education evolving

# ANNUAL REPORT
## 2025-2026













We advance **equitable, student-centered learning** for all students, by supporting teachers designing and leading schools, and by advocating for policy that catalyzes community-led innovation.

educationevolving.org

# Why We Exist

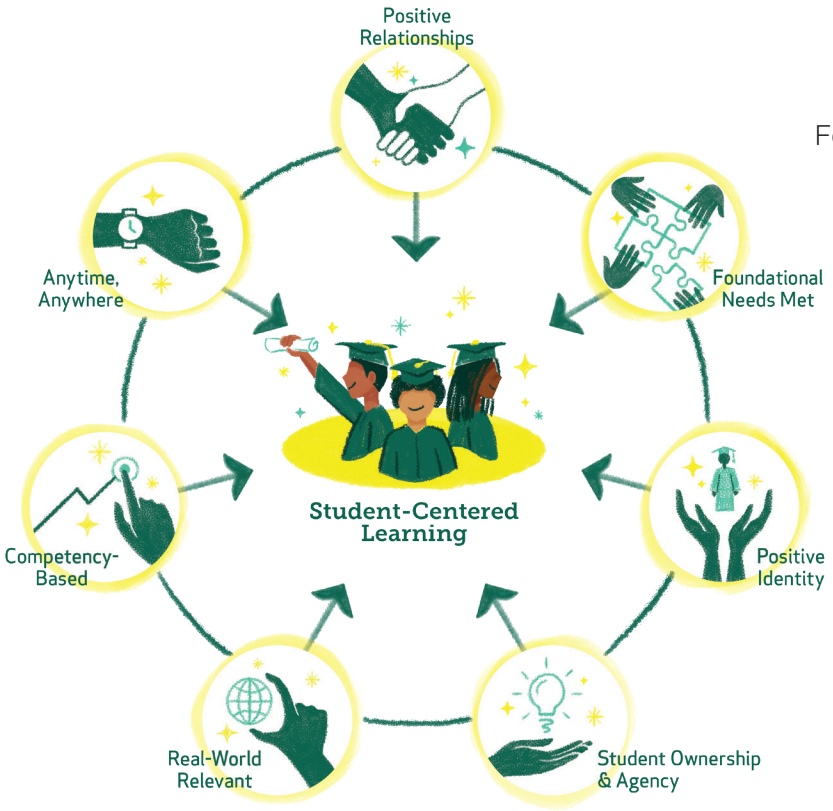
The one-size-fits-all model of school common today was never designed to serve all students, nor to prepare them for a changing 21st century world. It must be **more student-centered.**

Fortunately, the creativity, brilliance, and entrepreneurial spirit needed to boldly redesign learning **already exist in school communities**—among students, families, and educators.

**Our job is to support these leaders at the systems and policy level** as they build schools that center relationships, prioritize both academic rigor and social-emotional development, and nurture the many diverse cultures and identities of our youth.



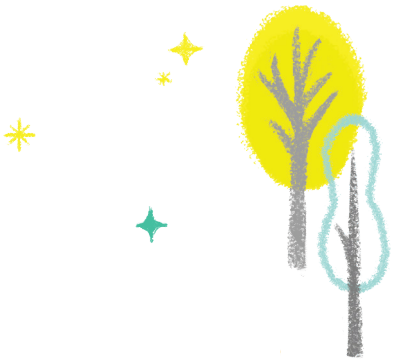
## Our Vision: Equitable, Student-Centered Learning for All




### Guided by our community—and modern learning science

For us "student-centered learning" is more than a buzz word. Seven concrete principles are our North Star.

We co-created these principles with students and educators, and in deep consultation with academic research.



# Our Theory of Change: Community-Led Redesign

Actions We Take

## Policy Advocacy

We push policies that create opportunities, clear barriers, and scale what works.

## Thought Leadership

We share community stories, research, and analysis to inform and inspire change.

## Educator Support

We connect and support a core group of innovators who are proving what's possible.

Changes We Seek

### Policy environments that catalyze and support community-led change

Policies are informed by those doing the work and those whose voices have traditionally been underrepresented.

### Schools where educators have agency and communities share power

Educator teams work in partnership with students and families to boldly innovate. Together they build student-centered schools.



### Ultimately, student-centered experiences and outcomes for each student

Our youth develop a sense of purpose and belonging, and are prepared to lead us into the more just and thriving future we so need.

# Minnesota Policy and Systems Change

**In 2025-2026, we advanced** student-centered education policy priorities and deepened partnerships with lawmakers, state agencies, associations, and organizations.

