



ExcelinEd.org

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2021

# Annual Report

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION TO  
UNLOCK LIFELONG OPPORTUNITY AND  
SUCCESS FOR EACH AND EVERY CHILD





## A MESSAGE FROM Our CEO



As each new year begins, we gratefully take stock of how far we've come in 12 months' time. Despite the myriad of challenges that families, students, teachers and policymakers faced in 2021, our momentum to transform education did not waver.

I'm especially excited that new opportunities for students unfolded in more than a dozen states through expanded private and public school choice. An additional 1.7 million students gained eligibility for private choice alone, and strong investments by states supported learning options, with an impressive total of more than \$1 billion for new choice programs and funding for charter schools.

States also invested deeply in closing the digital divide and building better workforce training and college acceleration programs. Florida set an example with a comprehensive education-to-workforce package that was supported by ExcelinEd's Pathways Matter policy research and resources.

And states continued to strengthen early literacy through policy improvements and new funding totaling \$330 million in Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Tennessee and Wisconsin alone.

Progress like this isn't possible without leaders and partners like you. Each year, as we seek to accomplish our ambitious student-centered goals, I stand firmly with a heart of gratitude for all that you do and ask you to remain committed. To push harder. To be bolder. And to continue partnering with us along the way.

*Patricia Levesque*  
Patricia Levesque  
CEO, ExcelinEd



## A MESSAGE FROM Our Chairman

This past year we have witnessed remarkable achievements by students, parents and educators. More than a dozen states enacted or improved their school choice programs in 2021, and policymakers across the country continued to embrace new and bold policies.

While many families persevered through COVID-related adversity to find new pathways to a quality education, not all students have been as fortunate. Sadly, there is tremendous evidence of massive learning loss as a result of COVID-related disruptions.

It's these challenges and opportunities that motivate us to continue our mission, advance new student-centered policies and work to ensure every student has the opportunity to unlock their full potential.

As we look to the future, I remain certain that we are on course to impact and improve the lives of millions of students throughout the country. I am excited by new policies built around unbundling education, new ways to make funding more individualized and portable, new high-quality career and college pathways, and continued progress in closing the digital divide for each and every student.

I want to thank all the policymakers dedicated to making this possible, as we work toward a time where all students can receive the personalized education they deserve.

Onward,

*Jeb Bush*  
Jeb Bush  
Chairman, ExcelinEd



# ExcelinEd Board Of Directors



**JEB BUSH, CHAIRMAN**  
Chairman of the Board & 43<sup>rd</sup> Governor of Florida



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President, The Ayers Foundation



**REGINALD J. BROWN**  
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**ERIC CANTOR**  
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**CÉSAR CONDE**  
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**SUSANA MARTINEZ**  
31<sup>st</sup> Governor of New Mexico



**BRUCE RAUNER**  
42<sup>nd</sup> Governor of Illinois



ExcelinEd in Action is the 501(c)(4) sister organization to ExcelinEd. ExcelinEd in Action works with state lawmakers and advocacy partners to pass legislation that empowers families with educational choice, prepares students for college and career, prioritizes early literacy, expands innovation and strengthens school performance.

ExcelinEd in Action Board members include Jeb Bush, Eric Cantor, Gary Chartrand, F. Philip Handy, Dee Bagwell Haslam, Bruce Rauner, William S. Simon and Zachariah R. Zachariah.

# About ExcelinEd

CHANGING POLICY, CHANGING LIVES

## OUR CHALLENGE

Organized around the needs of adults more than a century ago, America's outdated education system is failing too many of today's students, leaving them unable to access a learning environment that best meets their needs and underprepared for college and the workforce.

<p><b>36th</b> Where U.S. students rank internationally in math.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>65%</b> The percentage of fourth graders that are not proficient in reading.<sup>2</sup></p>	<p><b>1.7M</b> The number of first-year college students needing remedial help.<sup>3</sup></p>	<p><b>50%</b> The percentage of U.S. Millennials unable to effectively apply literacy or math skills in the workplace.<sup>4</sup></p>
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## OUR SOLUTION

To address this education and economic crisis, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush launched the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) and ExcelinEd in Action to support state leaders in transforming education so that all children are equipped for success.

For more than a decade, ExcelinEd has been advancing student-centered policy solutions that are:

- ▶ Improving student learning
- ▶ Increasing opportunity
- ▶ Eliminating inequities
- ▶ Ready graduates for college and higher-quality, in-demand jobs

## OUR FIVE GOALS

Massive challenges created by 2020's global pandemic underscored the need to reexamine every aspect of education and act with urgency on behalf of students and their future. To create a 21<sup>st</sup>-century learning environment, ExcelinEd established five goals—each with student-centered policy solutions—to impact 5 million students over 5 years. These goals have the power to change lives:

- 🏠 Bridge the Digital Divide
- 📺 Close Learning Gaps
- 👨‍👩‍👧 Empower Families with Opportunity
- 📖 Reimagine Learning
- 🛣️ Strengthen Pathways to College + Careers

## OUR APPROACH

**Policy Development & Implementation**  
We bring deep policy expertise and implementation experience to develop and support state leaders with customized, education policy solutions.

**State Advocacy**  
We collaborate, coalition-build and advocate for change where states are ready to transform education.

**Resources & Research**  
We develop state-specific policy resources and conduct and leverage research to understand how policy solutions translate to real-world student success.

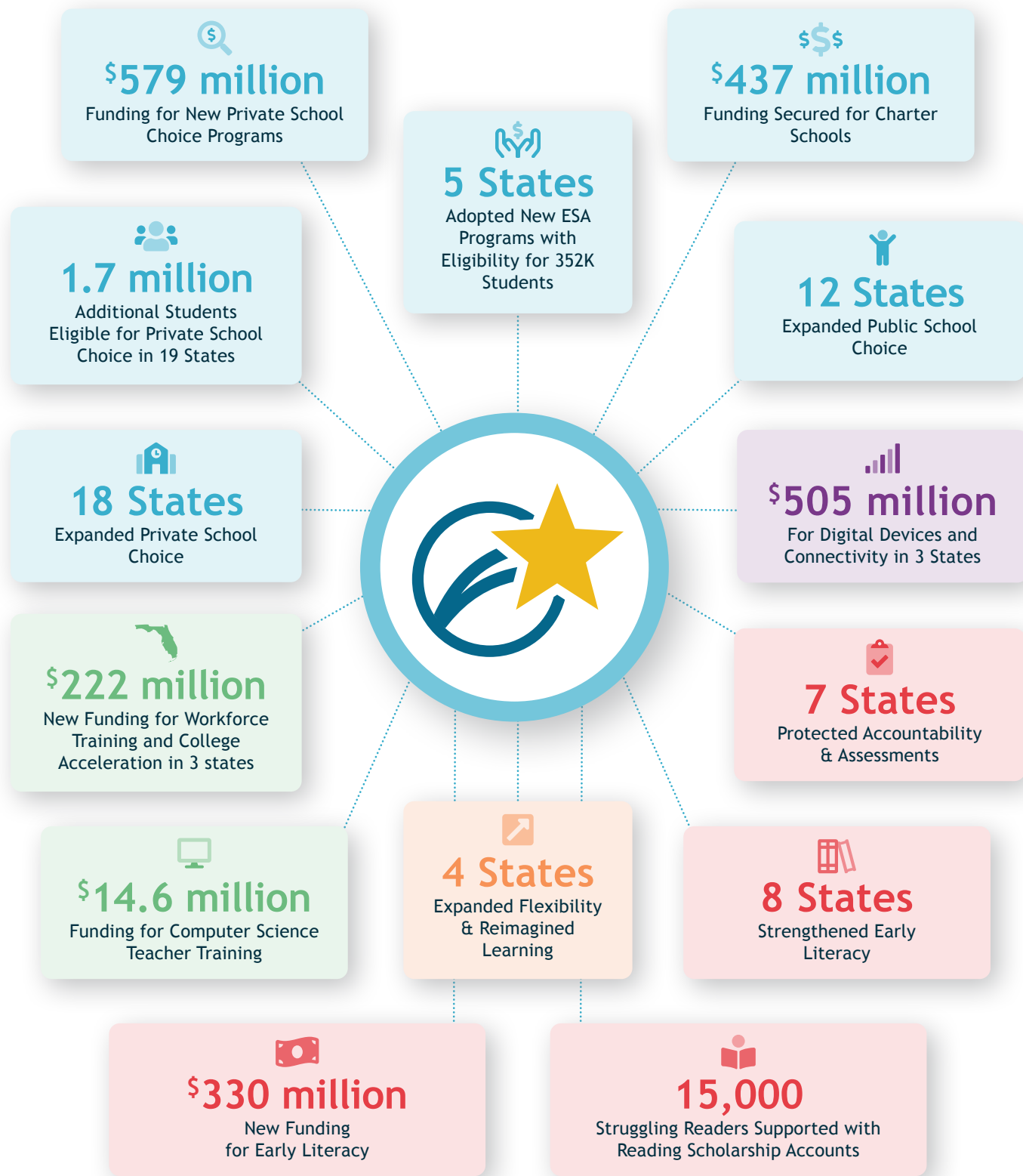
**Thought Leadership & Convening**  
We host the National Summit on Education to annually convene education policymakers, shapers and leaders, and we facilitate networks of states and partner collaboratives to inform policy and practice.

