



education
evolving

ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025



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



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

Why We Exist

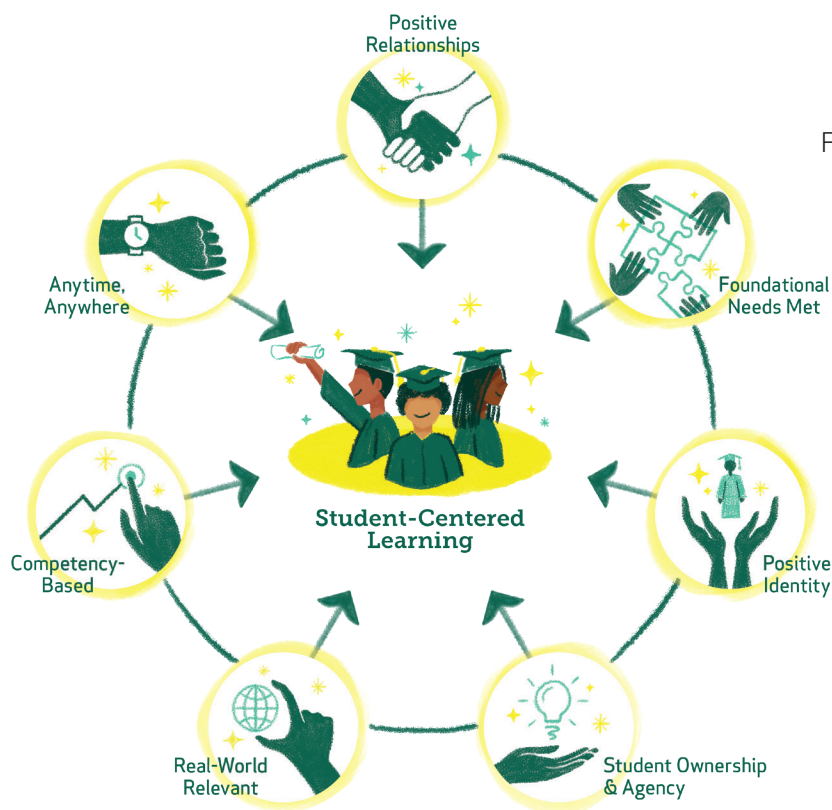
The one-size-fits-all model of school common today was never designed to serve all students, nor to prepare them for a changing 21st century world. It must be **more student-centered**.

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.



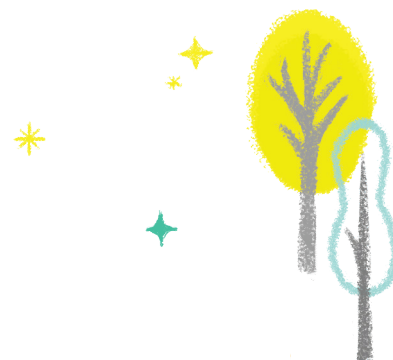
★ Our Vision: Equitable, Student-Centered Learning for All



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.

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.

Changes We Seek

Blazed new trails for teachers

We helped implement a **new experience and mentorship-based pathway** for heritage language teacher candidates in Minnesota.

We championed creation of the pathway in 2023 after years of advocacy—and it's working. From the inaugural candidate cohort, more than two dozen teachers have already earned full teaching licenses and dozens more are in the pipeline.

For some languages, these are the **first licensed teachers in the country**. We celebrated this milestone by generating media coverage from outlets like Minnesota Public Radio, the Minnesota Star Tribune, and Sahan Journal.

Amid belt tightening at the legislature, we **successfully advocated to continue a state appropriation** for this pathway to ensure schools can hire and keep vital teachers who speak and teach Minnesota's many heritage languages that reflect their student populations.

We also worked to **spread this model to other licensure fields**, and applaud a new state appropriation specific to supporting and expanding the portfolio licensure that underlies this pathway.

These approaches represent a fundamental shift in how the state views and validates teachers' preparation, legitimizing different ways of knowing while providing rigorous pedagogical and standards-based support.