Some of this year's clearest progress came from implementing hard-won victories of prior years. New teacher licensure pathways moved from pilot to permanent state infrastructure, bringing licensed teachers to schools that need them. Standards we helped pass took effect in classrooms.

**On newer priorities, this was a year of groundwork:** drafting bills, securing authors, building coalitions. For all of our top priorities we now have bill language, committed partners, and momentum heading into a budget year—progress that will yield real wins for students, teachers, and schools.

## Our Focus Issues

Our policy work pursues a future where:

**Student-Centered Learning.** Policies clear barriers to learning that is personalized, culturally affirming, career connected, and consistent with what we know works.

**Talent Pathways.** Licensure and preparation create accessible pathways for diverse, talented teachers ready to lead this work.

**Data and Assessment.** How we define and measure success sets the goal posts where they belong—and tells us how we're doing.

**Autonomy and Shared Power.** Decisions are made closer to students, with power shared among the educator teams and school communities who lead the work and own the results.



# Fought to protect the right to public education for all students

We advocated for legislation to ensure **all students and families are safe and welcome at school** amidst aggressive immigration enforcement that left families afraid to send children to school.

**The bill we brought forward** codifies all students' Constitutional right to public education, while setting clear expectations for educators so they can protect students and families in accordance with the law.

We elevated the issue, on Minnesota Public Radio and with the Minnesota Star Tribune and Sahan Journal, to express the need for safe access to public education for all kids and families.

**The bill passed the Senate** but could not overcome the gridlock in the House—a common theme in the 2026 session. Our progress was only won thanks to our close partners in the Push Forward MN Coalition, individuals and organizations committed like EE to advancing equitable learning opportunities for all Minnesota students. Our coalition is confident we will get the bill across the finish line in 2027.

The coalition did manage to deliver on another priority: We urged a limited "hold harmless" for compensatory revenue, **protecting dollars for students whose families are already at risk of losing SNAP and Medicaid.** This equitable funding solution, while not a permanent fix, is a crucial stabilizer for public schools.




EE's Alex Vitrella before the Senate in defense of safe access to public education for all kids.

Alex also spoke live on MPR News about the details of the education protection bill.




PUSH FORWARD MINNESOTA

Push Forward Coalition members showing up for a bill hearing at the Capitol.



# Shepherded critical teacher licensure pathways

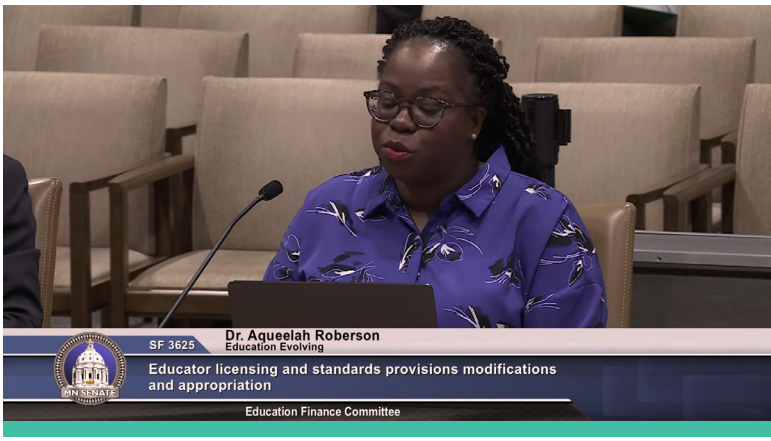
A licensure pathway that we helped establish is **delivering talented, fully licensed heritage language teachers** in Minnesota. A new heritage language license itself entered rulemaking, turning a hard-won pilot into permanent state infrastructure.

The same model is now being applied to Ethnic Studies, where another new teacher license is moving through the rulemaking process. Alongside our sustained advocacy, we co-hosted a third annual summit with teacher preparation providers to ensure that **quality programs to prepare in-demand Ethnic Studies teachers** exist.

This is a fundamental shift in how the state validates teacher preparation — legitimizing different ways of knowing while holding teachers to rigorous standards.

Looking forward, in collaboration with the UMN Humphrey School, we did a research deep dive on residencies, apprenticeships, and grow-your-own pathways to better understand pathways that draw diverse, talented people into the profession. In the coming months, we'll be publishing **concrete policy recommendations** to lay groundwork for advocacy in future legislative sessions.

Together, these efforts ensure talented teachers—especially those with uncommon but crucial areas of expertise and who tend to better reflect the students they seek to teach—have a viable pathway to the classroom outside of traditional routes.




EE's Dr. Aqueelah Roberson at the Senate supporting the work of MN's teacher licensing board.