**OUR VALUES**  
COLLABORATION | INTEGRITY | SERVICE | EXPERTISE | MAKING A DIFFERENCE

<sup>1</sup> Programme for International Student Assessment <sup>2</sup> National Assessment of Educational Progress <sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics <sup>4</sup> ETS

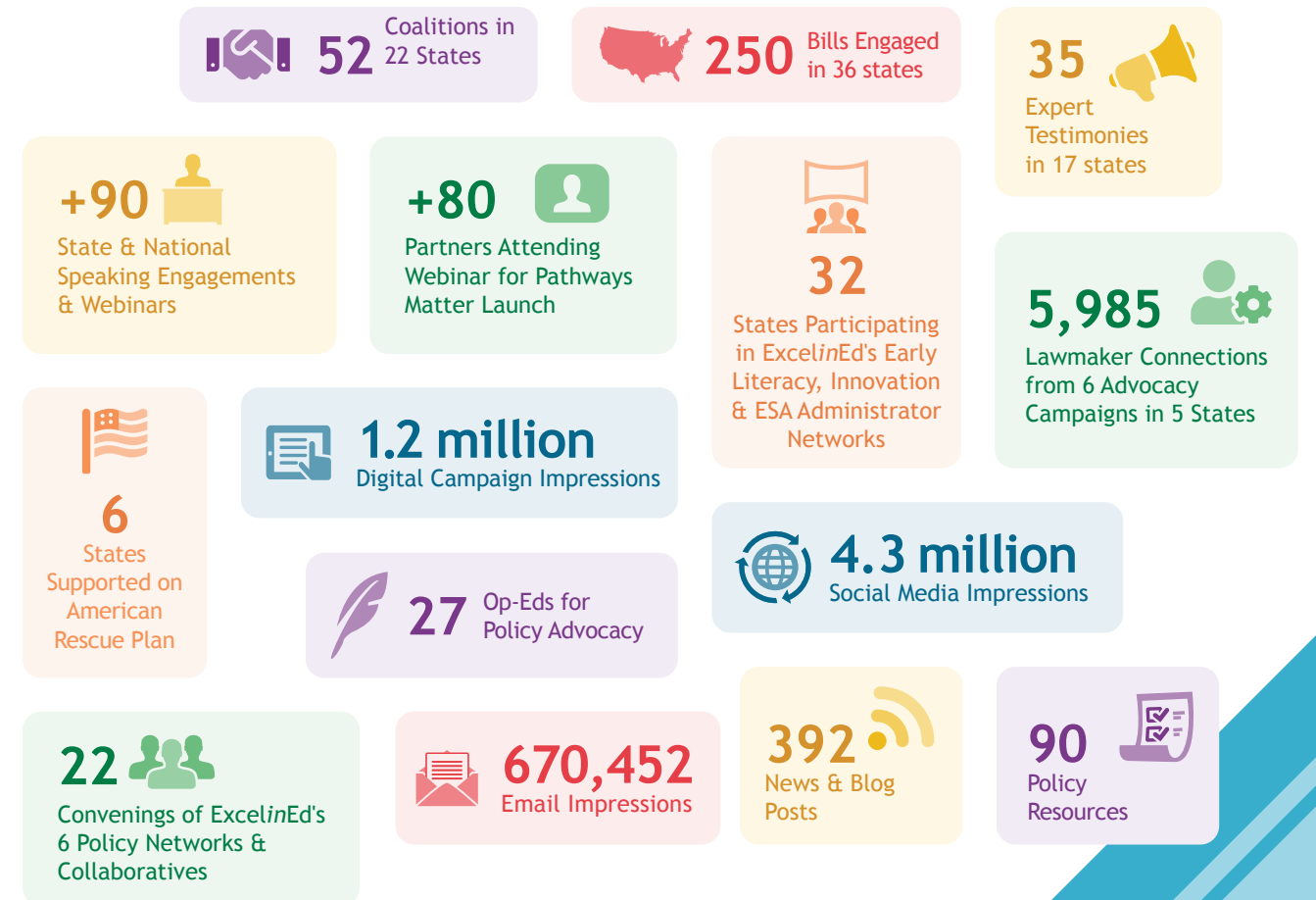
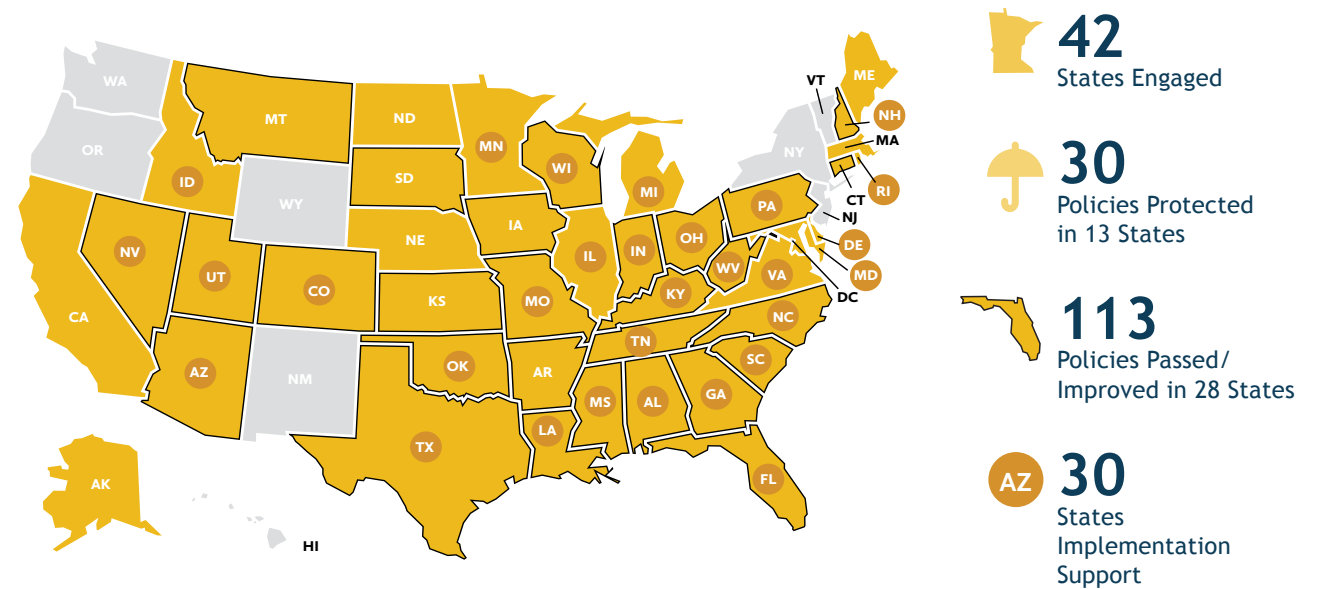


# By the Numbers | 2021



■ Bridge the Digital Divide ■ Close Learning Gaps ■ Empower Families ■ Reimagine Learning ■ Strengthen Pathways

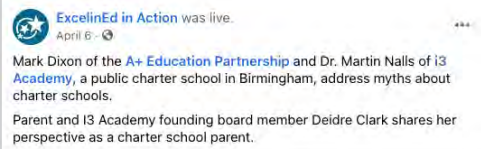
# ExcelinEd in the States | 2021



# State Highlights | 2021

## ALABAMA

Expanded high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the **digital divide**.



## ARKANSAS

Prioritized **computer science** as a graduation requirement for **+140,000** high school students.

Required **computer science** teachers for **+388** high schools.

Created a **\$2 million tax credit scholarship** program to serve **+250** low-income families.

## ARIZONA

Created flexibility for **2,700+** public schools to meet instructional hours through traditional and **innovative learning** models.



