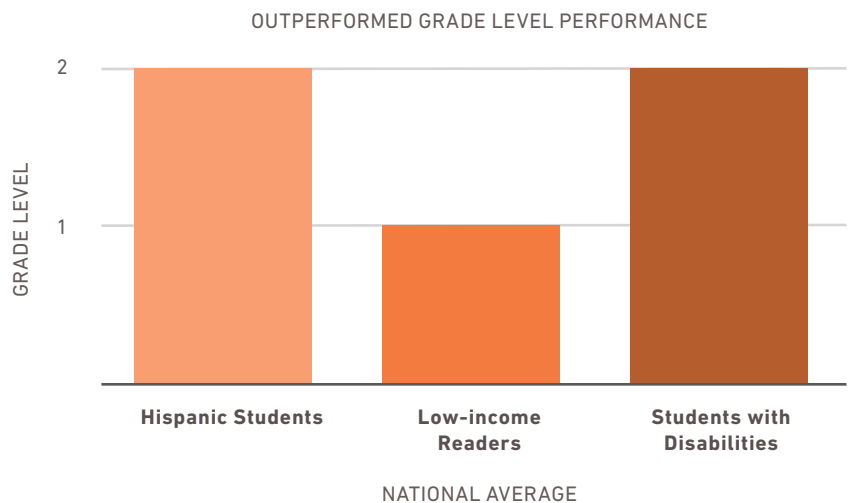
## STATE ACTIONS

In 2014, ExcelinEd worked in 19 states on K-3 Reading:

- **Passed Policy:** Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina
- **Strengthened Policy:** Florida, Mississippi
- **Guided Implementation:** Connecticut, Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio
- **Supported States:** Alaska, Arizona, Idaho, Indiana, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, West Virginia, Wisconsin

## REAL RESULTS

Since the policy was implemented in Florida in 2002, reading scores for students have soared. The 2013 Nation's Report Card found that Florida's fourth-grade readers outperformed the national average in every subgroup.



*“The Third Grade Reading Guarantee is going to be the very heart of education. If you aren’t reading proficiently by the end of third grade, you are going to struggle throughout the rest of your school years.”*

Ohio Senator Peggy Lehner | Advocate of Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee



# GIVING PARENTS A CHOICE

## SIGNATURE POLICY: EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

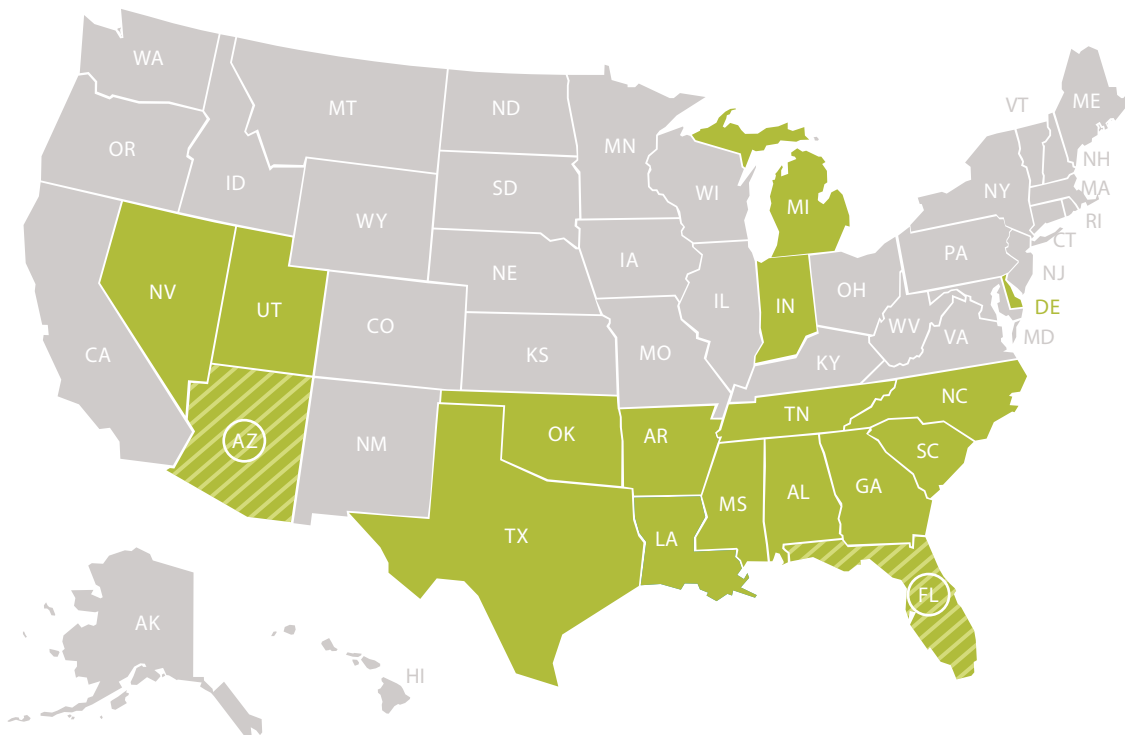
*An innovative choice program that empowers families with the financial freedom to choose the right school or learning environment for their child.*

Education Savings Accounts (ESAs), which were first introduced in Arizona five years ago, place state dollars designated for a child's education in a personal account that parents can manage to cover the cost of customized learning. Account funds can cover multiple education options, including private school tuition, online education, tutoring and dual enrollment. ExcelinEd promotes the expansion of ESAs in states as a supplemental way for parents to care for their child's unique needs. ESAs create an entirely flexible approach to education, where the ultimate goal is maximizing each child's natural learning abilities.



## ENGAGEMENT MAP | EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

- 2014 ExcelinEd Engagement
- Policy with Room for Improvement
- Comprehensive Policy
- Policy Strengthened or Passed in 2014



“No longer is the debate about whether we need educational choice. Today the conversation is about how much choice.”

Betsy DeVos | Chairman of The Windquest Group and the American Federation for Children



## STATE ACTIONS

In 2014, ExcelinEd worked in 17 states on Education Savings Accounts.

- **Passed Policy:** Florida
- **Strengthened Policy:** Arizona
- **Guided Implementation:** Arizona, Florida
- **Supported States:** Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah

## REAL RESULTS

In Arizona, where the ESA program originated, parents shared what they thought of the program.



- 71% very satisfied.
- 19% satisfied.
- 10% somewhat satisfied.
- 0 neutral or negative opinions



*“These scholarships empower moms and dads of students with disabilities with the flexibility to create education plans custom-made for their children – plans to help these unique boys and girls succeed in school and in everyday life. PLSAs will be life-changing for my family and potentially thousands of others in our state.”*

Julie Kleffel | Florida mother of a special needs student using a Personal Learning Scholarship Account (Florida’s ESA program)



# EXPANDING ACCESS AND EQUITY

## SIGNATURE POLICY: COURSE ACCESS

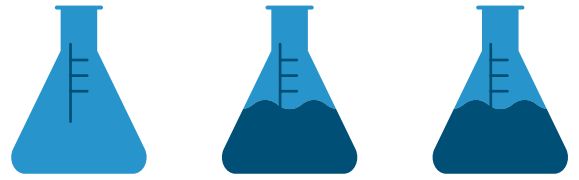
*A technology-driven choice initiative that allows K-12 students to access quality courses regardless of location.*

Access to a high-quality education no longer needs to depend on location. ExcelsinEd promotes Course Access to connect students – wherever they may live – with a wide variety of quality resources, instructors and courses.

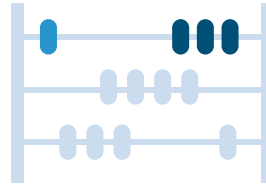
Course Access uses technology and innovative policy to offer a catalog of courses to students statewide. Families can select the best courses for their children from an online catalog of in-person, online and blended courses. From Advanced Placement to STEM and music courses, states can use Course Access to engage students like never before by offering their preferred courses in their preferred formats from effective, qualified teachers.

Among high schools that serve large percentages of African-American and Latino students:

**1 IN 3** *don't offer chemistry*

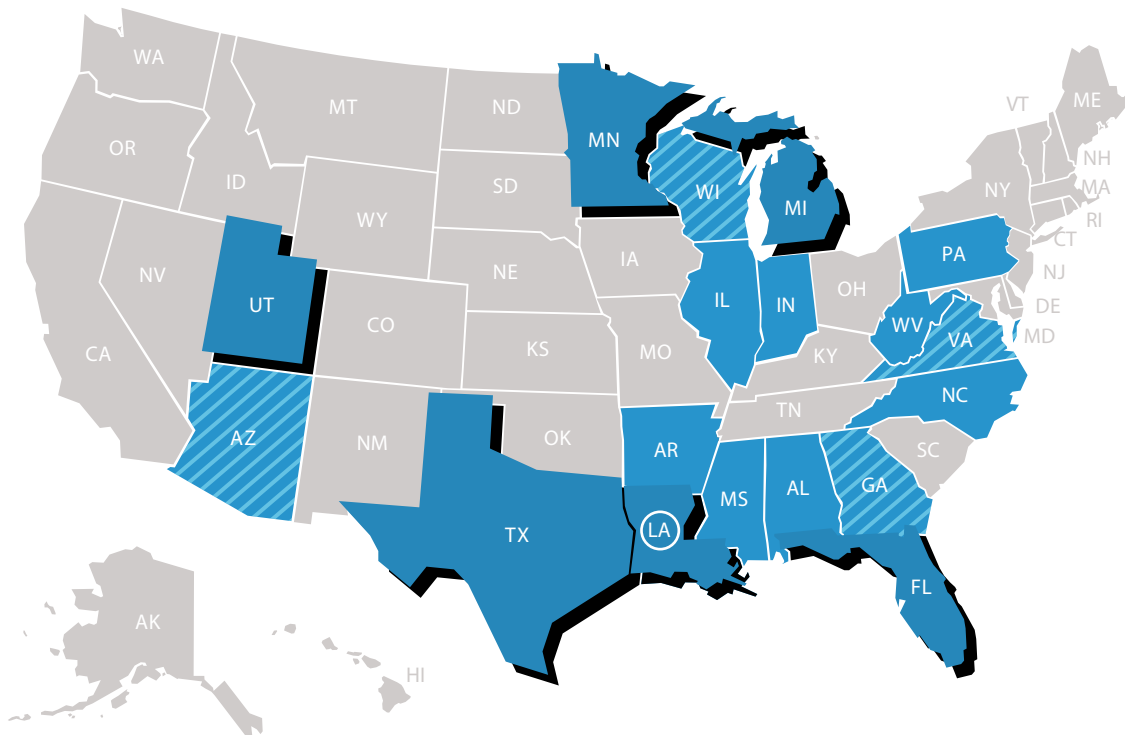


**1 IN 4** *don't offer algebra II*



## ENGAGEMENT MAP | COURSE ACCESS

- 2014 ExcelsinEd Engagement
- Policy with Room for Improvement
- Comprehensive Policy
- Policy Strengthened or Passed in 2014





“We can’t afford to lose generations of kids on the altar of ‘well, they have to stay in their assigned school.’”