EE's Alex Vitrella and heritage language teacher Deqa Muhidin at a presentation to the teacher licensing board.




EE's Marcus Penny spoke to KSTP about how students benefit from engaging in Ethnic Studies.

**876k**
**MN students** are now learning Ethnic Studies

**133**
**teachers licensed** via portfolio pathway last year, up 6x since 2020

# Pushed MN to name, and measure, what matters

We brought a pair of bills to **better capture student achievement and set a high bar** we know learners can meet when state policy has their backs.

Our **state Vision of a Learner bill** seeks to elevate the learner skills and attributes needed to thrive in college, career, and civic life so we may shape policies and institutions around them. The bill would task the Minnesota P-20 Education Partnership with engaging crucial stakeholders to develop the final vision.

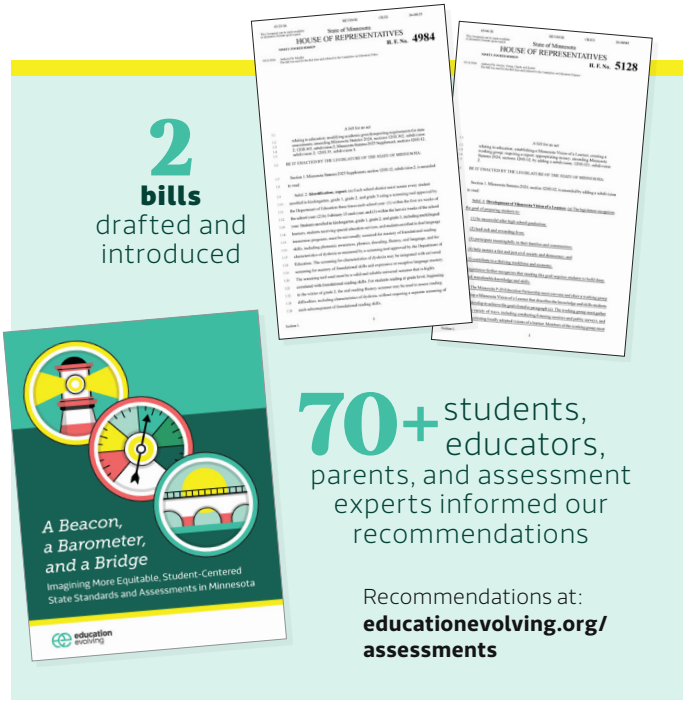
We secured strong champions in the House and buy-in from key stakeholders, including several education associations and P-20 itself.

We also brought a **bill to prioritize growth in Minnesota student assessments**, to capture a more holistic picture of student achievement and better honor their learning journey while providing stepping stones to further success.

The bill better defines how we will measure students' educational growth, compels the education commissioner to set growth targets for each grade, requires that schools provide student performance reports to families in a timely manner.

**We moved our recommendations** into concrete bill language and secured a bill champion in the House. As with the Vision of a Learner bill, this progress was a necessary building block for future passage and we have high hopes for both bills in 2027.

Outside the legislature, Governor Walz called for a **working group on state assessments** consistent with our recommendations.




> "**Assessments should** provide feedback that is helpful and uplifting, while also **challenging growth over time.**
>
> —A student who shaped our recommendations

# Revived opportunity for innovative school models

Schools work better **when decisions are made closer to students**—and when those who serve students enjoy the freedom to be responsive to their assets and needs.

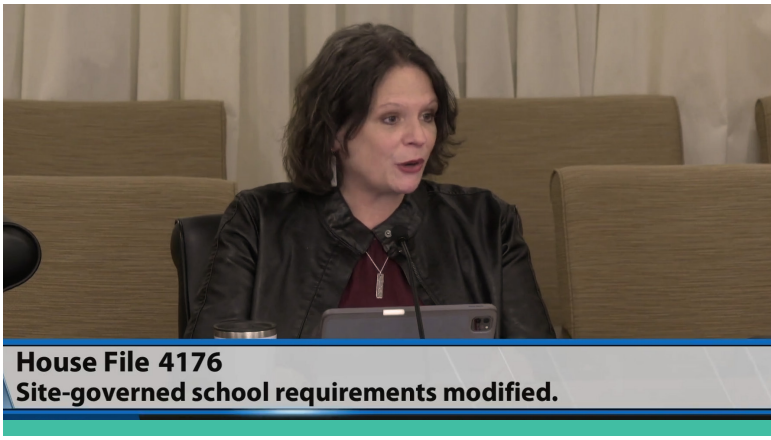
To that end, we crafted important revisions to simplify an existing but underused law enabling school teams to secure time and flexibility to run their schools differently, without having to leave their district.