## COLORADO

Protected the **READs Act** that serves **40,000+** struggling K-3 readers.



## CONNECTICUT

Improved **student literacy** with **+\$1 million** and **+\$12.8 million** beginning in FY23.

## FLORIDA

Strengthened **education to workforce** by centralizing governance and **+\$100 million** for enhancing data collection, analytics and transparency.

**\$57 million** for **workforce training** and **industry credential** incentives.

Increased workforce readiness by awarding credit for **work-based learning**.

Expanded **private school choice**, giving **+1.2 million** low-income public school students access to scholarships, expanding use of funds and guaranteeing access for military families.

Protected **\$60 million** to create **48,000** seats at **Schools of Hope**.

Protected funding equity for **charter schools** with **\$183 million** for facilities.

Reduced bureaucracy for **charter schools** by expanding authorization pathways.

Expanded **college acceleration** with performance funding and **+\$15.6 million** for dual enrollment scholarships.

Bridged the **digital divide** with grants for unserved areas.

Strengthened **early literacy** with enhanced supports and screening and **+\$207 million** in additional funding.

Supported **15,000** struggling readers with **Reading Scholarship Accounts**.

## GEORGIA

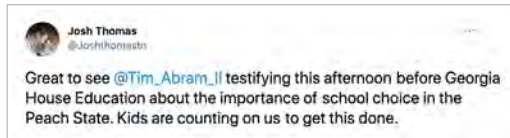
Protected **\$344K** for **computer science** professional development.

Secured **+\$3.3 million** in operational funding to better serve **77,000+** **charter school** students.

**+\$1 million** in new funding for **charter school** facilities.

Expanded special needs **vouchers** to include **50,000+** students with a **504 plan**.

Expanded **educational opportunity** for low-income families.



## IOWA

Expanded **tax credit scholarships** with **+\$5M** to serve **+3,500** students.

Improved **charter school** law to facilitate growth and expand public school options.

## INDIANA

Expanded **vouchers** and **tax credit scholarships** to serve **11,000** low- and middle-income families.

Increased funding for all students eligible for **private school scholarships**.

Created a new **\$10 million ESA** to serve students with special needs.

Secured **+\$39 million** to increase equity for **charter schools** and students.

**+\$250 million** in **broadband grants** for schools and at-home learning.

Secured **\$150 million** in student learning recovery grants.

Protected **\$3 million** for **computer science** teacher training.

## KANSAS

Expanded **tax-credit scholarships** to serve **+1,250** low-income students.



## KENTUCKY

Created a **\$25 million opportunity scholarship**—the state's first—to serve **+7,000** low-income and special needs students.

## LOUISIANA

Supported **struggling readers** with comprehensive early literacy legislation.

Expanded supports for **low-performing students** through supplemental instruction.

Increased **education options** through an improved voucher program and streamlined open enrollment procedures.



## MISSOURI

Created a new **\$50 million** tax-credit funded **ESA** to serve **+7,800** special needs and low-income students.





# State Highlights | 2021

## MISSISSIPPI

Prevented backsliding in school accountability.  
 Extended computer science courses to all 1,060+ public schools.  
 +\$1 million for computer science teacher training.



## MONTANA

Expanded tax credit scholarships to +750 students.

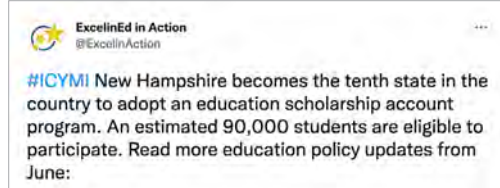
## NORTH CAROLINA

Strengthened early literacy through stronger interventions and science of reading teacher training.



## NEW HAMPSHIRE

Created the state's first Freedom Account Program to serve 90,000 students.



## NEVADA

Provided devices and connectivity for all 485,705 Nevada students.  
 Established seat-time flexibility.  
 +\$11.7 million to renew or restore tax credit scholarships for 2,300 students.  
 +\$15 million for Title I public charters serving +16,000 low-income students.

## OHIO

Created a \$250 million grant program to expand broadband coverage to communities.  
 Allocated +\$367 million over two years to public school students and moved toward a more student-centered funding formula.  
 +\$41 million over two years in industry credential incentives.  
 Expanded access to the EdChoice scholarship program.  
 Provided \$500 After School Enrichment grants to up to 100,000 students in low- and middle-income families.  
 Allocated \$108 million over two years to attract high-quality community schools.  
 Doubled funding for community school facilities from \$250 to \$500 per student.

## OKLAHOMA

Expanded public school choice availability and transparency and improved the funding formula.  
 Prioritized military families for admission to the school district of their choice.



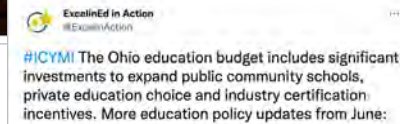
## PENNSYLVANIA

Raised the cap on the tax credit scholarship program by \$40M to fund up to +15,000 scholarships.



## SOUTH CAROLINA

Created schools of innovation to provide schools with flexibility to implement student-centered learning approaches.



## TEXAS

+ \$1.29 million annually for AP Computer Science Principles grants.  
 + \$30 million in Special Needs Supplemental Education Grants to serve up to 18,000 students.  
 Expanded the Jobs and Education for Texas program to include charter schools.



## UTAH

Prevented repeal of the state's school letter grading system.  
 Expanded course access and virtual course offerings to middle schools.



## SOUTH DAKOTA

Expanded private education choice to +200 low-income families.

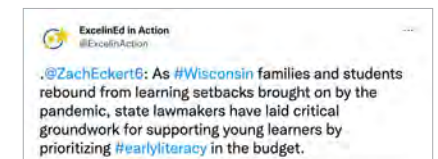
## TENNESSEE

Adopted comprehensive early literacy to identify and support struggling K-3 readers with +\$102 million in additional funding.  
 Protected spring assessments.



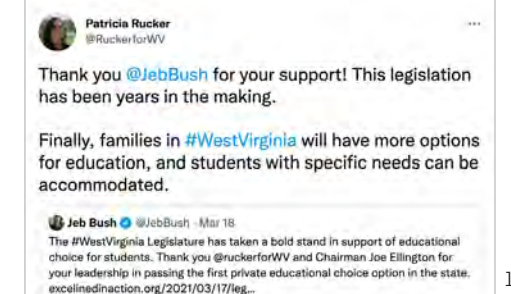
## WISCONSIN

+ \$7 million for early literacy, including teacher professional development, evidence-based instruction and teacher preparation aligned to the science of reading.



## WEST VIRGINIA

Created Hope Scholarships—the nation's most far-reaching ESA program—to serve all 250,000 public school students.  
 Expanded authorization pathways for charter schools.





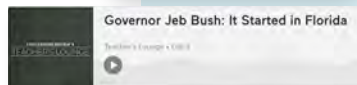
# Thought Leadership Highlights

## LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT



### GOVERNOR JEB BUSH

Governor Jeb Bush contributed opinion pieces to CNN Business Perspectives: [America is failing its workforce](#); National Review: [The pandemic made it clear that we can do better for our children](#); Miami Herald and Seattle Times: [Treat all public school students fairly, no matter what type of public school they attend](#). Governor Bush also participated in multiple interviews, including with Time 100 Talks, USA Today, a [Chalkboard Review Podcast](#), a fireside chat at SxSW EDU with Western Governors University President Scott Pulsipher and a panel with former US Secretary of Education John King for the World Education Summit. He served as keynote speaker for Harvard's Kennedy School virtual webinar series, [School Choice in the Post-Pandemic Era](#) and the 2021 Florida Charter School Conference.



### CEO AND BOARD MEMBERS

Patricia Levesque spoke at PIE Network's *Using Stimulus Funds to Drive Recovery and Spark Reinvention*, an Ed Reform Summit hosted by the Louisiana Association of Business & Industry, a webinar with former U.S. Secretary of Education John King on *Maximizing K-3 Opportunities in the American Rescue Plan*, and podcasts on Education Next's *The Education Exchange* and Fordham's *Gadfly*. She authored blogs on assessments and ExcelinEd's five year strategic goals and penned op-eds: [Chris Sprowls creating smarter plan for workforce development](#) and [Denying Opportunity to Attend Charter Schools Will Cost Hillsborough Students, Community](#).



Board members Gary Chartrand and Al Hubbard authored op-eds: [Ensure low-income students have access to high-quality 'Schools of Hope'](#) by Gary Chartrand and [Why are some students worth more than others?](#) by Al Hubbard and Bob Koch.