Dr. Condoleezza Rice | ExcelinEd Chair



## STATE ACTIONS

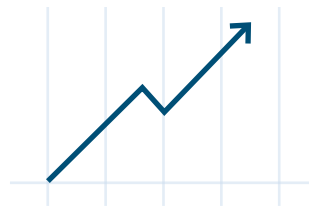
In 2014, ExcelinEd worked in 18 states on Course Access.

- **Passed Policy:** Louisiana
- **Strengthened Policy:** Louisiana
- **Guided Implementation:** Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Texas, Wisconsin
- **Supported States:** Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia

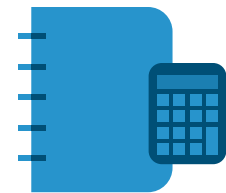
## REAL RESULTS

In Louisiana, students have been using the state’s Course Access program since 2013. From Advanced Placement courses to career and technical education, students can choose from a simple online catalog of in-person, online and blended courses.

LOUISIANA COURSE ACCESS PROGRAM



Enrollment in **19,000 courses** for 2014-2015 school year



Course enrollment saw **+700% increase** over 2013-2014 school year



*“If Louisiana and the rest of the nation are to compete in the 21st century, we have to get beyond the limitations of the traditional schoolhouse and provide each student with an education that meets with their vision of life beyond 12th grade.”*

Ken Bradford | Assistant Superintendent, Office of Content, Louisiana Department of Education



# PREPARING STUDENTS FOR TODAY'S GLOBAL ECONOMY

## SIGNATURE POLICY: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS

*Policies that provide information, incentives and access to advanced courses and certifications to prepare students for higher education and the workforce.*

The United States' failure to educate its students leaves them unprepared to compete and threatens the country's ability to thrive in a global economy. ExcelsEd promotes comprehensive college and career readiness policies to best equip students for the rigors of the college classroom and the labor market. The model includes:

- Increasing students' access to AP, IB and dual enrollment courses and industry-verified job certifications during high school.
- Rewarding schools and teachers for student success in earning college credit and industry certifications.
- Informing teachers, parents and students about college and career options.

*Complete College America reports:*

**+50%** of students entering two-year colleges are placed in remediation.

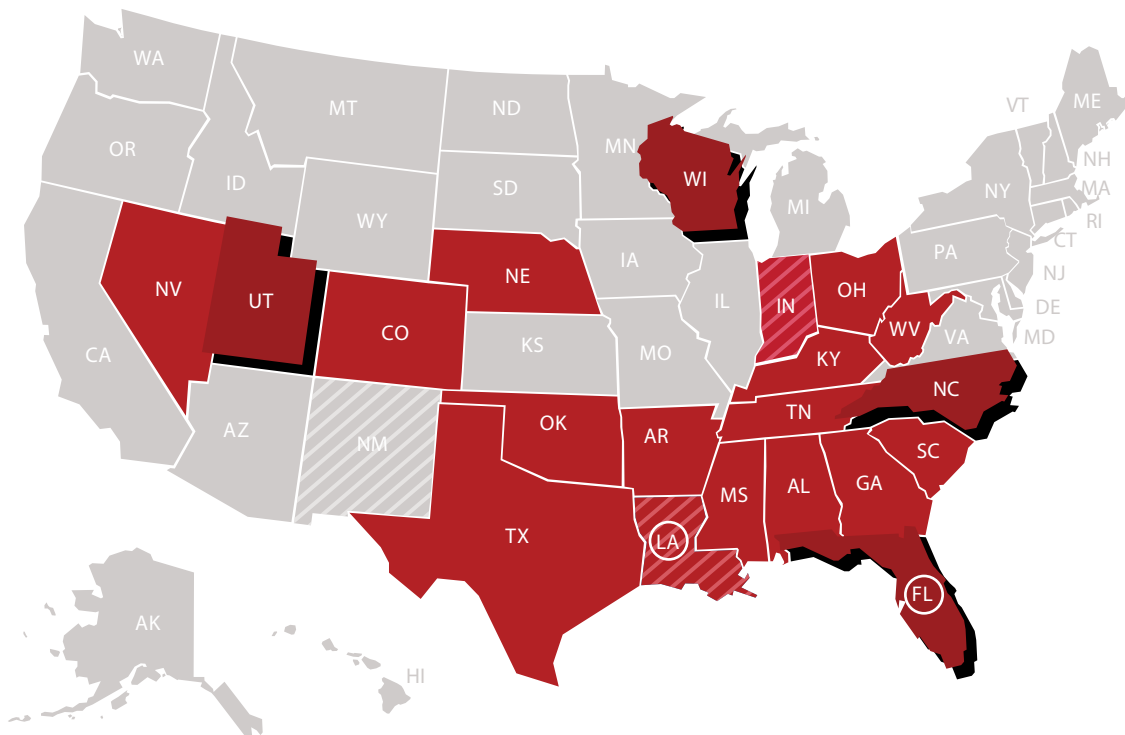
**40%** of that 50% never complete remediation

**10%** earn a degree in three years or fewer.



## ENGAGEMENT MAP | COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS INITIATIVES

- 2014 ExcelsEd Engagement
- Policy with Room for Improvement
- College & Career Readiness Initiatives
- Policy Strengthened or Passed in 2014



“To compete with the rest of the world in the 21st century, we must produce competitive high school graduates ready for college or meaningful careers.”

Governor Jeb Bush | Founder & former Chairman of ExcelinEd



## STATE ACTIONS

In 2014, ExcelinEd worked in 20 states on College and Career Readiness.

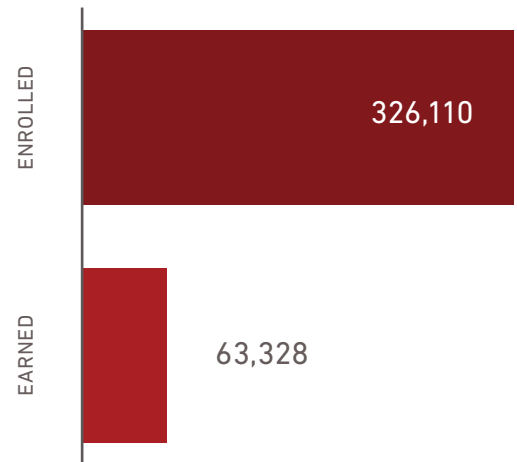
- **Passed Policy:** Florida, Louisiana
- **Supported States:** Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin

## REAL RESULTS

Florida's industry certification incentives program is the largest and longest running program in the nation.

In 2013-2014, **326,110 students** enrolled in **industry certification courses**. 40.4% of high school student population.

**63,328 students** earned **industry certifications**.



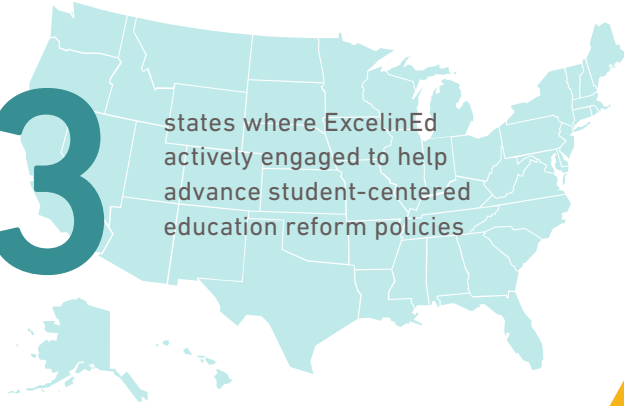
*“My students may currently live in trailers, work in the fields and help support their families, but their lives going forward can be whatever they dream....These students are prepared to attend college, start a career or enter the military with the full understanding that life is not easy, but they are ready.”*

Kelly Zunkiewicz | Florida AP Calculus Teacher,  
The New Teacher Project's 2014 Fishman Prize Winner

# 2014: BY THE NUMBERS

33

states where ExcelinEd actively engaged to help advance student-centered education reform policies

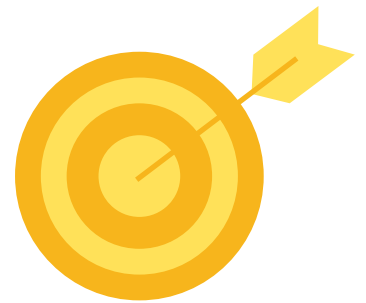


7

expert testimonies by ExcelinEd staff in 5 states

653

earned media hits



912

attendees at the 2014 National Summit on Education Reform



500+

pieces of legislation filed related to ExcelinEd policies

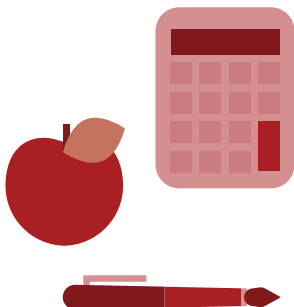


100+

education reform partners

109

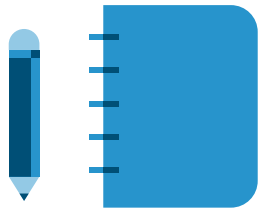
presentations and speeches by ExcelinEd staff



29

education policies promoted by ExcelinEd signed into law in 12 states

25%



of our team have taught K-12 or in higher-education classrooms.

with

200

years of collective professional experience

+50%



of our staff members have worked for a governor, a state legislature or a state department of education.