The law is supposed to make it feasible for nontraditional, more student-centered learning programs to launch and last. But clunky language tripped schools and their districts up before they could even get started, so we fixed it.

The cost-neutral **bill was carried by bipartisan authors and received unanimous support in both legislative chambers**—a layup when the legislature must pass an education budget in 2027.

Bottom line: Most Minnesota students attend district schools. This is how student-centered redesign happens where students already are.






Education Finance committee co-chair Rep. Cheryl Youakim presenting the bill to her colleagues in the House




EE's Marcus Penny testifying before the Senate on district school flexibility

# Convened students, teachers, and community across generations

We **hosted student and adult guests from across our region** at our annual student-centered convening, the largest gathering of its kind .

**To meet the needs of our local community**, we held the convening entirely virtually this year. Even with the change of format, we were able to offer messages from inspiring keynote speakers, host popular breakout sessions, and showcase talented student performers. We plan to return to a hybrid format in the future, but we proved the event is successful either way.

**400+**
**schools, districts, and organizations**
attended SCL4E in the past 3 years

Our keynote was a three-part, intergenerational message from three student-centered leaders at different stages of life. Breakouts highlighted one educator team's collaborative school redesign journey, meaningful youth-adult partnerships in an Indigenous studies program, and the role of advocates in defending student-centered learning environments.

Students from area schools took on emcee duties, performed original music, and provided AV support

HERITAGE HIGH SCHOOL
PiM ARTS HIGH SCHOOL
FL



The three-part keynote was delivered by community leader Carlos Mariani Rosa, educator Randilynn Boucher-Giago, and student Nicholas Vang.

> "**The past couple years** have felt like fighting one wildfire after another. Today has been a glimpse of the **wildflowers pushing themselves up through the mud.**"
>
> —Feedback from an SCL4E 2026 attendee

# Teacher-Powered Schools program

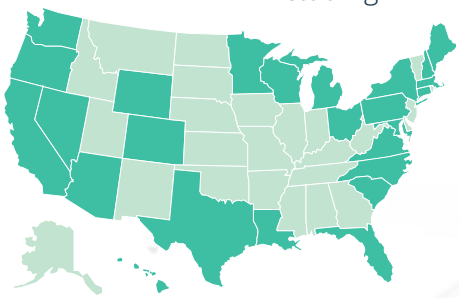
A **teacher-powered school** is a school designed and run by a team of educators, working in close partnership with students, families, and community.

They use collaborative leadership to make changes that transform student learning—and the teaching profession.

Teacher-Powered Schools (TPS) is a program of Education Evolving, operating in Minnesota and nationally alongside the policy work described in the preceding pages.

Through TPS, we support a national network of teacher-powered schools, coach school teams directly, and shape the field by building awareness, ecosystems, and evidence for strong teacher-powered schools.

**300+**
**teacher-powered** schools in at least
**31 states**
including MN





# Coached teams remaking their schools from the inside out

**Our coaching program grew** as did requests for direct support from teams wanting to build shared leadership, sharpen decision-making, redesign educator roles, and deepen collective responsibility.

**Our approach emphasizes local goals for local wins.** Each coaching engagement is tailored to the specific goals and needs of the school. Examples of specific goals we achieved together with schools include:

- School-wide implementation of a team teaching model
- Creating a new co-lead teacher leadership structure
- Student disciplinary referrals cut in half
- Chronic absenteeism reduced by 70 percent
- Teacher turnover reduced from double digits to 4 percent
- Students showing high growth on NWEA MAP benchmark assessments increased by 7 percent

**We launched new coaching engagements** at schools in California, Colorado, Minnesota, Texas, and Wisconsin—funded by a deliberate mix of school-paid fees and philanthropy, to ensure this work is sustainable for both TPS and coached schools.



An educator team at one of many tailored, collaborative sessions with TPS coaches.

**28**
**schools coached**
(up 87% from the year before)

**10k**
**students served**
by those schools
(up 126% from the year before)

COACHING HIGHLIGHT

## Hopkins Public Schools

We partnered with Empower Schools on the Inspired Teaching, Exceptional Learning pilot project, supporting eight schools to combine innovations in teacher teaming models with rigorous relevant learning programs.

In Hopkins, our coaches worked with three district schools to explore how collaborative teaming models better meet the needs of students and educators—by breaking down the isolating one-teacher, one-classroom model and giving students flexible groupings and more adults with whom to build meaningful relationships.

All three schools in Hopkins use an innovative international baccalaureate or project-based learning model, and our coaches worked with their teams to answer the question of how high-quality instructional materials and teaching complement and enhance their student-centered learning models.