ExcelinEd Board member Gov. Susana Martinez of New Mexico convenes with former West Virginia Gov. Bob Wise and Ohio Gov. Bob Taft to discuss ensuring access for all students to a quality education.



### SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

ExcelinEd's policy experts participated on panels at more than 75 national and state events, including PIE Network's Summit and Recovery to Reinvention Series, Florida Charter School Conference, Louisiana's Teacher Leadership Summit, Michigan's *Big Show* and Mackinac Institute ESA webinar, Aim Higher Workforce and Education Conference, Campaign for Grade Level Reading webinars, Digital Learning Annual Conference, AEI's Early Childhood Education ESA discussion, a CCSSO Student-Centered Learning Workshop and Aspen Institute's "Looking Back to Accelerate Forward." ExcelinEd also joined National School Choice Week events in Arkansas, Mississippi and West Virginia.



### STATE OF BLACK EDUCATION

ExcelinEd published a blog series on The State of Black Education: [What is the state of Black education in America?](#), [What is the state of Black education in Mississippi?](#) and [What is the State of Black Education in Louisiana?](#) Written by policy experts Kymyona Burk and Tim Abram, the series explores Black education in select states to shed light on achievement and opportunity gaps, successful strategies and economic impacts on Black students who do not have access to a quality education. The series was capped with a strategy session at the 2021 National Summit on Education, bringing together solutions-minded experts in early literacy, teacher development and school choice for a frank discussion on improving outcomes for Black students.



## RECOVERING FROM COVID-19

### STRATEGIES FOR RELIEF FUNDS

Published [American Rescue Plan: Guiding Principles and Essential Strategies for Education Funds](#) to guide state spending of [\\$123 billion](#) in ARP funds allocated to the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund for [safe school reopenings and recovering learning loss](#). The brief includes an overview of federal funding, guiding principles and essential strategies for implementing stimulus funds.



### GEER ALLOCATIONS

Developed [2021 Update: How to Target GEER Funding, A Playbook for Governors](#) to ensure that every GEER dollar has an impact, with strategic solutions to bridge the digital divide, close learning gaps, strengthen pathways to college and career, reimagine learning and empower families with opportunity.



### SUPPORTING PARENTS

Developed a [parent-centered playbook](#) that introduces five state initiatives to halt learning loss and address uneven education opportunities. Policy concepts include LEAP Grants, State-Wide Tutoring Corps, Teacher-Parent Compacts, Open District Acts, and Broadening District Flexibility by adopting broad district contracting authority.





# 2021 NATIONAL SUMMIT ON EDUCATION



**ExcelinEd Chairman, Governor Jeb Bush**, delivered #EIE21's opening keynote address, followed by a conversation with **Romy Drucker**, K-12 education director at the Walton Family Foundation.

*"Think critically for yourself—by listening to other voices."*  
– Dr. Cornel West

U.S. Marine **Calvin Akery** and his family joined Florida Speaker **Chris Sprowls** in opening the 2021 National Summit on Education in Lake Buena Vista, FL.



*"The future we envision requires us to think big, to be bold and to never, ever relent. That's how we put students and families first in everything we do. To me, that is future of education, and it's why I'm excited that we're gathered here today to reinvigorate our efforts to make our dreams come true."*  
– Governor Jeb Bush



*"All kids are capable of learning anything. When scientists try to find evidence that people can't learn, they can't find any."* – Dr. Jo Boaler

**Dr. Jo Boaler** shared her research on brain science to explore how beliefs and bias can impact education, identifying six keys to unlocking everyone's learning potential.

Author **Tim DeRoche** shared his research on the origin and long-lasting impact of inequities in school attendance zones in a panel discussion with parent activist **Kelley Williams-Bolar**, Georgia Representative **Valencia Stovall**, ExcelinEd CEO **Patricia Levesque** and moderator **Derrell Bradford**.



*"I'm just a mom, a regular family, just wanting the best for my children, like everyone else. I want them to have an opportunity like everyone else, like we all should."* - Kelley Williams-Bolar, Parent Activist

Next steps for Florida's transformative education agenda sparked a discussion with House Speaker **Chris Sprowls**, Education Commissioner **Richard Corcoran**, Senator **Manny Diaz**, Senator **Kelli Stargel** and **T. Willard Fair**, with moderator **Lane Wright**.



*"The greatest crisis in America is us losing from within because we are not educating our children well enough."* – Richard Corcoran, Florida Commissioner of Education



**Dr. Cornel West** and **Professor Robert George** shared personal insights and inspirational reflections with Fox News' **Juan Williams** during a special keynote conversation on the value of civil discourse in society.



Journalist **Amanda Ripley** explained how constructive conflict can build understanding on issues where there may be strong disagreement—so vital to transforming education.

*"We need to push each other and to be pushed, to challenge each other. Conflict is the best shortcut to transformation. But it needs to be good conflict."* – Amanda Ripley



## 2021 SUMMIT SPONSORS





# STRATEGY SESSIONS



STRATEGY SESSION: **Education Unbundled: A New Education System for All Learners**



STRATEGY SESSION: **Learning from Disruptions: How States Can Reimagine Learning and Embrace Innovation**



STRATEGY SESSION: **The State of Black Education**

**A. D. Motzen** @ADMotzen  
Thank you Governor @JebBush and @ExcelinEd for convening nearly 1000 education policymakers and advocates at #EIE21 in Orlando. As we heard at lunch today, the first step to better policy is listening to other voices.

STRATEGY SESSION: **Pathways Matter: High-Quality Ed-to-Workforce Pathways for All Students**



STRATEGY SESSION: **Let's Start at the Very Beginning: Teacher Prep for Early Literacy Excellence**

STRATEGY SESSION: **The Year of School Choice**



*"Your team brings some of our country's best thought leaders to the table."* – Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education

**TN State Board of Ed** @SBE\_TN  
The Tennessee delegation is looking forward to bringing back insights gained from #EIE21 to improve our students' educational outcomes across the state.

*"I found myself more as a learner than a presenter. It was a great Summit!"* – Sydnee Dickson, Utah Superintendent of Public Instruction

**Citizen Stewart** @citizenstewart  
The entire @ExcelinEd team deserves praise for their gold-standard education conference. They make space for everyone, keep the message focused on issues that matter most, and deftly navigate tough political times with grace.

## #EIE21 Highlights

- 900+ attendees
- 47 states plus Washington, DC, and Ontario, Canada
- 98% rated Summit content outstanding or above average
- 3.6 million reach on social media



*"I learned so much and was filled with energy and inspiration to keep working."* – Idaho Representative Wendy Horman



SPOTLIGHT SESSION with Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson: **Silicon America: How Ed Policy Can Build a Diverse Workforce Pipeline for the Tech Industry**

## 2021 SUMMIT SPONSORS





# Empower Families with Opportunity

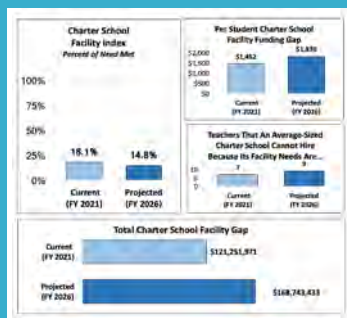
## PROVIDING FAMILIES WITH ACCESS TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT BEST FITS THEIR CHILD'S NEEDS

Parent demand for education options is higher than ever. But fewer than 1 percent of the nation's 50.8 million K-12 students have access to a private choice program. And for families seeking public options, more than 1 million students remain on waitlists for access to a charter school. With proven benefits ranging from increased college attendance and taxpayer savings to academic improvement, ExcelinEd is working to expand educational options for all students.

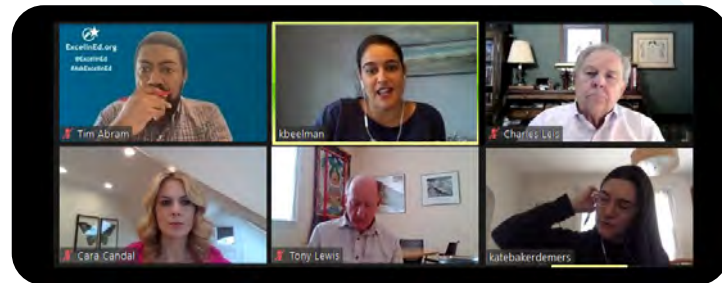
### RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

#### Index Tool for Meeting Charter School Facility Needs

ExcelinEd developed a calculation tool that assesses the extent to which a state is meeting the facility needs of its charter schools. The Indiana Charter Coalition used the facility index to successfully support an increase in charter per-pupil funding. In Ohio, facilities funding was doubled, from \$250 to \$500 per student, to meet an additional 11.2% of facility needs for Ohio's 322 community schools.



## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



### Expanding ExcelinEd's ESA Administrator Network

Now in its second year, ExcelinEd's first-of-its-kind ESA Administrator Network doubled the number of states participating in Network convenings. Fourteen states joined for one or more of the Network's five virtual meetings plus the in-person event at the 2021 National Summit.

The Network supports administrators from states with Education Scholarship Account (ESA) programs to share knowledge and resources for sound administrative practices, national and state-specific solutions, professional development and the policies, hallmarks and supports needed for successful ESA program implementation.



### Walton Family Foundation on Governor Bush's op-ed in the National Review:



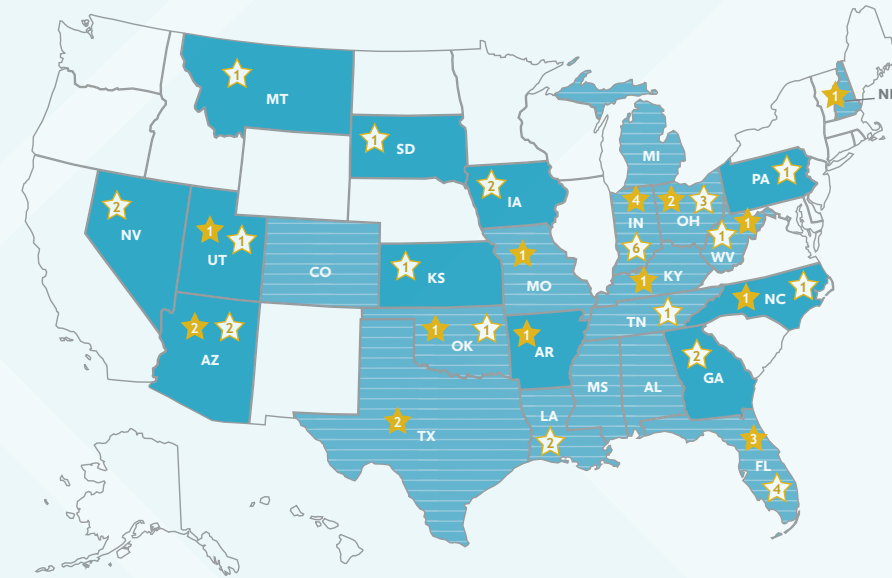
### The Year of School Choice

By JEB BUSH | May 21, 2021 6:30 AM

Governor Bush interviewed by the National Charter Schools Founders Library

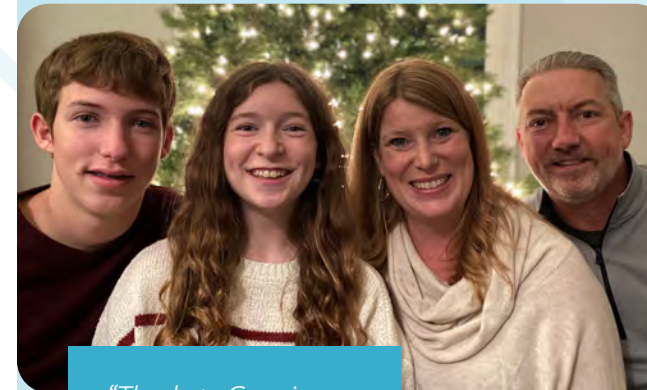
## STATE ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

### 2021 PROGRESS



★ ExcelinEd in Action helped **Pass** policies to empower families with opportunity. ★ ExcelinEd in Action helped **Improve** policies to further empower families with opportunity. ■ ExcelinEd supported states with technical assistance and **policy implementation**.

2021 earned the designation "Year of School Choice" following unprecedented progress in 26 states to expand opportunity for students and families. New education scholarship account (ESA) programs were adopted in five states, almost doubling the number of states that offer a customized education to those that need it most.



"Thanks to Georgia lawmakers, students with a 504 accommodations plan can now receive a scholarship to attend a participating private school that meets their needs. I have seen how these opportunities change the trajectory of a child's education."

Kimberly Leftwich is a parent, dyslexia advocate and co-founder of Cobb Dyslexia Network

West Virginia created the statewide Hope Scholarship program, available to all public school families, to help them purchase educational services for their children.



"We are proud of our work to create the most expansive ESA program in the country."

West Virginia Senator Patricia Rucker



### Lawmakers expanded Florida's Family Empowerment Scholarship program to ensure children of active-duty military families are automatically eligible for a K-12 scholarship.

U.S. Navy Veteran and military spouse Rachel Darrow was able to use a state scholarship so her older child could attend the school that works best for him.

Governor Ducey signed legislation to create a new \$30 million transportation modernization program to support districts and charters, including direct grants to parents to cover transportation costs.

"These new grants will strengthen opportunities for K-12 kids and their families."

Arizona Governor Doug Ducey





# Reimagine Learning

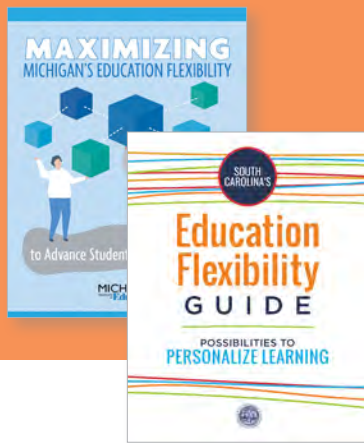
## PROVIDING FAMILIES WITH ACCESS TO THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT BEST FITS THEIR CHILD'S NEEDS

Schools and educators must put students at the center of learning, tailoring experiences to meet the unique strengths, interests and needs of individuals. Innovative strategies include flexible paths to academic mastery, credit for work experience and allowing students to learn anywhere. From delivery and pace to place and path, alternative learning models have become a necessity for a high-functioning, 21st-century education system.

### RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

#### Flexibility Guides for Alternative Learning Models

ExcelinEd continued to build on the success of its flexibility guides, adding state-specific guides for **Michigan** and **South Carolina**. The guides provide school districts and leaders with customized information to advance student-centered learning through their state's education regulations and a look at the suite of learning models available to schools as they seek to reimagine education.



## THOUGHT LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

### Network of State Innovation Partners

Each year, ExcelinEd convenes education leaders from more than a dozen states to advance innovations and flexibilities and to identify actionable strategies that support more personalized, student-centered learning models. Three convenings in 2021 drew 22 participants from 14 states and 3 partner organizations. Agenda topics included a state legislative summary of progress and a focus on how to help educators stabilize, recover and advance toward more student-centered learning models.

### #EIE21 — Education Unbundled: A New Education System for All Learners

ExcelinEd CEO Patricia Levesque led a panel discussion at the National Summit to showcase emerging policies that can unbundle education. Student-centered innovations include part-time public school enrollment, expanded course access, microschoools, parent-teacher compacts and parent-directed funding. Panelists identified what barriers exist today and what policy conditions can unbundle the system to customize learning.



*"The first sentence of this document hits the nail on the head. It says, 'Indiana has taken significant steps to put local education leaders in the driver's seat when it comes to reimagining education and transforming classrooms into 21st-century learning environments capable of meeting the unique needs of students they serve.'"*

Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education

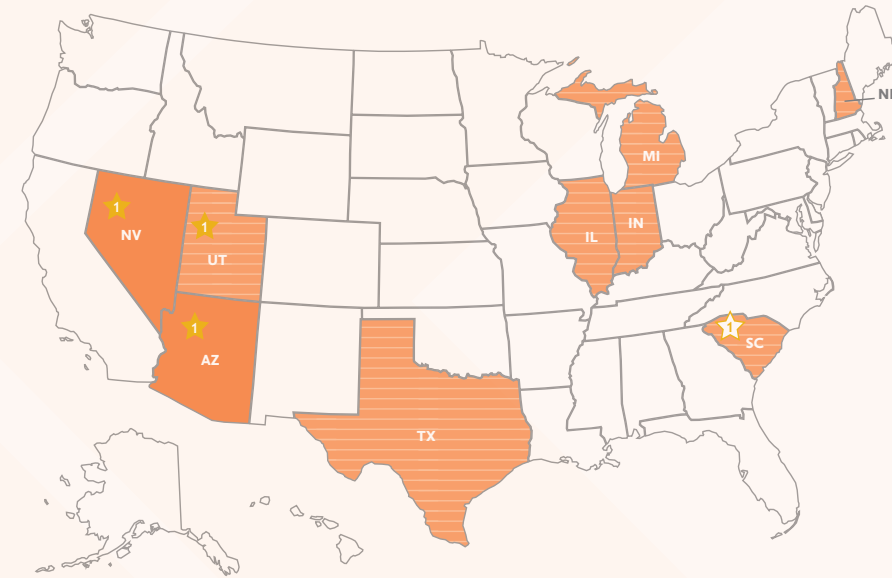
*"There was a good balance of learning and sharing."*

—Participant in the Network of State Innovation Partners



## STATE ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

### 2021 PROGRESS



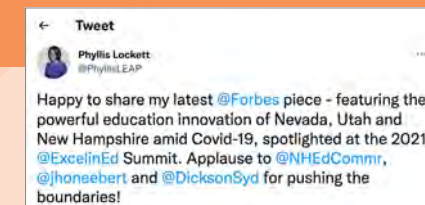
★ ExcelinEd in Action helped **Pass** policies to empower families with opportunity. ★ ExcelinEd in Action helped **Improve** policies to further empower families with opportunity. ■ ExcelinEd supported states with technical assistance and **policy implementation**.