214%

increase in page visits to [ExcelinEd.org](http://ExcelinEd.org)



88%

increase in Facebook fans



35%

increase in @ExcelinEd Twitter Followers

136%

increase in page visits to the [EdFly Blog](#)

200

100

0

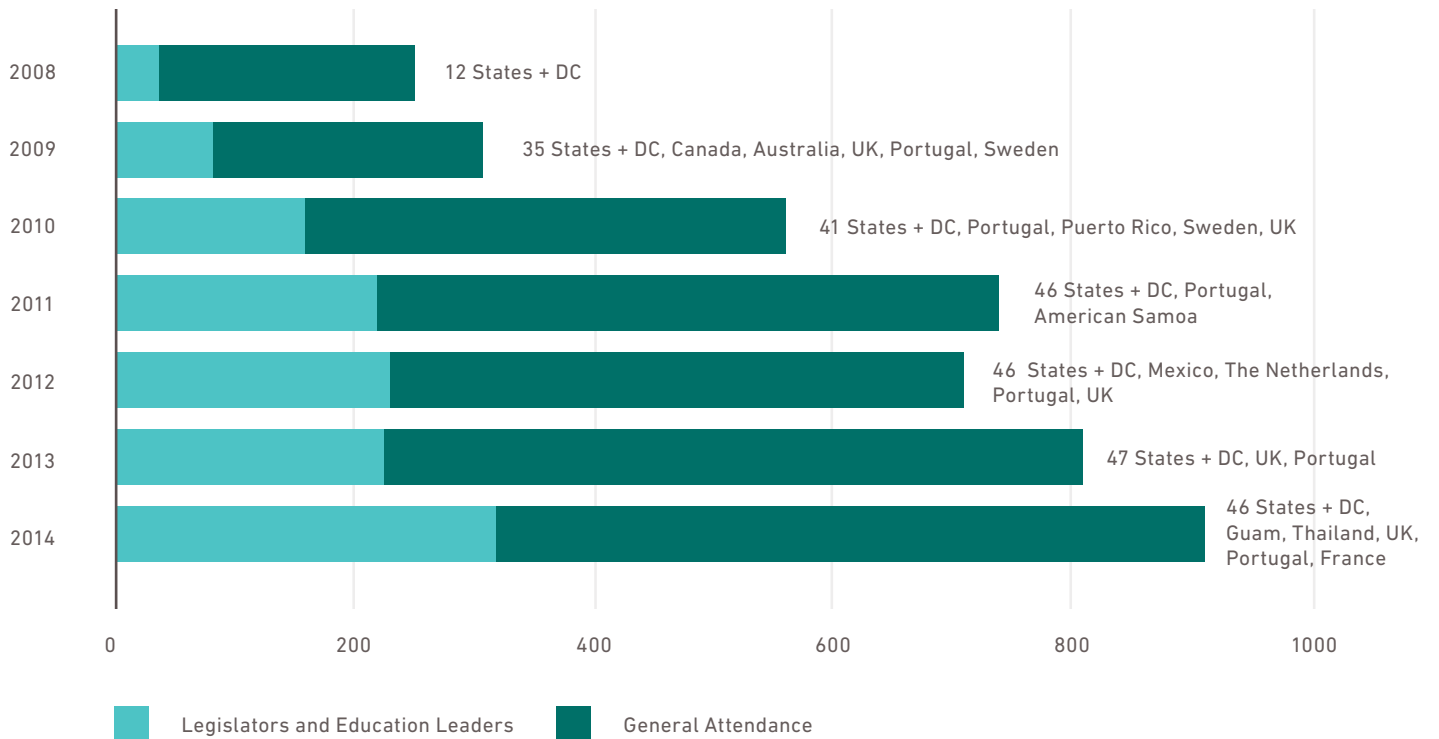
# CONVENING THE NATION'S LEADERS

## THE NATIONAL SUMMIT ON EDUCATION REFORM

The National Summit on Education Reform is ExcelinEd's flagship event. On November 20-21, 2014, ExcelinEd hosted the seventh annual National Summit on Education Reform in Washington, D.C. "Unlocking Student Achievement: Choice and Accountability" brought together national leaders, state policymakers, reform organizations and education stakeholders to learn about successful education reforms and solutions to shared challenges. The Summit featured five keynote addresses, two general sessions and 12 strategy sessions.



## ATTENDANCE



## HIGHLIGHTS

**95%**

of attendees graded the summit either an A or B for content, value and usefulness to work.

Streamed live from remote locations by nearly **400 people**.

**318**

legislators and state education leaders, representing **35% of total attendees**.

Attendees from **5 countries, 46 states**, Washington, D.C. and Guam.

## #EIE14 DIGITAL



**5,466,385**

reach on social media



**18,496**

website views during the week of the Summit



**14,636**

YouTube views since the Summit

**5,974**

tweets using #EIE14



**“The higher the stakes for students, the more equitable the education system.”**

Andreas Schleicher | Director for Education and Skills and head of the Programme for International Student Assessment at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

*“The Summit reminded me of the importance of school choice for students. It is baffling that school choice remains a question in a country founded on the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”*

Faye Adams | Florida Teacher

*“The Summit gives participants the tools they need to return to their home states and be effective advocates for education improvements, including the inspiration for reformers to continue their efforts.”*

Pete Miller | Indiana State Senator

*“The Excellence in Education Summit is a transformational experience. The array of content, the ability to share ideas and the expertise of the speakers is truly impressive.”*

Pierce McNair | Director of Research for the South Carolina House of Representatives



# NEXT GENERATION REFORM

## DATA PRIVACY

ExcelinEd is strengthening alliances with education reform organizations and corporations around the common theme of providing a data-secure learning environment for children. ExcelinEd's model legislation, combined with forward-looking policies such as statewide student data backpacks, helps to address privacy concerns without restricting innovations.

ExcelinEd is developing policy toolkits and resources for state and district leaders, including a guide on how to talk about privacy with parents and a detailed analysis of the

existing privacy laws in all 50 states. ExcelinEd's model legislation for states provides stronger governance with the sharing of student information, the establishment of a state Chief Privacy Officer and clarification around the use of sensitive data by private sector companies. This work has involved our partners, the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), The Software & Information Industry Association and the Future of Privacy Forum. In addition, ExcelinEd has partnered with DQC to offer a data privacy course as part of the new *EdPolicy Leaders Online* series.

“Today’s global economy requires a modernized education – free from the outdated constraints of the Industrial Age. New models of learning replace seat time with mastery of skills; they inspire achievement with performance funding and they embrace the technological innovations of the 21st Century. We should harness these opportunities to better prepare our students to compete; to propel them to new heights of success and, most importantly, to secure our nation’s future.”

Patricia Levesque | ExcelinEd CEO





## COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

A traditional, time-based education system advances students based on their age, regardless of what they have learned. This outdated model limits student achievement in two fundamental ways: it holds back students who could excel more quickly and it pushes students forward who are not yet ready. ExcelinEd is developing policies to help states adopt competency-based education models that advance students when they are ready to succeed at the next level. These policies redesign education from an age-based, grade-level system to one where students advance based on mastery. The pace and style look different for different students, but the goal remains constant: allowing students to master the concepts and skills they will need to advance to more challenging material.



## EDUCATION FUNDING REFORM

Per-student funding in American schools has quadrupled since the 1960s, yet academic achievement has remained stubbornly flat. Why? Because spending more on education only works when the money targets strategies and programs that produce results. ExcelinEd supports outcome-based funding policies that invest in proven strategies, incentivize achievement and recognize and reward student learning instead of just seat time. Outcome-based funding policies change funding formulas so per-pupil payments are aligned with desired student outcomes – such as course completion and graduation – instead of inputs.

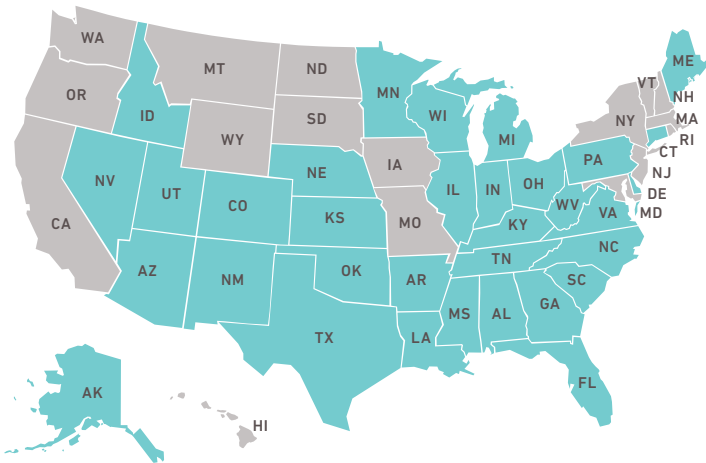


# EXCELINED ACROSS THE NATION: STATE PROFILES

## 33 States

where ExcelinEd helped promote, protect or strengthen student-centered education reform policies in 2014.

ExcelinEd believes all children are born with a love of learning. Nurturing that gift largely determines whether or not they will succeed in life. This is why we are working toward a public education system that focuses solely on the success of each and every child regardless of circumstance. Engaged with our state partners, ExcelinEd employs three elements to achieve this goal:



### ADVOCATE

ExcelinEd supports education reform by providing states with technical assistance in developing and implementing proven reform policies. Support services include conducting research and providing model legislation, rule-making expertise, implementation strategies and public outreach.



### COLLABORATE

ExcelinEd builds alliances by collaborating with stakeholders; convening local, regional and national organizations; participating in education conferences and state education summits; and hosting the annual National Summit on Education Reform.



### COMMUNICATE

ExcelinEd uses traditional and digital communications tools to share the facts and faces of education reform with local, state and national audiences.

**The following state pages** feature the work of ExcelinEd in the 17 states with the most activity and engagement in 2014. Data sources for the information on these pages includes: State Departments of Education, ExcelinEd, the National Center for Education Statistics, the Friedman

Foundation for Educational Choice and the College Board. The most recent data available at time of publication is used, and in some cases, data may have been unavailable for inclusion.