Over the 2025-2026 school year, school leadership teams designed teaming models that work for their unique students and educators, explored ways to increase rigor in projects, and built foundations for healthy collaborative teams.

# Built on a national movement and conversation—and our capacity to catalyze it

**Teacher-Powered Schools** is rooted in the professional capacity of teachers—to spur the movement toward removing barriers and supporting teachers so they can do their best work for students.

Minnesota has long been home to many leading teacher-powered schools. We launched a MN TPS Fellows program for seven veteran teacher-powered schools, meeting monthly, explicitly to **develop the next generation of leaders** for the state's founding cohort of these schools. We also kicked off a mentor-mentee group pairing teacher-leaders across schools.

We also brought together new voices for the field. A fresh **cohort of Teacher-Powered Ambassadors** from across the country began sharing about the impact of a teacher-powered model on their experience as an educator at conferences, podcasts, and blogs.

We opened the front door for interested schools. Two Explore Cohorts—one national, one for Minnesota district schools—**brought roughly 15 school teams** into structured learning about the model, and into the top of our coaching pipeline.

As our TPS initiatives grew, so did our capacity to sustain it. NewSchools Venture Fund reinvested $250,000 in TPS for a second year. We completed our business playbook with Watershed Advisors, finished a theory of change with concrete measures, and brought on a dedicated TPS communications coordinator. •



EE's Director of Teacher-Powered Schools Amy Junge facilitating conversations at an educator conference

> "This is not about releasing power, but sharing it and building relationships.
>
> —A teacher-powered principal speaking about the TPS movement



A talented cohort of Teacher-Powered Ambassadors worked with us to lead workshops, write stories, and more

# Brought the movement together in Michigan

**The impact of TPS** is not only through schools we work with directly, but also the hundreds of schools and teachers in our network who engage with our events and workshops.

**We hosted nearly 300 in Michigan for the 2025 Teacher-Powered Schools National Conference.** The conference included site visits to area teacher-powered schools, several days of breakout sessions, collaborative full-group plenaries, and a gathering for union partners. •

**94%**
**of attendees** said the conference equipped them with new knowledge, skills, and tools

**98%**
**of attendees** said the conference inspired them to think bigger and/or differently



Educators joined education leaders, university faculty, foundations, and nonprofit education advocates




















EE closed the 2026 fiscal year in a strong and sustainable financial position, with growth in both philanthropic support and earned revenue, and having demonstrated careful stewardship of resources that fuel our ambitious work and the movement we serve.

## Statement of Financial Position

| | |
|---|---|
| Cash and Cash Equivalents | $966,697 |
| Accounts Receivable | $1,465,317 |
| Lease Right-of-Use Asset | $21,162 |
| **Total Assets** | $2,453,176 |
| | |
| Accounts Payable and Accrued PTO | $48,768 |
| Operating Lease Liability | $21,162 |
| **Total Liabilities** | $69,930 |
| **Total Net Assets** | $2,383,246 |
| | |
| **Total Liabilities and Net Assets** | $2,453,176 |

*Accounts Receivable primarily includes restricted funds awarded as part of multi-year grants.

## Statement of Activity

Unrestricted for preliminary FY 2026

| | |
|---|---|
| Foundation Grants (received and revenue recognized) | $2,083,793 |
| Individual Donations | $589 |
| Earned Revenue | $161,028 |
| Interest and Other Income | $24,513 |
| **Total Revenue** | $2,224,923 |
| | |
| Team Compensation and Benefits | $841,663 |
| Sub-grant to Partner Organization | $500,000 |
| Contractors | $341,609 |
| Professional Services | $17,839 |
| Event Hosting Expenses | $86,413 |
| Occupancy | $21,600 |
| Other Program Expenses | $348,451 |
| **Total Expenses** | $2,157,575 |
| | |
| **Net Operating Income** | $67,348 |

We are deeply grateful to the generous supporters who make our work possible.

Angeles Scougall

Bush Foundation

Chris Ghere and Alex Vitrella

Civic Affairs Trust

Dennis Vitrella

Great Minnesota Schools

Hannah and Lars Esdal

Joe Graba

Jon and Dana Schroeder

Keith and Natalee Johnson

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Minneapolis Foundation

NewSchools Venture Fund

Robertson Foundation

TeachPlus




Education Evolving is a Minnesota-based,
non-partisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

**Together with our community, we're building an education system that...**

**honors** our youth as people

**challenges** them as scholars

**interrogates** our inequities

**innovates** our workplaces

**sustains** our communities

**to build** a more just and thriving world



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