Several states made notable progress in reimagining learning through expanded flexibility for districts, schools and individual students. **South Carolina** created schools of innovation to support student-centered learning, and **Arizona** provided flexibility to its public schools to use innovative learning models. **Nevada** established seat-time flexibility, while **Utah** and **Indiana** expanded course access for students, with Utah also extending virtual course offerings to middle schools.

*The work taking place in Utah, Nevada and New Hampshire is groundbreaking because leaders are expanding beyond the traditional model and inventing new approaches to instruction."*



Phyllis Lockett, Founder and CEO of LEAP Innovations



After a successful launch in New Hampshire, ExcelinEd supported Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, in advancing Schoolhouse world in 10 states (AK, CO, ID, IN, MS, NC, ND, NV, OH, TN).



*"We know that we need to personalize learning to fill gaps and allow for learning acceleration. Removing seat time gives teachers the flexibility to get students the instruction they need."*

Jennifer Echols, Director of Online and Personalized Learning, Mesa Public Schools, Arizona



*"Utah has been intentionally creating alignment and cohesiveness throughout the education system, from policy to practice. We understand the importance of establishing a common vision, providing flexibility and empowering local innovation."*

Sydney Young, Education Specialist, Utah State Board of Education





# Bridge the Digital Divide

## ENSURING EVERY STUDENT HAS EQUITABLE ACCESS TO THE DIGITAL SUPERHIGHWAY

Bridging the digital divide is a pivotal step in ensuring all students have equitable access to a quality education. Prior to the pandemic, data from the National Center for Education Statistics and USAFacts showed that 14 percent of schoolchildren had no internet access at home, and 17 percent lived in households without a computer. As policymakers and practitioners help students recover from lost learning, they know that learning will occur both inside and outside of the traditional classroom setting. All students urgently need basic devices and access to the Internet in order to continue learning.

### RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

ExcelinEd published a set of policy resources to support state leaders in bridging the digital divide, including [Achieving K-12 Broadband Goals Using a State Request for Information Process](#) with steps for states to efficiently aggregate the broadband marketplace and more equitably provide connectivity and devices to low-income households.

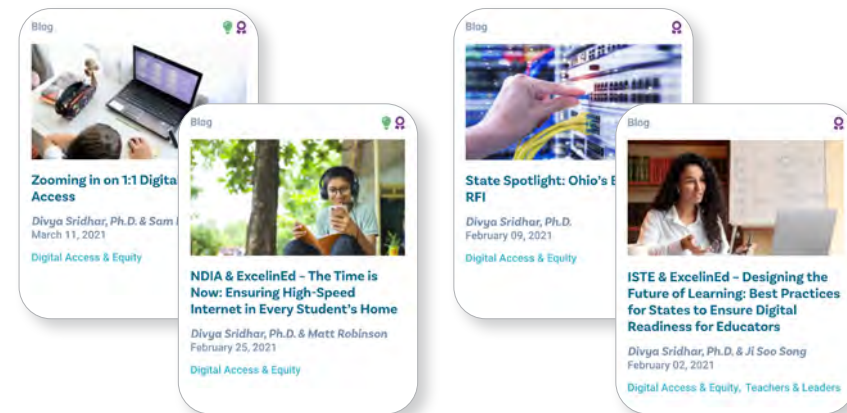
ExcelinEd's model policy, the [Digital Devices for All Act](#), allows districts to use curriculum-focused resources to purchase devices for students. [Sustaining the Emergency Connectivity Fund](#) provides recommendations on leveraging the FCC's \$7 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund to support students and educators with their in-home and off-campus connectivity needs.



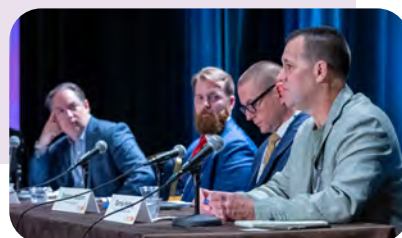
### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

#### Digital Access & Equity Blog Series

ExcelinEd authored 14 [blogs](#) on topics including lessons learned from the first round of the Emergency Connectivity Fund, real solutions from state leaders on closing the digital divide, the future of learning and digital readiness, leveraging broadband emergency funds, ensuring high-speed internet in every student's home plus spotlights on Ohio and Indiana.

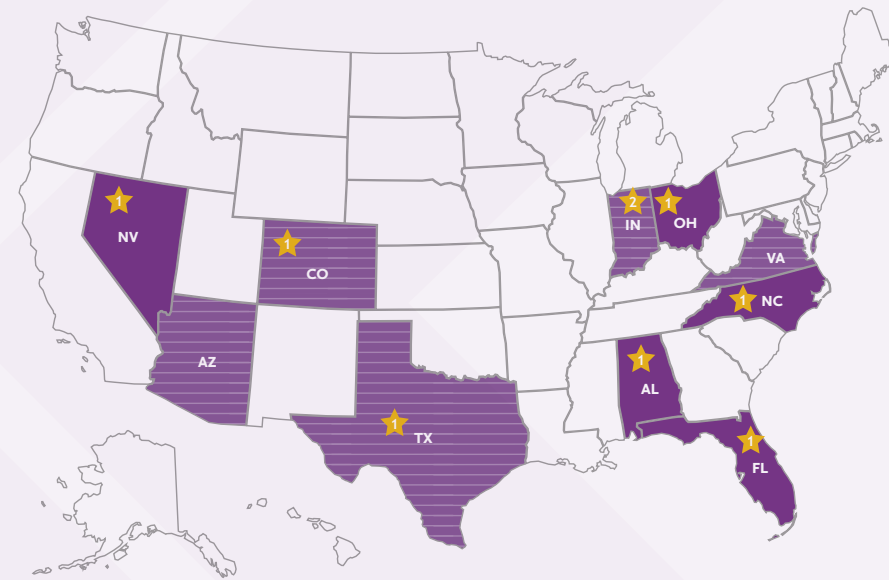


ExcelinEd hosted **Closing the Digital Divide: Real Solutions from State Leaders** at the 2021 National Summit on Education, sharing effective strategies, such as procurement, affordability programs and 1:1 device policies from Indiana, West Virginia and Rhode Island.



### STATE ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

#### 2021 PROGRESS



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States took action to address unmet needs for remote learning, with **Indiana** and **Ohio** each investing \$250 million for digital devices and connectivity for students.

**Nevada** provided devices and connectivity for all +485,000 students, and **Colorado** added a \$5 million grant program to connect 7,500 students. **Alabama** expanded its high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to support students.

Florida Virtual School meets a diverse set of students' needs, with more than 12,500 full-time students and +190 courses—all tuition-free for Florida residents. The online school has served as a vital resource to families during pandemic-related disruptions, more than doubling its pre-pandemic enrollment.

The Landreths, a military family, also depend on Florida Virtual School for stability in their two sons' education.

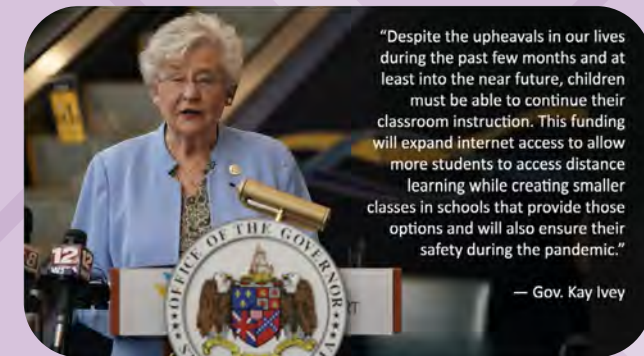
"We moved 20 times in 26 years," said Cheryl. But with her sons learning online, the boys don't have to leave their education family.

