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

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
Chairman, ExcelinEd
ExcelinEd Board Of Directors

JEB BUSH, CHAIRMAN
Chairman of the Board & 43rd Governor of Florida

JANET AYERS
President, The Ayers Foundation

REGINALD J. BROWN
Partner, Kirkland & Ellis LLP

ALLAN B. HUBBARD
Co-founder and Chairman, E&A Industries & former Director, National Economic Council

CÉSAR CONDE
Chairman, NBCUniversal International Group and NBCUniversal Telemundo Enterprises

CHRIS CERF
Former New Jersey Commissioner of Education

F. PHILIP HANDY
CEO of Winter Park Capital & former Chairman of the Florida State Board of Education

DEE BAGWELL HASLAM
CEO, Haslam Sports Group and Partner/Executive Producer, RIVR Media

JOEL I. KLEIN
Chief Policy and Strategy Officer of Oscar Health & former Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education

SUSANA MARTINEZ
31st Governor of New Mexico

BRUCE RAUNER
42nd Governor of Illinois

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.

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
- Readying 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 21st-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

- Programme for International Student Assessment
- National Assessment of Educational Progress
- National Center for Education Statistics
- ETS
### By the Numbers | 2021

- **$579 million**
  - Funding for New Private School Choice Programs

- **1.7 million**
  - Additional Students Eligible for Private School Choice in 19 States

- **$437 million**
  - Funding Secured for Charter Schools

- **5 States**
  - Adopted New ESA Programs with Eligibility for 352k Students

- **$505 million**
  - For Digital Devices and Connectivity in 3 States

- **5 States**
  - Expanded Public School Choice

- **12 States**
  - Expanded Private School Choice

- **$222 million**
  - New Funding for Workforce Training and College Acceleration in 3 States

- **$14.6 million**
  - Funding for Computer Science Teacher Training

- **$330 million**
  - New Funding for Early Literacy

- **4 States**
  - Expanded Flexibility & Reimagined Learning

- **8 States**
  - Strengthened Early Literacy

- **7 States**
  - Protected Accountability & Assessments

- **15,000**
  - Struggling Readers Supported with Reading Scholarship Accounts

### ExcelinEd in the States | 2021

- **42 States Engaged**
- **30 Policies Protected in 13 States**
- **113 Policies Passed/Improved in 28 States**
- **30 States Implementation Support**

#### Key Statistics:

- **27 Op-Eds**
- **670,452 Email Impressions**
- **392 News & Blog Posts**
- **90 Policy Resources**
- **5,985 Lawmaker Connections from 6 Advocacy Campaigns in 5 States**

- **113** States Participating in ExcelinEd’s Early Literacy, Innovation & ESA Administrator Networks
- **+80** Partners Attending Webinar for Pathways Matter Launch
- **35 Expert Testimonies in 17 states**
- **250 Bills Engaged in 36 states**
- **52 Coalitions in 22 States**
- **+90** State & National Speaking Engagements & Webinars

#### Funding Highlights:

- **$14.6 million**
  - Funding for Computer Science Teacher Training
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  - For Digital Devices and Connectivity in 3 States
- **$437 million**
  - Funding Secured for Charter Schools
- **$579 million**
  - Funding for New Private School Choice Programs

#### Educational Improvements:

- **18 States**
  - Expanded Private School Choice
- **12 States**
  - Expanded Public School Choice
- **5 States**
  - Adopted New ESA Programs with Eligibility for 352k Students

#### Support Highlight:

- **6 States**
  - Supported on American Rescue Plan
**State Highlights | 2021**

### ALABAMA
- 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.

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

### FLORIDA
- Strengthened education to workforce by centralizing governance and $100 million for enhancing data collection, analytics and transparency.
- 557 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.

### GEORGIA
- Protected $344K for computer science professional development.
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### IOWA
- Expanded tax credit scholarships with +$54 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.

### 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.

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

### ARIZONA
- Improved student literacy with +$1 million and +$12.8 million beginning in FY23.
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### CONNECTICUT
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

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

### KANSAS
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

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

### MICHIGAN
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### MONTANA
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### NEBRASKA
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### OKLAHOMA
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### RHODE ISLAND
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### SOUTH CAROLINA
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### SOUTH DAKOTA
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### WASHINGTON
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### WEST VIRGINIA
- Expanding high-speed broadband networks, services and technologies to bridge the digital divide.

### WISCONSIN
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### WYOMING
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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.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE**
- Created the state’s first Freedom Account Program to serve 90,000 students.