# ALABAMA



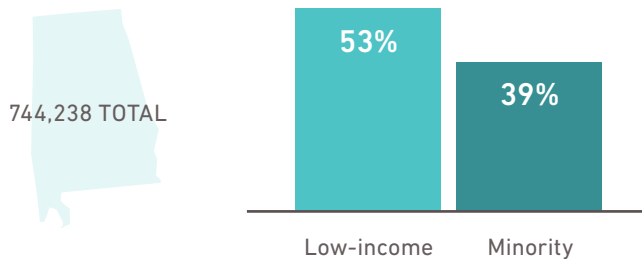
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading

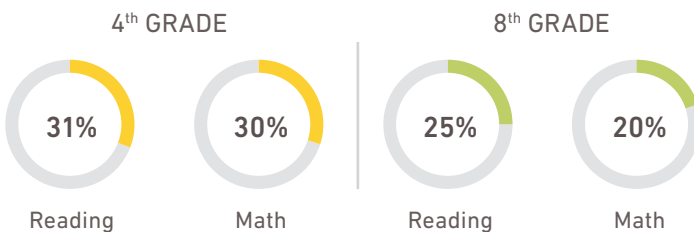
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

11.5% Alabama  
21.6% National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# D-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

Students Enrolled

1

N/A

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, State Standards, Tax Credit Scholarships

Excelined's work in 2014 focused on building relationships with in-state reform partners and policymakers by sharing resources and expertise on signature policies.

Excelined engaged on A-F School Grading, providing technical expertise to Representative Terri Collins, sponsor of Alabama's Accountability Act and a member of the state's accountability task force, which is charged with implementing the law that passed in 2012.

Excelined supported the Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund with communications guidance and resources, which included creating a communications template for providing the public with updates on the success of enrollments in Alabama's tax credit scholarship programs.

Additionally in 2014, Excelined coordinated with in-state partners at the 2014 National Summit to share the benefits of school choice policies with Alabama lawmakers. Excelined also provided planning assistance and outreach for the country's largest National School Choice Week event and provided charter branding and communications support for a charter policy in the state. Also, Excelined provided proactive communications and resources to in-state partners to help with their efforts to preserve Alabama's adoption of higher state standards.

### IN THE NEWS

#### MONTGOMERY ADVERTISER: ALABAMA ACCOUNTABILITY ACT HELPS THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

*"Public education is changing rapidly in many states; parents are choosing from magnet schools, charter schools, virtual schools. I am most concerned that poor parents not be left behind in this transition. The Accountability Act is one of Alabama's first steps on the path towards this innovation, and it targets those who need the most help."*

Rev. H.K. Matthews, Board Member of the Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund and pastor and presiding elder at Zion Fountain AME Church in Brewton.



## STATE OF THE STATE

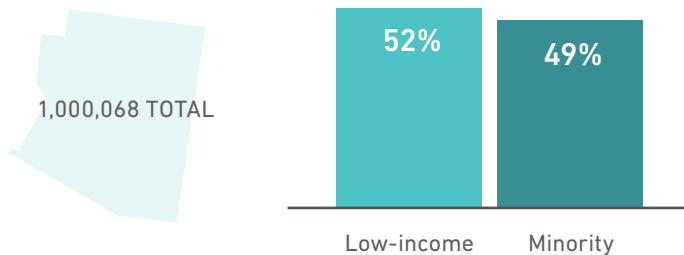
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading  
K-3 Reading

Education Savings Accounts  
Course Access

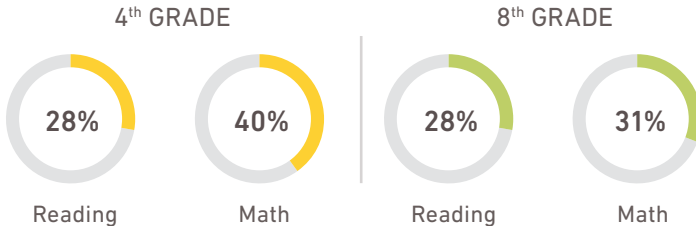
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

15.1% Arizona  
21.6% National Average

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, Competency-Based Education, Course Access, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading

ExcelinEd's work in Arizona focused on implementation support for A-F School Grading, K-3 Reading and Education Savings Accounts (ESAs).

A-F School Grading efforts included submitting policy recommendations to the Arizona State Board of Education and Arizona Department of Education, and working with in-state partners to provide public support and A-F technical expertise.

To support implementation of K-3 Reading, ExcelinEd had the opportunity to engage with in-state literacy specialists at "Read On Arizona" quarterly meetings.

ExcelinEd's Senior Advisor for Policy and Research gave expert testimony on Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts before the House Education Committee and provided additional technical support to ESAs throughout the year.

In April, ExcelinEd Founder and former Chair Governor Jeb Bush gave the opening keynote at the Arizona State University/Global Silicon Valley Education Innovation Summit. Governor Bush discussed the American Dream, the ideals of limitless opportunity and social mobility and the critical role education plays in facilitating both.

### IN THE NEWS

## NATIONAL REVIEW: ESAs ARE CHANGING THE GAME

*Education savings accounts give parents a wide range of options, from private schools to online learning... ESAs operate on the philosophy that parents are best equipped to make the important decisions about their child's education.*

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# C+

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

4

Students Enrolled

43,020



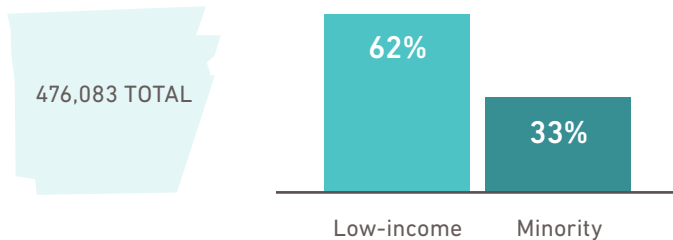
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading

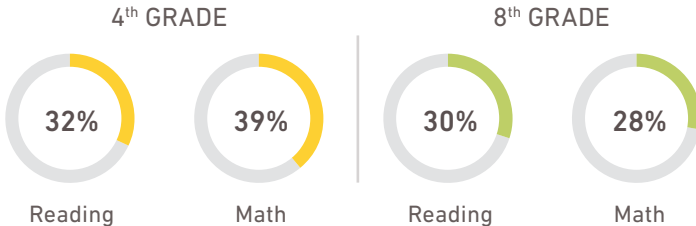
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

16.9% Arkansas  
21.6% National Average

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Data Privacy, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, School Vouchers, Tax Credit Scholarships

Laying a foundation for future education reform, ExcelinEd began meeting this year with Arkansas policymakers, reform leaders and in-state partners. Focusing on the overall reform outlook in the state, ExcelinEd provided insight and support regarding the defense of higher standards, school choice (vouchers and tax credit scholarships), Education Savings Accounts, digital learning and Course Access. ExcelinEd also shared resources with its in-state partners, including Education Savings Accounts model legislation, student Data Privacy model legislation and information on industry certification and the concept of an Economic Security Report.

In September, ExcelinEd Founder and former Chair Governor Jeb Bush visited a free open-enrollment public charter school in Little Rock that emphasizes College and Career Readiness by providing options for students to enter into jobs in math, science and technology.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"Excellence in Education staff were extremely important as we approached different policy initiatives during the 2015 session. Not only did it help us make the right policy decisions, it helped us avoid early mistakes that could have derailed various pieces of legislation."*

Arkansas State Representative Bill Gossage

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

C

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

0

Students Enrolled

N/A



# FLORIDA

## STATE OF THE STATE

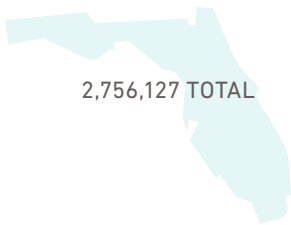
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading  
College & Career Readiness  
Education Savings Accounts

K-3 Reading  
Course Access

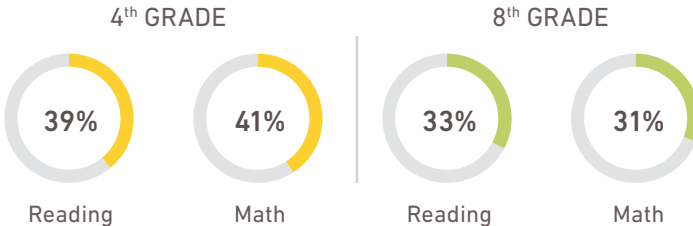
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

**30%** Florida  
**21.6%** National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# A-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs **3**  
Students Enrolled **86,714**

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Data Privacy, Education Savings Accounts, Higher Standards, K-3 Reading, School Choice

Florida schools have made remarkable progress over the past 15 years, but the state has further to go. Knowing the next two years of moving to higher standards and new, in-depth assessments would be historic in Florida's journey to excellence, ExcelinEd in 2014 launched "Learn More. Go Further." Through this initiative, ExcelinEd increased awareness of the state's education turnaround and built awareness, understanding and support for the state's higher standards. ExcelinEd also expanded efforts to engage stakeholders and amplify the faces and voices of reform in Florida, communicating not just the policies but the stories.

In 2014, ExcelinEd worked closely with state leaders to provide guidance on student-centered policies, such as changes to K-3 Reading policy and the state's back-to-basics approach to A-F School Grading, including the calculation and accountability system. ExcelinEd was active in the discussion and efforts around the transition to a new state assessment amid increasing testing backlash nationwide. ExcelinEd's message of "fewer, better tests" is now used nationally, and the surrounding work helped pave the way for effective national messaging and tools in support of accountability and transparency.

ExcelinEd worked diligently to provide guidance on Florida's Education Savings Accounts program, known as Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts (PLSAs). In 2014, Florida became the second state in the nation to serve its children by providing this level of choice and customization in education. ExcelinEd communicated with Floridians about PLSAs, highlighting stories from families and working with partner organizations and other states considering similar policies. The team also provided feedback on policies expanding the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program and helped amplify the program's positive outcomes. Following a union-led lawsuit aiming to take this program away from nearly 70,000 students, ExcelinEd publicly supported the intervening families and urged unions to #DropTheSuit.