"During the pandemic, their learning was seamless. We even had other families come to us and ask for ways to make it better for their children."



*"Supporting digital literacy is an important step in meeting the needs of our educators and students—yet also acknowledges the critical role that parents and families play in supporting learning every single day."*

Nevada Superintendent Jhone Ebert



*"Despite the upheavals in our lives during the past few months and at least into the near future, children must be able to continue their classroom instruction. This funding will expand internet access to allow more students to access distance learning while creating smaller classes in schools that provide those options and will also ensure their safety during the pandemic."*

— Gov. Kay Ivey



*"With Florida Virtual School, we can take our community with us when we move," said Luke, a high school senior.*





# Strengthen Pathways to College + Career

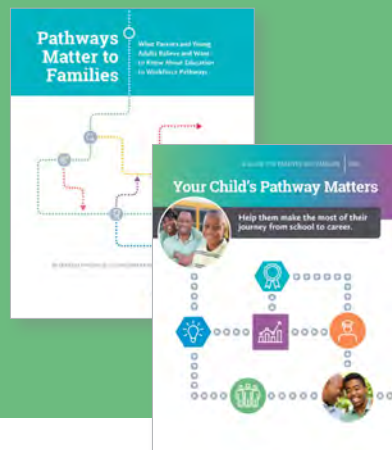
## SUPPORTING EVERY STUDENT IN GAINING IN-DEMAND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

To compete for higher-wage, in-demand jobs, our nation's students need postsecondary credentials—either a college degree or technical skills and certifications, or both. College and career pathway policies bring purpose to learning by allowing students to earn authenticated skills informed by labor market demand. And they improve educational equity by ensuring more rigorous courses are available and incentivized for all students.

### RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

#### Strengthening Career Pathways

ExcelinEd continued to build on *Pathways Matter*—the first and only comprehensive suite of policy solutions that connect K-12 educational paths with postsecondary and employment—with 11 state implementation *Case Studies* and family resources, including *Pathways Matter to Families* and companion guide, *Your Child's Pathway Matters*, which provides families with information to make decisions about high-quality pathways and employer-valued credentials.



### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

## PATHWAYS MATTER

#### Pathways Matter Advisory Council

ExcelinEd hosted four convenings of the 13-member Pathways Matter Advisory Council to inform development of the ed-to-workforce policy continuum *Pathways Matter*. Plans are in place to launch a Pathways Matter State Implementation Network focused on helping states examine their pathway efforts, identify critical policy gaps and opportunities for action.

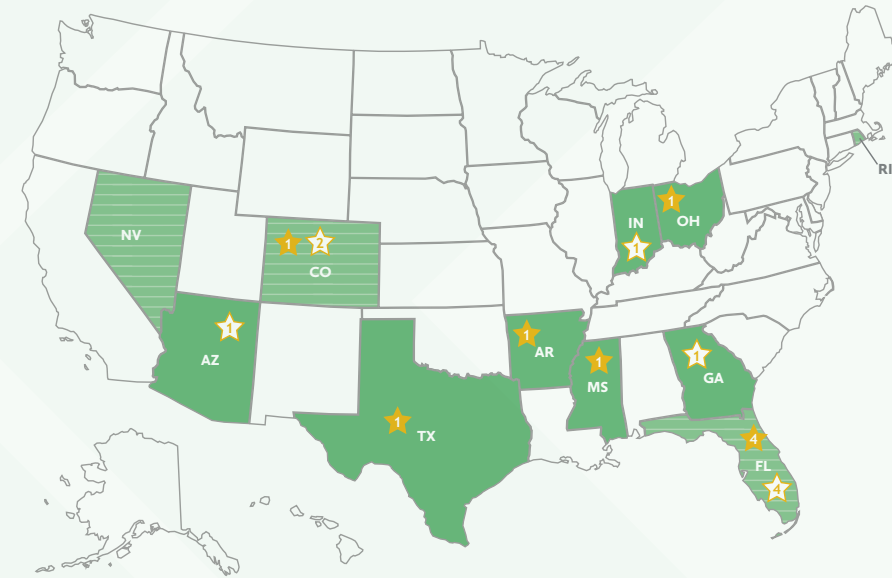
#### #EIE21 Spotlight Session – Silicon America: How Ed Policy Can Build a Diverse Workforce Pipeline for the Tech Industry



The 2021 National Summit on Education focused a spotlight session on one of the nation's most dynamic industries—and its critical need for dynamic talent. Led by Governor Asa Hutchinson, the session explored how Arkansas created some of the nation's strongest pathways into the tech sector. Panelists shared how employers and practitioners are building more diverse, creative pathways into industry through a mix of public investment, policy changes and employer buy-in.

### STATE ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

#### 2021 PROGRESS



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**Florida** leaders passed a comprehensive education-to-workforce package with \$178 million to support a data dashboard, workforce training grants, dual-enrollment scholarships and incentives for college and career readiness.

**Ohio** created incentives for career readiness, dedicating \$41 million to support an estimated 20,000 students in earning industry-recognized credentials.

**Arizona** stepped up with \$1 million to cover credentialing exams for students across the state.

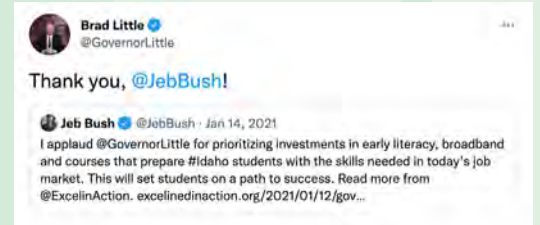
*"I would encourage my child to take the classes necessary, but I would highly encourage him to seek actual hands-on experience in internships/work experience to see how the industry actually operates and more to the point, whether he actually enjoys it."*

Parent of Middle Schooler, featured in ExcelinEd's Credentials Matter



*"My top priority is Idaho's children. We need to continue to invest in an education system that gives the next generation of Idahoans a solid foundation for lifelong learning and meaningful employment, here at home in Idaho."*

Idaho Governor Brad Little, 2021 State of the State Address



*"Job seekers and students can be confident that we are closer than ever to providing the most unified and exceptional workforce system in the nation to help them land and grow in an in-demand career."*

Florida Speaker Chris Spowls





# Close Learning Gaps

## GUARANTEEING EVERY CHILD RECEIVES ACADEMIC SUPPORT TO LEARN, SUCCEED AND ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

Progress over the past 30 years to close learning gaps has been limited. Almost two-thirds of fourth graders are not performing on grade level in math or reading,<sup>1</sup> and Black and Hispanic students are trailing their white peers by up to two grade levels in those subjects.<sup>2</sup> Effective state policies have the power to turn that around—by holding schools accountable for student success, ensuring all learners are reading by the end of third grade, directing funding to follow each student and empowering families with transparent information.

### RESOURCE HIGHLIGHTS

#### Maximizing Funding Impact

This research-based report, *Maximizing Funding Impact: How States Can Help Districts Create Opportunity for*



*All Students*, identifies obstacles that deter school districts from using resources effectively and policy solutions to overcome those barriers.

#### Equitable Assignment of Teachers

ExcelinEd's model policy on equitable teacher assignments addresses inequities exposed by the pandemic. The policy draws upon Florida's 2021 approach to ensure high-needs schools are assigned experienced, certified and in-field teachers.



### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS



#### Early Literacy Network Convenings

ExcelinEd's Early Literacy Network met in person at the National Summit on Education and virtually during the year. Connecticut, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri and Texas grew the network to 22 states plus Washington, D.C., with 73 total members. Discussions among these expert practitioners explored ExcelinEd's model policy for [Aligning Educator Preparation Programs to the Science of Reading](#) and a [State-by-State Analysis of Fundamental Principles](#). The Network also explored innovative and effective early literacy implementation practices, with strategies and lessons learned serving as the framework for a comprehensive policy guide.