Student testers at the Capitol with their teachers, the EE team, and Dr. Yelena Bailey of PELSB



100+ teachers gained

licenses through the portfolio process, up nearly two-fold from pre-pathway



House File 1418

Teacher licensure, grant programs transferred from Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board to the Dept. of Education, reports required, and money appropriated.

Teacher Deqa Muhidin testifying before the MN Senate in support of sustaining the innovative licensure pathway

“This program is not just about teaching—it’s about the sense of pride, resilience, and unity that lasts for generations.

—Ehtalaw Zar, MN educator and the first licensed Karen language teacher in the United States

Defended culturally responsive and future-ready learning

Alongside community partners, we mobilized quickly to **defend Minnesota's newly adopted social studies standards** against efforts to nullify them.

The new, inquiry-based standards reflect the latest research and provide opportunities for all students to see themselves and their classmates reflected in the inclusive histories and perspectives they learn. Our advocacy helped put these standards into rule in 2024.

This mobilization effort also protected legislation we helped pass in 2023, which ensured all Minnesota students have **access to rich Ethnic Studies courses**.

We also **supported various bills** to help Minnesota better measure, honor, and motivate the diverse ways students learn and demonstrate their learning.

...

We pushed for learning designs to be **more student-centered**.

We **advocated for an “instructional hours” bill** to promote more flexible and equitable learning opportunities for students outside of traditional seat time. And we spoke out in favor of **establishing a Civic Seal** for students to be able to showcase civic knowledge and skills to future schools and employers, similar to the existing bilingual seal in Minnesota.

While the bills have yet to pass, they advanced a growing conversation about valuing a full breadth of student knowledge and skills—dovetailing with our work on state standards and assessments highlighted in the next section.

“These standards are not about blame, they are about empowerment.”

—EE's Marcus Penny making the case for academic standards that better reflect Minnesota students



House File 1607
Hours of instruction requirements modified.

EE's Dr. Aqueelah Roberson advocating in the House for flexible, equitable student learning opportunities



21 students testified

in defense of better, more inclusive social studies standards



Marcus Penny
Education Evolving

EE's Marcus Penny before the House in defense of inclusive, research-driven academic standards

Fostered community for student-centered learning

In May, **we hosted *Student-Centered Learning for Equity***, the largest educator convening of its kind in our region.

Students and adults co-led every breakout workshop. Breakouts focused on proven practices and critical skills for sustainable student-centered learning. Topics emphasized meaningful student ownership and agency in education.

As in prior years, we drew on community members, partner organizations, and regional schools not only to present and attend SCL4E, but participate formally in the visioning and planning of the event.

The hybrid event boasted lively panels with students and educators, student musical performances, and an electrifying keynote address from author and speaker Dr. Christopher Emdin.

Attendees enjoyed performances by Hmong dance group Golden Mist, Academia Cesar Chavez's Baile Folklorico, and local poetry organization TruArtSpeaks.



Dr. Christopher Emdin takes a photo with student emcees from Lakota Tech High School



EE's Hawra Alnabi moderated a panel on the experiences of immigrant and refugee students

“I valued the opportunity to connect with others committed to elevating and amplifying student perspectives, voices, and assets.”

—An attendee of SCL4E 2025 in their event feedback

SCL4E 2025 by the numbers

600+
community
members
at SCL4E 2025

97%
of attendees
agree the event “equipped
me with new knowledge,
skills or tools”

14
workshops
in-person
& online

100%
of workshops
co-presented
with youth

Fought for data that matters

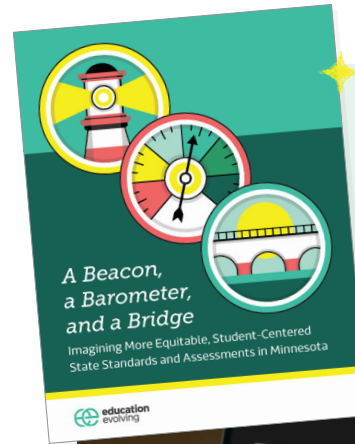
In September, **we published our paper *A Beacon, a Barometer, and a Bridge*** which calls for state assessments to be more timely, relevant, and equitable for educators and families looking to improve schools.