Additional policy engagement in 2014 included feedback or guidance on: technology and digital learning proposals, teacher evaluation proposals, principal pilot program language specific to professional development for school leaders and a proposal to address dual enrollment changes in law. The team also offered information on Course Access (including information on Louisiana’s success with blended learning) and College and Career Readiness (Career Technical Education courses).



## Florida’s Fight to Prioritize Student Learning

School choice policies prioritize student learning over a system that benefits adults, and this has caused no shortage of litigation for states challenging the status quo. In July 2014, the Florida Education Association (FEA) – the state teachers’ union – sued the state of Florida to eliminate the new Personal Learning Scholarship Account (PLSA) program for students with disabilities and, in separate litigation, to stop the expansion of the state’s Tax Credit Scholarship Program. Together, the suits threatened Florida’s ability to provide a quality education to more than 70,000 disadvantaged students and children with unique abilities.

In the PLSA challenge, six Florida families intervened on behalf of all families who would be impacted by the suit and filed a motion to defend the new law. After several refilings by the union, the lawsuit was ultimately dismissed by the courts. Despite this good news, the union-backed lawsuit against Florida’s Tax Credit Scholarship Program remains a significant threat to Florida’s families.

### IN THE NEWS

## WFSU: FAMILIES WITH DISABLED KIDS FIRE BACK AGAINST TEACHER’S UNION LAWSUIT OVER NEW PROGRAM

*At stake for the six families intervening in the lawsuit, and the thousands of families with students who have disabilities is whether they’ll get to participate in the program, or not—if it gets struck down as a casualty of a larger war.*





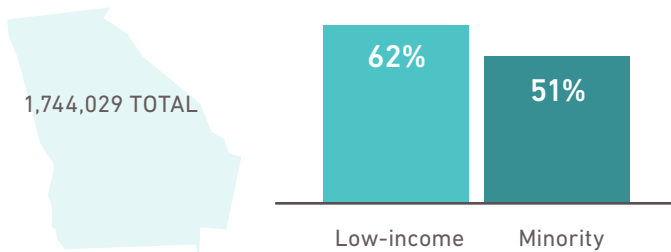
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

Course Access

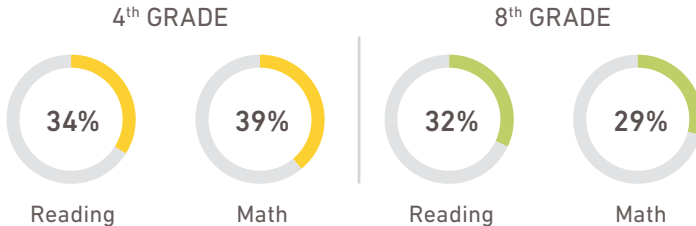
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

**22.2%** Georgia  
**21.6%** National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# B

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs **2**  
Students Enrolled **16,685**

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Data Privacy, Digital Learning, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts.

At the request of the Governor's Office, ExcelinEd traveled to Atlanta to provide input on improving the state's 100-point school accountability system, adding an A-F School Grading component. ExcelinEd also enhanced understanding for school accountability and furthered its advocacy relationships, presenting core A-F School Grading principles to in-state partners and reformers.

ExcelinEd promoted next generation education policies in Georgia during 2014, conducting outreach to policymakers on blended learning, providing policy expertise and participating in workshops with the Governor's Office of Student Achievement to share technical assistance with schools seeking innovation grant funding. Course Access and Data Privacy policy development focused on conversations with in-state partners including the Georgia Chamber of Commerce, the technology sector, lawmakers and National Summit attendees.

Laying the groundwork for 2015 and beyond, ExcelinEd participated in a forum on Education Funding Reform with school officials and advocacy partners, and continued conversations with the leaders and other local partners on this emerging area of reform. The team also conducted outreach on Education Savings Accounts with policymakers, advocacy partners and the Governor's Office and shared model legislation to set the stage for 2015.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"...our pre-k through high school programs continue to improve the quality of our students. We must work to avoid the necessity of costly remediation. If we hope for the greatest results, we must get it right the first time! This means making sure they're reading on grade level by the end of third grade and then following through as they continue their education journey."*

Governor Nathan Deal, 2014 State of the State Address





## STATE OF THE STATE

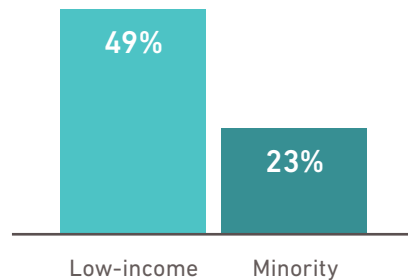
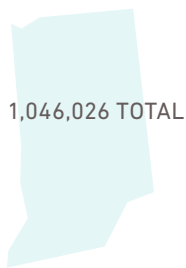
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading  
College & Career Readiness

K-3 Reading  
Course Access

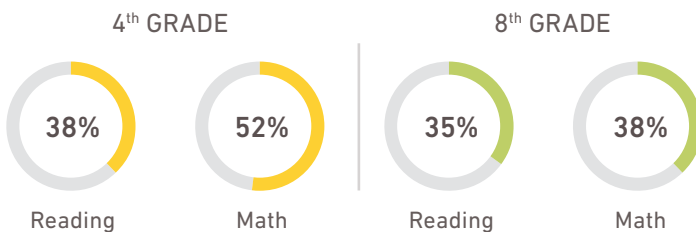
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

18% Indiana  
21.6% National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# B-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

2

Students Enrolled

24,447

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading, Pre-K, School Vouchers, Teacher Effectiveness

ExcelinEd contributed policy support on A-F School Grading in Indiana last year, providing background information, communication collaterals, data and the policy's fundamental principles to in-state partners. ExcelinEd also provided technical input to the Governor's Office on a growth proposal being considered by the State Board of Education.

ExcelinEd supported school choice in the state with an analysis of school choice programs, including the state's voucher program, private school choice and Education Savings Accounts.

In addition, ExcelinEd worked with the Executive Office on the implementation of Indiana's pre-K pilot and the state's third-grade reading assessment. ExcelinEd also provided policy support around alternative teacher certification policies to reform partners and College and Career Readiness to the State Board of Education, including incentive-based/performance-based funding.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*Indiana saw an increase of 31 percent in schools earning A grades since school grading was introduced in 2012. In addition, the number of schools earning F grades has dropped by 37 percent in the same time period.*

*"This data shows significantly increased performance for our schools, particularly in schools that have been lower performing in prior years."*

Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz on the release of the state's 2014 A-F school grades.



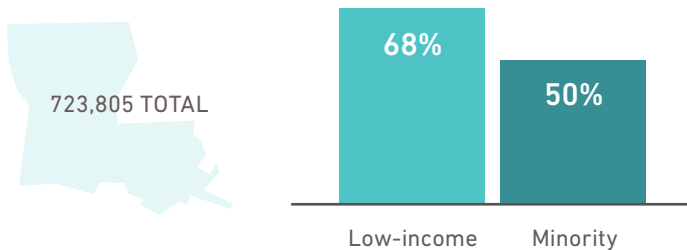
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading    Course Access

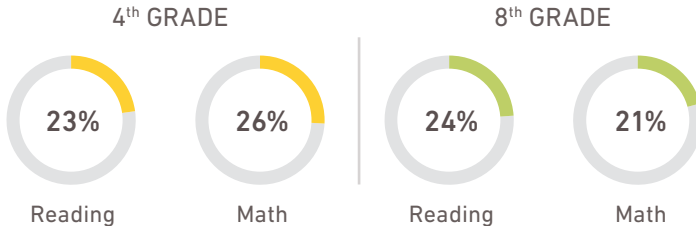
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

6.2% Louisiana  
21.6% National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# B-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs **3**  
 Students Enrolled **7,036**

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, Course Access, College & Career Readiness, Data Privacy, Education Savings Accounts

ExcelinEd's work in Louisiana centered on building and strengthening relationships with in-state advocacy partners, with a focus on Course Access implementation and the defense of higher standards.

Through regular outreach, ExcelinEd provided resources and technical expertise on Course Access to a multi-state working group that included Louisiana representatives. ExcelinEd also provided support and consultation to the American Federation for Children, its in-state affiliate the Louisiana Federation for Children and to the Louisiana Department of Education.

A central focus in Louisiana in 2014 was testing, accountability and Common Core State Standards. ExcelinEd engaged with in-state partners throughout the year to provide resources on higher standards, best practices on transitioning to new standards and assessments and Data Privacy policies.

### IN THE NEWS

## THE TIMES-PICAYUNE: IN JEFFERSON, FIRST A-RATED OPEN-ENROLLMENT SCHOOLS EMERGE

*In a first since Louisiana began assigning letter grades to public schools three years ago, Jefferson Parish can boast some A-rated schools that don't screen applicants. Seven Jefferson schools with no prerequisites for admission received As, joining eight other A-graded schools that select their students. Statewide, only 241 of 1335 schools received As, an increase from 187 a year earlier.*

# MICHIGAN



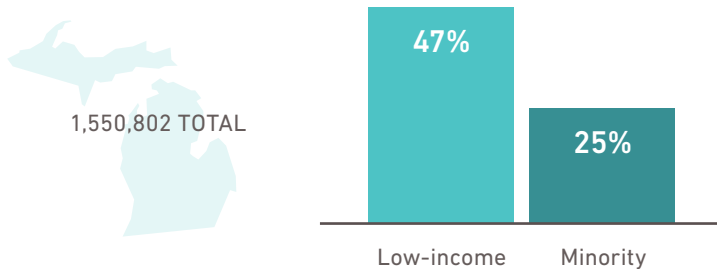
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

Course Access

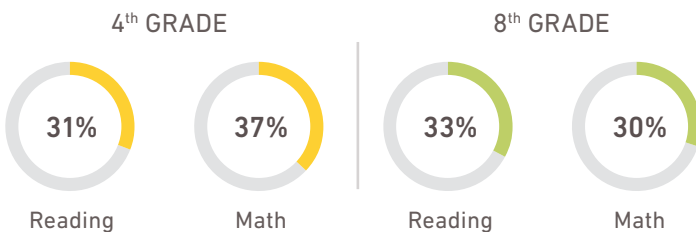
### K-12 STUDENTS

DEMOGRAPHICS



### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

19.4% Michigan  
21.6% National Average

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, Course Access, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading, Tax Credit Scholarships

ExcelinEd provided technical assistance and resources to Michigan policymakers and in-state partners regarding K-3 Reading, with Michigan-specific data demonstrating how – because of reform – Florida students have consistently surpassed Michigan students in reading.