**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.

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

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

**TEXAS**
- Prevented backsliding in school accountability.
- Extended computer science courses to all 1,060+ public schools.
- +$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**
- +$7 million for early literacy, including teacher professional development, evidence-based instruction, and teacher preparation aligned to the science of reading.

**WISCONSIN**
- 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.

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

**NEVADA**
- Provided devices and connectivity for all 485,700 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.

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

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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, Am High 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.

CEO AND BOARD MEMBERS
Patricia Levesque spoke at PIE Network's Living 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 and Diversity experts in early literacy, teacher development and 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.

Board members Gary Chartrand and Al Hubbard authored an op-ed: "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.

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 SAW 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 2023 Florida Charter School Conference.

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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.

“Think critically for yourself—by listening to other voices.” – Dr. Cornel West

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.

“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

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.

“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.

“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.”

“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

“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

“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

“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

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

“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.”

“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.”

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STRATEGY SESSIONS

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

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

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

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

“Your team brings some of our country’s best thought leaders to the table.” – Katie Jenner, Indiana Secretary of Education

Thank you Governor @AsaHutch 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.

The Tennessee delegation is looking forward to bringing back insights gained from #EIE21 to improve our students’ educational outcomes across the state.
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.

**Empower Families with Opportunity**

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

**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 facility index to successfully support its charter schools. The Indiana Charter Coalition used the calculation tool that assesses

**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 convenerings. 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:**

“Our recent polling found that parents share dramatic support for charter funding of their children’s educational needs. [ExcelinEd’s] weight in four state conveners are making state and national sense in the Midwest.

**Governor Bush interviewed by the National Charter Schools Founders Library:**

“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, a parent, dyslexia advocate and co-founder of Cobb Dyslexia Network

**Governor Doug Ducey, Arizona Governor:**

“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, a parent, dyslexia advocate and co-founder of Cobb Dyslexia Network

**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
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.

**Reimagine Learning**

**Providing Families with Access to the Learning Environment That Best Fits Their Child’s Needs**

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

“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

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“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

“Happy to share my latest EdSurge article – fleshing out the powerful educational innovation of Nevada, Utah and New Hampshire amid Covid-19, spotlighted at the 2021 National Governors Association. In ‘EdSurge’ for Education Innovation, @KatieJennerInd @PhyllisLockett and @ODMtnView highlight the many ways they’re reimagining learning.”

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

“After a successful launch in New Hampshire, ExcelEd supported Sal Khan, founder of Khan Academy, in advancing Schoolhouse.

The world 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

“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

**Thought Leadership Highlights**

Network of State Innovation Partners

Each year, ExcelEd 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 three 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

ExcelEd 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, microschools, parent-teacher compacts and parent-directed funding.

Panelists identified what barriers exist today and what policy conditions can unbundle the system to customize learning.

**State Advocacy Highlights**

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.

ExcelEd 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.

**Resource Highlight**

**Flexibility Guides for Alternative Learning Models**

ExcelEd continues 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.

ExcelEd in Action helped policies to empower States with opportunity.

ExcelEd supported states with technical assistance and policy implementation.

- **South Carolina**

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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.

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 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 funds 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.

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 K-12 device policies from Indiana, West Virginia and Rhode Island.

FLORIDA VIRTUAL SCHOOL MEETS A CRITICAL NEED

Florida Virtual School meets a diverse set of students’ needs, with more than 12,500 full-time students and +100 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.”

“Despite the upheaval in our lives during the past five months and at least another five to go, children must be able to continue their classroom instruction. This funding will enable remote access to allow every student to access learning, while continuing critical services for schools that provide those options and will also support their safety during the pandemic.”

— Gov. Kay Ivey

“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

STATE ADVOCACY HIGHLIGHTS

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.
Strengthen Pathways to College + Career

SUPPORTING EVERY STUDENT IN ACQUIRING 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.

RESOURCES 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 its 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 to act.

IN-DEMAND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

“Pathways Matter State Implementation Network focused on helping states examine their pathway efforts, identify critical policy gaps and opportunities to act.”

Government of the State of Idaho

“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

IN-DEMAND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

“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.”

Idaho Governor Brad Little

“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

Florida leaders passed a comprehensive education-to-workforce package with $378 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.

IN-DEMAND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

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

“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

IN-DEMAND SKILLS FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

“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 Sprowls
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,1 and Black and Hispanic students are trailing their white peers by up to two grade levels in those subjects.2 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.

HIGHLIGHTS

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
ExcelEd’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
ExcelEd’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 ExcelEd’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

ExcelEd 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.

“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 ExcelEd’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

2021 PROGRESS

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.
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.

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.

To review our recent 990 filings, visit ExcelinEd.org/financials.
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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