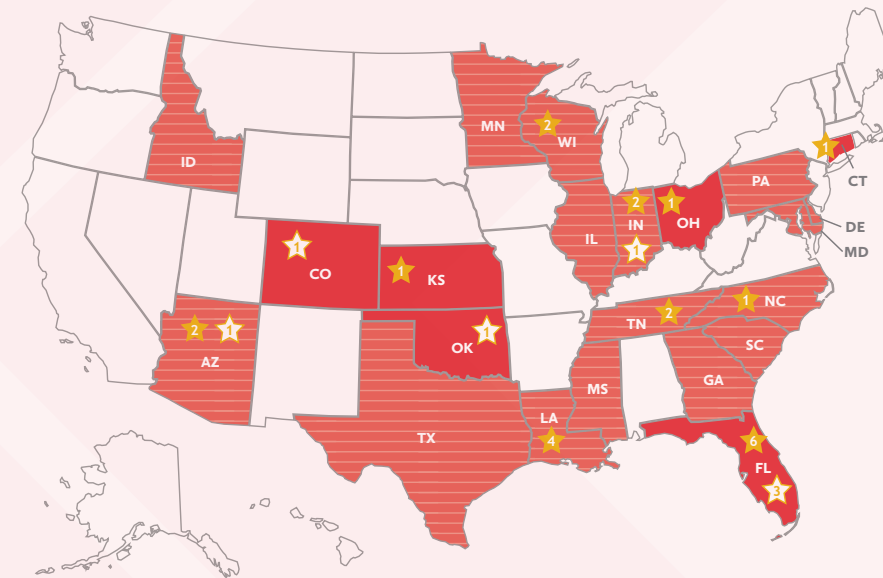
*"I am so glad you have provided us a roadmap to support Alabama's success, and a network to lean on one another!"*  
—Bonnie Short, Alabama Reading Initiative



ExcelinEd hosted **School Accountability: Answers. Not Excuses, for Enhanced Student Outcomes** at the 2021 National Summit on Education, sharing ideas for accountability systems that better serve students while also delivering robust information that helps drive achievement.

### STATE ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

#### 2021 PROGRESS



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Early literacy policy improvements advanced successfully in 8 states, with 5 of those states—Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Tennessee and Wisconsin—investing a total of \$330 million in new funding to support struggling readers and early literacy programs. Assessments garnered support as an essential way to identify pandemic impacts on learning, with 7 states protecting their assessment and accountability policies.

*"Modernizing the funding formula ensures funding follows the student, not the school. These reforms are vital to getting Oklahoma to be a Top Ten state in education, and I am proud of our leaders for their dedication to putting students first."*



Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt on legislation that updates the state's funding formula



*"Ensuring students can read on grade level is a fundamental step to setting them up for future success."*



Tennessee Governor Bill Lee on legislation signed to provide new literacy supports for students.

Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey aligned her strong commitment to early literacy with ExcelinEd's policy recommendations and op-ed, [Alabama Needs All the Tools to Ensure Our Youngest Students Can Read](#), in highlighting the importance of the Alabama Literacy Act.



*"I appreciated your state-level perspective as North Carolina's legislators consider ways to strengthen literacy instruction across the education continuum."*

Dr. Javaid Siddiqi, President & CEO, The Hunt Institute





# Fiscal Accountability

AS WITH OUR FORMULA FOR STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, THE FOUNDATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION BELIEVES IN ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN OUR OPERATIONS.

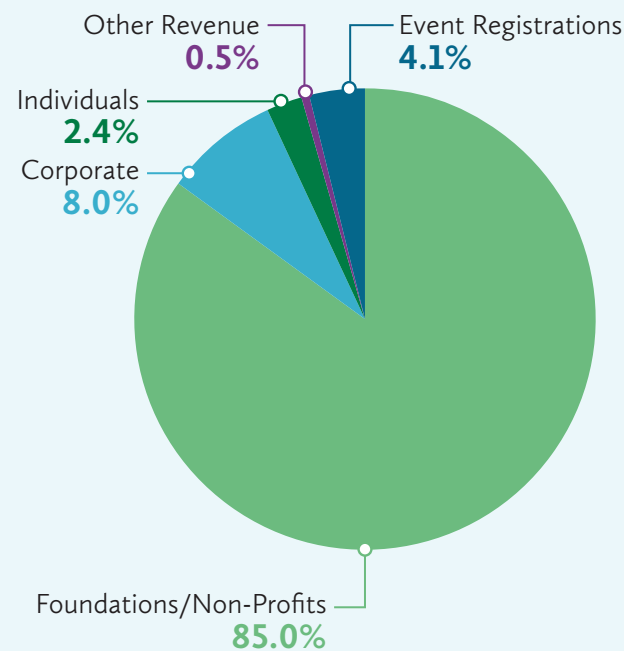
As trusted stewards, we are committed to sound fiscal management and maximizing the use of every dollar toward policy solutions that are increasing student learning, eliminating inequities and readying graduates for college and career.

In 2021, 80 percent of ExcelinEd's expenses were invested directly into our policy, advocacy and communications work to support states in transforming education.

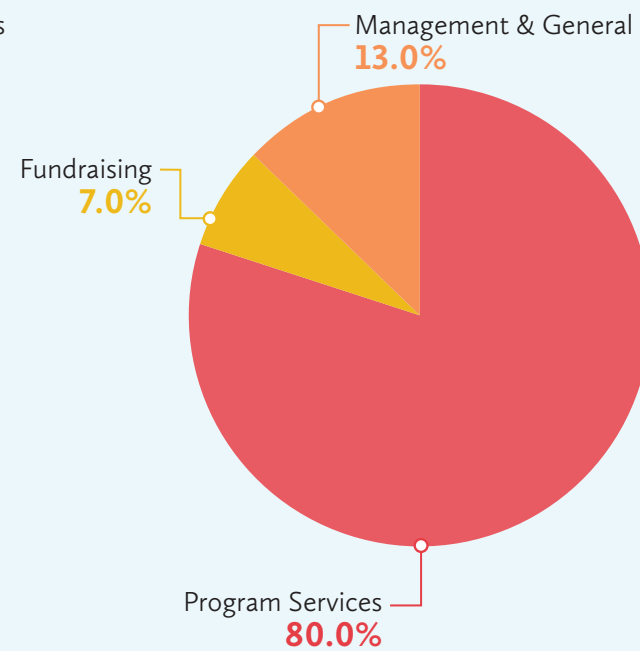


## REVENUE & EXPENSES

2021 REVENUE



2021 EXPENSES



To review our recent 990 filings, visit [ExcelinEd.org/financials](https://ExcelinEd.org/financials).

# ExcelinEd Donors

We often think of education reform as policies written in legislation or rules enacted by elected officials and appointed boards. Rather, reform is a profound game changer in the lives of individual children, a gift that allows them to maximize their potential.

*We are deeply grateful to our donors who believe in the gift of a quality education, and with their generous support of our work, we are transforming policy and transforming lives.*



- Bellwether Education Partners
- The Cobb Family Foundation
- Golden Fleece Foundation
- Al and Kathy Hubbard
- Ann and Charlie Johnson
- Keiser University
- The Crown and Kunkler Family
- Meyer Family Charitable Fund
- The Mondello Family Foundation
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- The Cobb Family Foundation
- Kyra Solutions
- Raquel A. Rodriguez
- Kathleen Shanahan
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*The Foundation for Excellence in Education is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan organization.*



# IN MEMORIAM

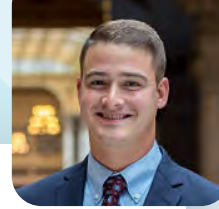
## Remembering our friend, Zach

Zach Eckert, ExcelinEd's Midwest Regional Advocacy Director, passed away on December 18, 2021. Zach was a passionate advocate for students and a relentless warrior for ExcelinEd's mission. He was a talented, kind, humble and loving colleague who embodied a passion for our work.

In two short years, Zach's boundless energy and warm personality made him an important part of the fabric of the ExcelinEd family.

Zach was a proud son of Indiana, a graduate of Indiana University and a stalwart fan of IU sports. He earned his law degree from the Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis.

Zach lives on in our hearts and the many students he helped through his dedicated work.



*"I am grateful for the time we had together with Zach, and I'm confident his legacy will remain strong in the lives of countless individuals and students who are better off due to Zach's selfless attitude, passion and hard work." —Patricia Levesque, CEO*



*"Zach was a treasured colleague who was as known for his humor and affability as he was for his humility and compassion. Zach's passion for improving education and opportunity for all students ran deep, and it was obvious to all those who met and interacted with him how much he cared for others." —Governor Jeb Bush, Chairman*

## SAVE THE DATE

## 2022 NATIONAL SUMMIT ON EDUCATION

Transforming education to unlock lifelong opportunity and success for each and every child.

November 17-18 • Salt Lake City, Utah



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