With parent involvement and fiscal management key to the success of K-3 Reading policy implementation, ExcelinEd provided information and strategies to the Executive Office and lawmakers on parent outreach and engagement, community and business partnerships, funding mechanisms and options for reading coach support.

ExcelinEd continued to promote school choice in Michigan with feedback to in-state partners on constitutional amendment language that would open the door for tax credit scholarships and Education Savings Accounts.

A-F School Grading support included providing policy expertise, background on Florida's experience and communications collaterals, and refuting claims by Michigan's Department of Education that A-F School Grading would endanger the state's Elementary and Secondary Education Act waiver.

To expand Course Access across the nation, ExcelinEd recruited Michigan Virtual University (MVU) to join the Course Access Network, highlighting MVU's work as a course provider and providing the President & CEO with the opportunity to speak at ExcelinEd's 2014 National Summit on Education Reform.

### IN THE NEWS

#### MLIVE: JEB BUSH-BACKED GROUP GIVES MICHIGAN AVERAGE MARKS ON SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY

*Michigan is doing more to encourage digital learning than many states, but still has room for growth, an education reform group founded by former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush said in a new analysis.*

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

C

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs  
Students Enrolled

0  
N/A

# MISSISSIPPI



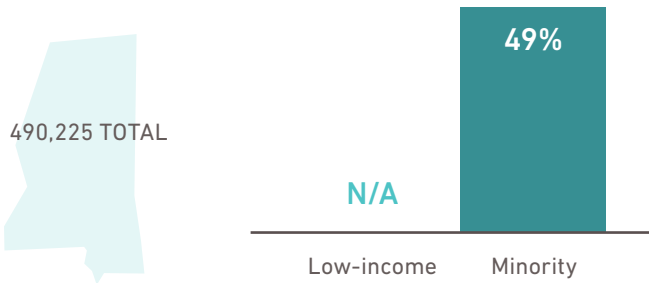
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading    K-3 Reading

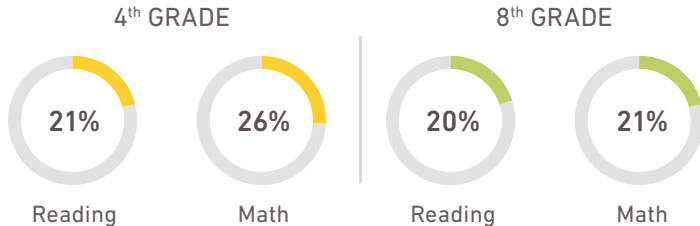
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



5% Mississippi  
21.6% National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# D-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs **2**  
Students Enrolled **73**

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Data Privacy, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading

ExcelinEd continued to work on every phase of Mississippi's Literacy Based Promotion Act (K-3 Reading) implementation, from providing ongoing technical assistance to the Mississippi Department of Education to developing the Department's Literacy Toolkit and drafting sample communications materials.

ExcelinEd continued to participate in and support the Mississippi Department of Education's accountability task force on the ongoing development of the state's A-F School Grading policy.

While Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) were not successful during the 2014 Legislative Session, ExcelinEd provided technical expertise and policy support throughout the year to in-state partners on this signature policy. Allies included Empower Mississippi, the Mississippi Center for Public Policy and the American Federation for Children. Together with in-state partners, ExcelinEd worked on developing grassroots support for ESAs during the summer and fall months to create a solid foundation for consideration of this important choice policy in 2015.

ExcelinEd also provided significant feedback to general policy-related inquiries from the offices of Governor Phil Bryant and Lt. Governor Tate Reeves on Education Funding Reform, Data Privacy, College and Career Readiness, charter schools and other school choice policies.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"I believe that when we use every tool we can for our most vulnerable children to succeed...we will succeed in turning this around. Providing an option like ESAs would save both parents and school districts money and time."*

Mississippi Senator Nancy Collins on the importance of Education Savings Accounts for students with special needs



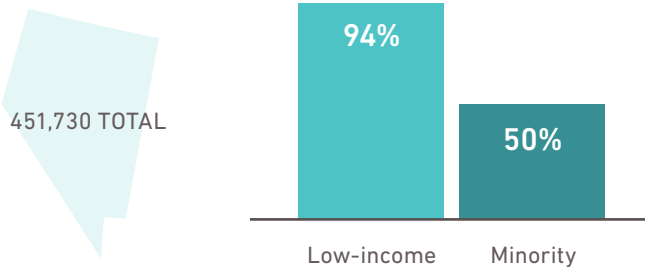
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

N/A

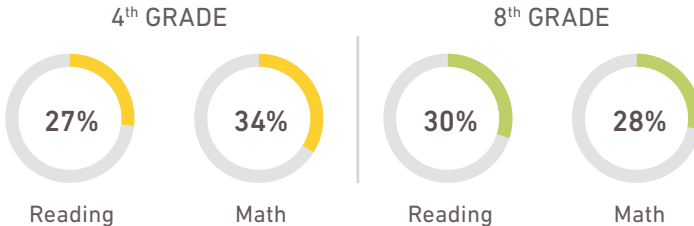
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

#### 2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

**20.9%** Nevada  
**21.6%** National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

**B+**

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

0

Students Enrolled

N/A

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College and Career Readiness, Data Privacy, Digital Learning, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading, Education Funding Reform

ExcelinEd worked in 2014 to cultivate and strengthen in-state relationships toward an effective policy agenda for the upcoming year.

In March, advocacy partner Nevada Succeeds hosted their first statewide Literacy Summit. This event featured speakers from across the country, including ExcelinEd team members who had the opportunity to address K-3 Reading policy from a national perspective and share lessons learned on financing an effective statewide literacy policy.

During the same month, ExcelinEd Founder and former Chair Governor Jeb Bush visited Advanced Technologies Academy in Las Vegas for a tour of the top school in the state and participated on a panel with state leaders and students to discuss digital learning and education technology.

Throughout the year, ExcelinEd worked closely with Nevada's State Superintendent of Education, providing policy expertise and technical assistance on reform policies such as K-3 Reading, A-F School Grading, College and Career Readiness, School Choice, Digital Learning and Education Funding Reform.

### IN THE NEWS

## LAS VEGAS REVIEW JOURNAL: EXPERTS: EARLY INVESTMENT IN LITERACY HAS BIGGEST PAYOFF

*Invest early and make certain students have grade-level reading skills by the end of third grade. If they aren't proficient, don't advance them. Give attention early to students who are struggling, which will cost more in the short term but less in the long run as they reach middle and high school, said Margarita Calderon, senior researcher at Maryland's Johns Hopkins University School of Education.*



## STATE OF THE STATE

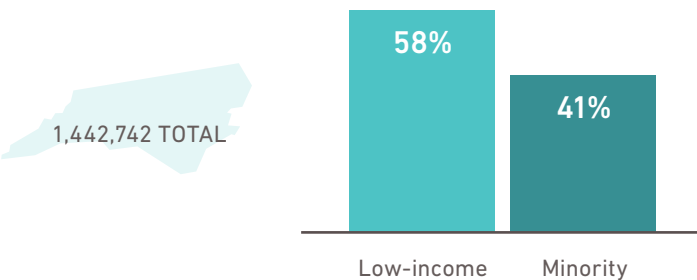
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading  
College & Career Readiness

K-3 Reading

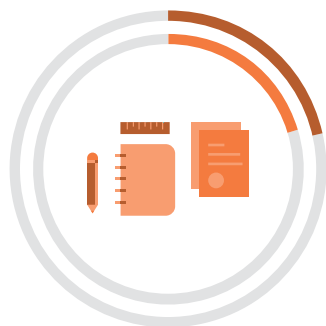
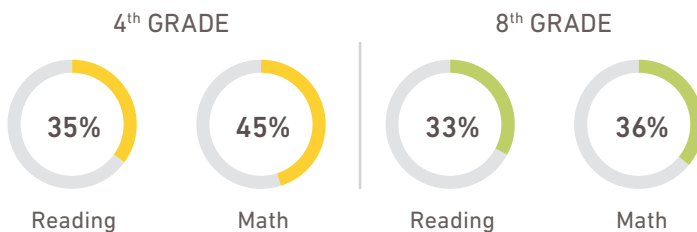
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

**20.5%** North Carolina  
**21.6%** National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

**C**

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

**2**

Students Enrolled

**N/A**

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College and Career Readiness, Competency-Based Education, Course Access, Data Privacy, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading, School Choice

ExcelinEd's efforts in North Carolina focused on policy implementation, policy support and assisting in-state leaders and partners.

ExcelinEd engaged in the active court case on private school choice through press releases, social media and other communications in support of the state's disputed voucher program. ExcelinEd team members also discussed the legal and communications strategy going forward with Parents for Educational Freedom in North Carolina (PEFNC), the issue's lead advocacy group, and met on multiple occasions in Raleigh with a PEFNC-led coalition seeking improvements to the state's charter laws to provide insight and best practices.