The paper presents **clear, specific, and actionable recommendations** for policymakers. We recommend that Minnesota:

- Re-envision more focused and rigorous academic standards, and anchored by a statewide Profile of a Graduate that lifts up essential life skills like collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.
- Improve grade 3-8 assessments by involving youth in culturally relevant test design, speeding and simplifying access to results, and prioritizing growth measures alongside proficiency.
- Reimagine high school assessments to recognize deeper, applied competencies and ultimately help students access college credit and job opportunities.

Our recommendations laid the groundwork for change, and have been well received by leaders across the state.

Next up: **shifting focus to advocacy**, joining with community, schools, and organization partners to move these recommendations forward.



70+ students, educators, parents, and assessment experts informed our recommendations

Paper available at: educationevolving.org/assessments



EE's Lars Esdal joined the AmpliEd podcast to share about our paper and recommendations

“Assessments should provide feedback that is helpful and uplifting, while also **challenging growth over time.”**

—A student who shaped our recommendations

Dr. Christopher Emdin engaging the SCL4E audience



Engaged deeply with partners to make a greater impact

At the heart of everything we do is the belief that **our work must be guided by and co-designed with the communities** our work impacts.

To that end, we met regularly this year with school and ecosystem partners to ensure EE was serving the real needs of students and educators.

We convened a policy advisory council comprised of thoughtful leaders from across Minnesota's public education landscape: elementary to high school, metro to rural, districts and charters. These representative leaders inform and steer our policy focus.



Per a formal agreement with the state's teacher licensing board, EE convened the **Minnesota Heritage Fellows**, a group of veteran educators and language experts to look critically at the teacher licensure pathway we helped shepherd. Drawing on the Fellows' wisdom, we released policy and program recommendations for improving the pathway moving forward.

We pitched in and partnered on several joint efforts—including with EngageMN, the MN Ethnic Studies Coalition, Push Forward Minnesota, and the Coalition to Reimagine the Teaching Role.

In newsletters, blog posts, memos, and earned media, we spotlighted school bright spots and kept our community in the loop on education policy happenings and trends.



12 heritage language experts joined our fellowship and influenced our recommendations



MN school leaders at EE's offices to discuss sustaining innovative, student-centered learning programs

2024-25 virtual reach

9
major media
mentions
for our work

6k+
readers
engaged

18
newsletters
& blog posts

37k+
visitors
to our websites

Nurtured a movement and national conversation

Teacher-Powered Schools (TPS) is a program of Education Evolving that operates both in Minnesota and nationally. It is distinct but deeply complementary to our Minnesota policy and systems change work. The next few pages highlight this work. *Learn more at teacherpowered.org.*

A growing conversation around **reimagining teacher roles** has emerged in response to both dire trends in teacher job satisfaction and retention, and lagging student achievement. Teacher-Powered Schools is right at the center, shaping the framing, narrative, and metrics for this growing field.

We are ensuring that conversation is asset-based—rooted in the professional capacity of teachers—while drawing focus toward removing barriers and supporting teacher capacity so they can do their best work for students.

Over the past year we:

- Were a core participant in the coalitions and collaboratives that are shaping this burgeoning field, including the Coalition to Reimagine Teacher Roles and the Inspired Teaching, Exceptional Learning project.
- Presented at conferences of education leaders around the country.
- Were featured in news articles, podcasts, and blog posts published by national outlets.
- Published our blog posts and newsletters to both spread the word and support our network of schools proving what's possible.
- Opened a national call for Teacher-Powered Ambassadors, and in 2025 welcomed six talented current teachers to be spokespeople for dynamic, student-centered, teacher-powered schools.

“This is not about releasing power, but sharing it and building relationships.”

—A teacher-powered principal speaking about the TPS movement



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



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



EE's Alex Vitrella spoke on a panel on at a convening for the National Center for Teacher Residencies.