At the request of the Executive Office, ExcelinEd reviewed Governor Pat McCrory's multi-year education platform, providing input on digital learning, education funding, College and Career Readiness and accountability. Additionally, ExcelinEd provided guidance to the North Carolina State Board of Education and Executive Office policy advisors on continued implementation of the Read to Achieve program, how to further strengthen their A-F School Grading system, and next steps for digital learning. To strengthen relationships with in-state advocacy groups, ExcelinEd played a leading role in helping new partner, BEST NC, get established with extensive contributions to their strategic planning process.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"We know that third grade is a pivotal year for future academic success, and reading proficiency plays a critical role. We want to make sure that we support not only our early learners, but also our elementary school teachers so that they can work in concert to ensure students build a strong foundation in reading."*

North Carolina State Board of Education Chairman William Cobey on nearly 80 percent of North Carolina's third-graders meeting reading proficiency standards



## STATE OF THE STATE

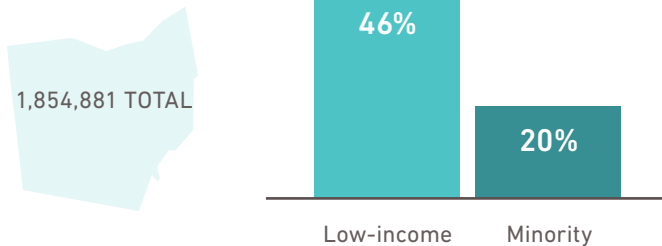
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading

K-3 Reading

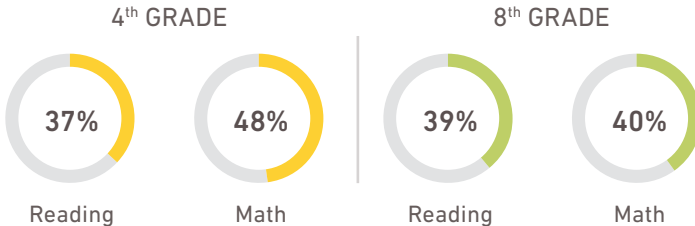
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

**15.8%** Ohio  
**21.6%** National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# D

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

5

Students Enrolled

29,042

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Data Privacy, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading, School Choice

As a state with reform policies in place, ExcelinEd largely played a support role in 2014 with implementation and technical assistance focused on A-F School Grading and Ohio's K-3 Reading policy.

To counter the attack on testing, ExcelinEd provided support and resources on Data Privacy and the key principles of higher standards. Additional support focused on the Ohio Department of Education's efforts to assemble legislatively-required recommendations for reducing testing time.

Additionally, planning for 2015 got under way with resource-sharing and outreach to in-state partners on: Pre-K, Education Funding Reform, College and Career Readiness and consolidating Ohio's five voucher programs.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"Since Ohio started encouraging innovative new education improvements with the Straight A Fund, we've seen school districts across our state take new steps that have meant real cost-savings for taxpayers while simultaneously improving opportunities and outcomes for students. Our Straight A schools should be commended for taking bold steps to creatively move the needle and put kids first."*

Ohio Governor John Kasich



## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading

K-3 Reading

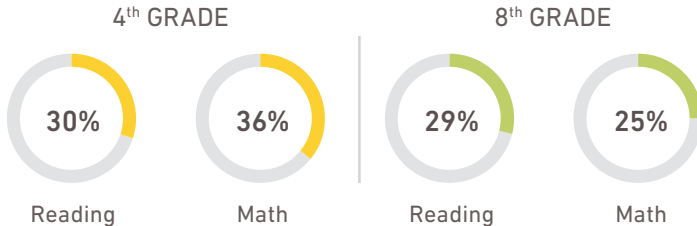
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

11.4% Oklahoma  
21.6% National Average

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Competency-Based Education, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading

Throughout the year, ExcelinEd engaged in outreach to policymakers, the Department of Education and the Executive Office on K-3 Reading. Resources provided included information on funding K-3 Reading programs, background on Florida's experience, research – state K-3 Reading data and retention information – and technical input on policy development and implementation. Early in the year, ExcelinEd team members visited the state to discuss K-3 Reading and A-F School Grading.

In April, ExcelinEd Founder and former Chair Governor Jeb Bush visited KIPP Reach College Preparatory Academy and participated in a roundtable discussion with Governor Mary Fallin, teachers, school administrators and students. Governor Bush also met with the State Superintendent of Education on A-F School Grading and K-3 Reading and with other key leaders and policymakers, including Secretary of Education Bob Sommers.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*“The A-F report cards are vital to ensuring accountability. Parents and communities must know what schools are excelling and what schools need additional help. In so doing, Oklahoma educators and schools can build on successes and focus on particular challenges.”*

Former Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Janet Barresi on the state's school grades

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

C+

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

2

Students Enrolled

757



# SOUTH CAROLINA



## STATE OF THE STATE

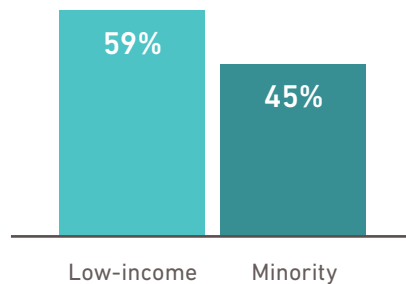
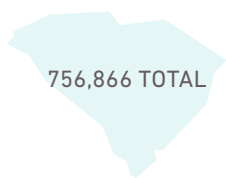
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading

K-3 Reading

### K-12 STUDENTS

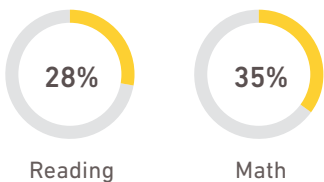
#### DEMOGRAPHICS



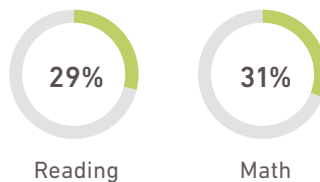
#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better

4<sup>th</sup> GRADE



8<sup>th</sup> GRADE



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

19.1% South Carolina  
21.6% National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# B-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

1

Students Enrolled

N/A

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

College & Career Readiness, Data Privacy, Education Funding Reform, Education Savings Accounts, K-3 Reading

ExcelinEd was heavily engaged in the effort to create a strong K-3 Reading policy in South Carolina. For more than two years, ExcelinEd visited the state, providing policy resources and technical support to assist with the development of South Carolina's Read to Succeed program. Read to Succeed, which passed the legislature and was signed by the Governor in June, created a comprehensive K-3 Reading policy, focusing on literacy through teacher training, state and district reading plans, reading readiness assessments, summer reading camps and accountability.

In addition to highlighting the progress of this policy with communications strategies, ExcelinEd worked with the South Carolina Department of Education and other on-the-ground stakeholders regarding program implementation.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"We're making progress and heading in the right direction in our elementary and high schools. There are some districts and schools that are knocking it out of the park. Some of the state's highest performing districts and schools also have high poverty. They have proven that a zip code should not determine a student's destiny, and that poor children can learn."*

Former South Carolina State Superintendent of Education  
Dr. Mick Zais on the state's school grades



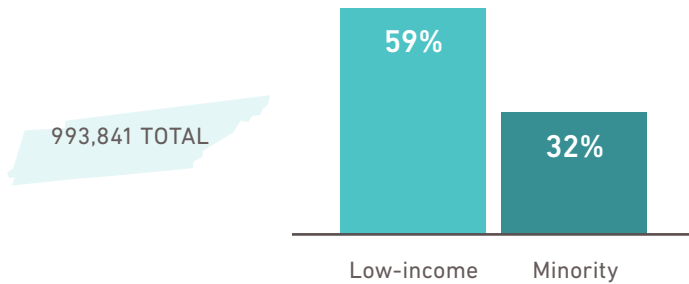
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

N/A

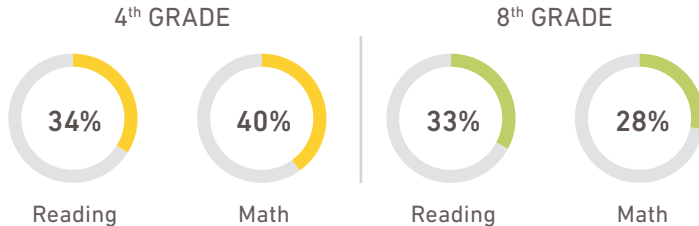
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

10.7% Tennessee  
21.6% National Average

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Data Privacy, Education Savings Accounts, Education Funding Reform, K-3 Reading

In March, ExcelinEd Founder and former Chair Governor Jeb Bush was in Nashville to participate in meetings and events on behalf of ExcelinEd. He joined legislative roundtable discussions on education reform policy with members of the Tennessee State House and Senate and also met with the Commissioner of Education to discuss the positive reform momentum in Tennessee. Attended by business, industry and state policymakers, Governor Bush also spoke at a forum focusing on Governor Haslam's workforce readiness initiatives – Drive to 55 and Tennessee Promise scholarships – which aim to boost workforce preparedness by making college and career training accessible and affordable for Tennesseans.

ExcelinEd worked throughout the year to provide outreach, education and policy development in the areas of Education Savings Accounts, A-F School Grading and Education Funding Reform.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"The Foundation for Excellence in Education's assistance and commitment to help children special needs was instrumental in the passage of the Education Savings Account program in Tennessee. They helped provide the families of these special needs students with options and ultimately gave parents a stronger voice when it comes to their child's education."*

Tennessee Senate Education Committee Chairman Dolres Gresham

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

F

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

0

Students Enrolled

N/A





## STATE OF THE STATE

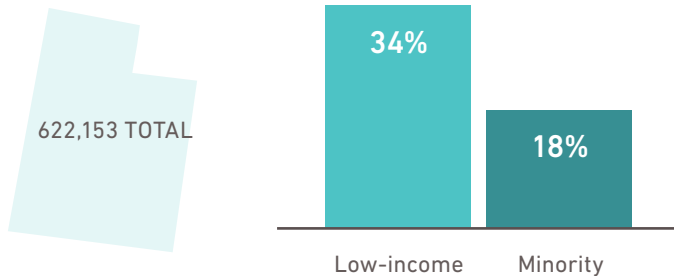
### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading  
College & Career Readiness

K-3 Reading  
Course Access

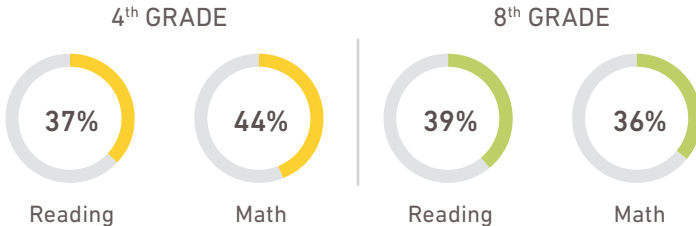
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

**25.2%** Utah  
**21.6%** National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

# A-

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs	1
Students Enrolled	650

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, College & Career Readiness, Course Access, Education Savings Accounts

ExcelinEd's work in Utah centered around continued implementation of A-F School Grading; developing and providing policy resources and model legislation on Education Savings Accounts and College and Career Readiness; presenting to stakeholders on key education reform policies; and continuing to strengthen the relationship with in-state partner, Parents for Choice in Education.

Utah State Board of Education members were interested in ExcelinEd's My School Information Design Challenge, and were provided with additional information on the design winners.

### IN THE NEWS

## DESERET NEWS: IN OUR OPINION: UTAH EARNS DIGITAL LEARNING EXCELLENCE

*Utah emerges as the vanguard of the nation, with a 92.3 percent score, because the state has opportunities for students in all grades to access online courses, because it requires credit to be based on mastery of skills and content rather than on seat time, and because of its "Student Achievement Backpack," which creates a portable education record that follows the student from school to school – and gives parents the right and ability to securely access those records.*





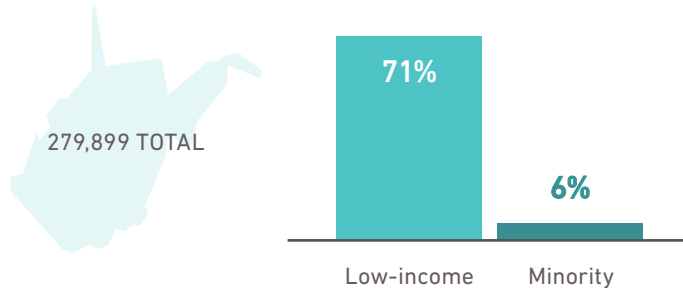
## STATE OF THE STATE

### EXISTING SIGNATURE POLICIES

A-F School Grading

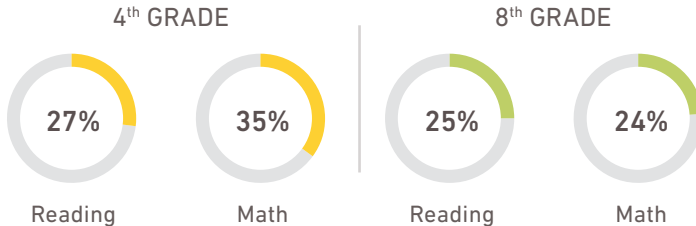
### K-12 STUDENTS

#### DEMOGRAPHICS



#### PERFORMANCE

2014 Nation's Report Card Proficient or Better



Class of 2014 Advanced Placement Students Scoring 3 or Higher

10.2% West Virginia  
21.6% National Average

### 2014 DIGITAL LEARNING REPORT CARD:

**B-**

### CHOICE PROGRAMS

Programs

0

Students Enrolled

N/A

## 2014 EXCELINED ENGAGEMENT

### POLICY ENGAGEMENT

A-F School Grading, Competency-Based Education, College and Career Readiness, Course Access, Digital Learning, K-3 Reading

Building on in-state relationships, ExcelinEd worked closely with Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, the State Board of Education and The Education Alliance to support the state's transition to A-F School Grading. The policy was adopted by State Board rule. ExcelinEd's 2014 National Summit on Education Reform highlighted West Virginia's implementation of the A-F School Grading policy by featuring the State Superintendent, West Virginia Department of Education staff and State Board of Education members in a strategy session on school grades.

In addition, ExcelinEd played an active role in planning The Education Alliance's 2014 West Virginia Education Summit. Attended by more than 250 business, community and education leaders, the Summit focused on personalizing education through time and technology with an emphasis on Competency-Based Education, College and Career Readiness, career and technical education and digital learning.

### WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

*"All students have the ability to learn and grow, and a strong accountability system must capture measures of that growth....Having a scale that parents, teachers and administrators clearly understand and is relevant creates a system that holds schools accountable for what is considered their core mission – increasing student achievement. While the ultimate goal is that all students will be performing on grade level, the reality is that many are not. It is critical that all stakeholders in West Virginia schools know exactly where we stand."*

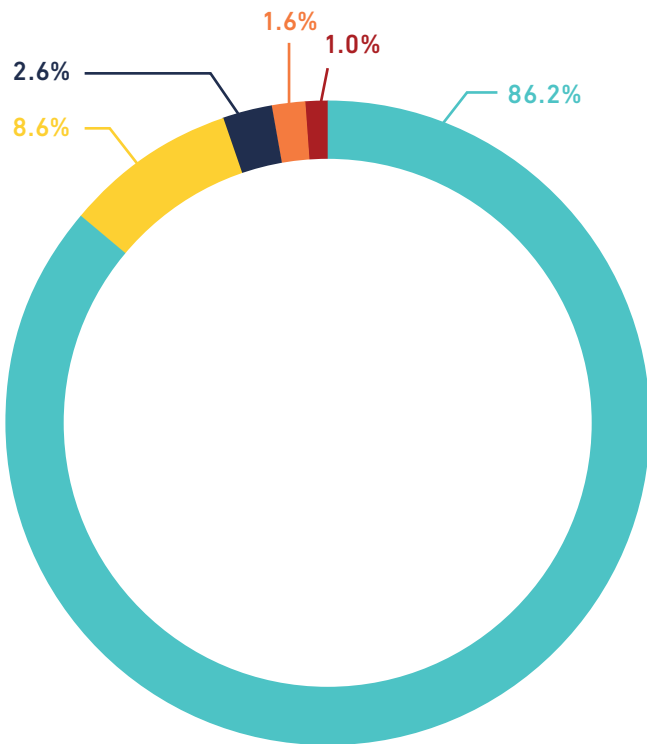
Gayle Manchin, President of the West Virginia Board of Education on the state's adoption of A-F School Grading

# FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

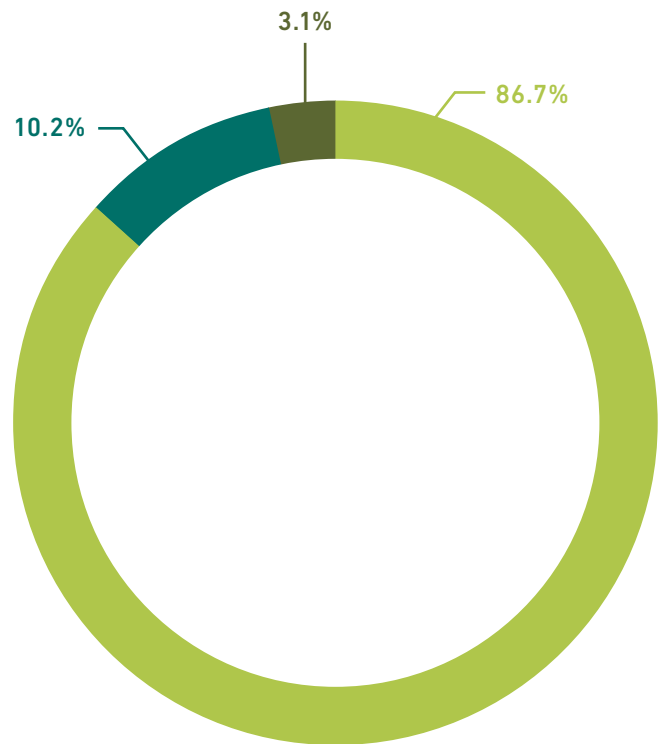
As with our formula for student achievement, ExcelinEd believes in accountability and transparency in our operations. We are committed to sound fiscal management, low overhead and bringing a strong return on investment to those who support our education reform work in the states.

In 2014, ExcelinEd received 86 percent of its operating revenue from foundations, and invested more than 85 percent of ExcelinEd's expenses directly into our policy, advocacy and communications work in the states, as well as our signature outreach event, the National Summit on Education Reform.

## 2014 REVENUE\*



## 2014 EXPENSES\*



<span style="color: #00A0A0;">■</span> Foundations	86.2%
<span style="color: #FFC000;">■</span> Corporate	8.6%
<span style="color: #000080;">■</span> Other Income	2.6%
<span style="color: #FF8C00;">■</span> National Summit Registration	1.6%
<span style="color: #8B0000;">■</span> Individuals	1%

<span style="color: #9ACD32;">■</span> Program Services**	86.7%
<span style="color: #008080;">■</span> General & Administrative	10.2%
<span style="color: #654321;">■</span> Fundraising	3.1%

\*2014 Unaudited results

\*\*Program services include policy, advocacy, communications, outreach and education, the National Summit on Education Reform and the Arts For Life program.

Copies of our 990 filings, as well as a listing of our donors, can be found at: [www.excelined.org](http://www.excelined.org).

# DONORS

*The Foundation for Excellence in Education is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization.*

● Digital Learning Now   ● National Summit   ● Arts for Life

## GREATER THAN \$1,000,000

Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley  
Charitable Trust  
Walton Family Foundation

## \$500,001 - \$1,000,000

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
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News Corporation  
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## \$250,001 - \$500,000

Laura and John Arnold Foundation  
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Triad Foundation

## \$100,001 - \$250,000

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## \$50,001 - \$100,000

● ACT Aspire LLC  
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● Bill and Susan Oberndorf Foundation  
The Paul E. Singer Foundation

## \$25,001 - \$50,000

Bill and Mary Ann Becker  
● College Board  
● Intel Corporation  
● William R. Kenan, Jr. Charitable Trust  
● K12  
● McGraw-Hill Education  
● The Perelman Family Foundation  
Peter G. Peterson  
Tampa Bay Host Committee  
● Target

## \$5,000 - \$25,000

● Alvarez & Marsal Holdings, LLC  
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We are grateful for the support of our donors.

# MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

As ExcelinEd's flagship initiative, the 8th annual National Summit on Education Reform will convene the best and brightest from around the world to share strategies to improve the quality of education for all children, everywhere. Join fellow lawmakers, policymakers and advocates as we collaborate, energize and accelerate the education reform movement.

Visit [www.ExcelinEd.org/National-Summit](http://www.ExcelinEd.org/National-Summit) to learn more.



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EdPolicyLeaders  
Online



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