Provided direct support to school teams to transform teaching and learning

In the last three years, we have received growing requests for direct support from **teams wanting to build shared leadership**, strengthen decision-making, reimagine more sustainable educator roles, and deepen collective responsibility.

Through our new **Teacher-Powered Coaching Initiative**, we worked alongside educators working to make their teams more effective, their jobs more sustainable and—above all—their students more responsive and equitable for the students they serve.

Our Approach

- **Coaching Leaders:** We coach district, school, and classroom leaders to expand educator voice, agency, and shared leadership—empowering and aligning change at all levels.
- **Redesigning Systems:** From staffing to schedules, we partner with teams to collaboratively redesign structures, practices, and routines that work better for students and adults.
- **Transforming Learning:** Ultimately, we support educators in building capacity to design and use student-centered teaching practices that are rigorous, relevant, and culturally affirming.



Our coaches held conference workshops for educator teams curious about teacher-powered coaching



Tailored coaching engagements include full-team training and more specialized, follow-on supports

TPS coaching by the numbers

23
schools in
9 states
across rural, urban,
and suburban
settings

500
educators
impacted by coaching
at these sites

14
coaches
in partnership
with teacher
teams

83%
of participants
say coaching
had a positive
impact on their
school

Built capacity to scale our work

Our work **drew national attention** amidst a growing focus on the sustainability of the teaching profession and reimagining educator roles.

- We were one of five grantees selected from hundreds of applicants for the inaugural investments of the NewSchools Venture Fund for bold, innovative efforts to reimagine teaching.
- We were also honored to receive one of eight inaugural grants to support schools as part of the Inspired Teaching, Exceptional Learning pilot—a collaboration of 20+ organizations and a dozen foundations around the country.

These grants enabled us to bolster our coaching model, develop rich new resources, improve our internal processes, and deepen our partnerships with educator teams at coaching sites. Together, this sets us up to scale the impact of our work in the years ahead.

We also grew in number this year, onboarding a half-dozen new coaches, all with current experience collaboratively teaching and leading teacher-powered schools. We engaged with expert advisors to fine tune strategies to deliver better coaching to teams. And we built a robust data infrastructure to be able to track progress and outcomes of our work in real time.

SPOTLIGHT: The Prism Challenge

Funded through the previously described Inspired Teaching, Exceptional Learning pilot, we launched *The Prism Challenge*, a new project that seeks to shift perspectives to see teacher roles through a new prism—reflecting the collective assets, knowledge, and experience within our educators.

After a competitive national application process where we received 17 applications, we chose districts and schools in Hopkins, MN; San Antonio, TX; and Montrose, CO.

Prism Challenge schools will receive deep support over the next three years to build shared leadership structures, use teacher teaming models, implement high quality learning instructional materials (HQIM), and build formal protections for school-level flexibility.



Teachers in San Antonio collaborating during the early “design” phase of The Prism Challenge



EE closed the 2025 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	\$903,444
Accounts Receivable	\$2,704,358*
Lease Right-of-Use Asset	\$41,214
Total Assets	\$3,649,016
Accounts Payable and Accrued PTO	\$30,490
Operating Lease Liability	\$41,214
Total Liabilities	\$71,704
Total Net Assets	\$3,577,312
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$3,649,016

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

Statement of Activity

Unrestricted for FY 2025

Foundation Grants (received and revenue recognized)	\$1,569,339
Individual Donations	\$2,694
Earned Revenue	\$45,850
Interest and Other Income	\$18,318
Total Revenue	\$1,636,200
Team Compensation and Benefits	\$636,288
Sub-grant to Partner Organization	\$500,000
Contractors	\$217,924
Professional Services	\$21,765
Event Hosting Expenses	\$137,273
Occupancy	\$21,850
Other Program Expenses	\$113,916
Total Expenses	\$1,649,016
Net Operating Income	\$-12,815

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

Angeles Scougall

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Chris Ghery and Alex Vitrella

Civic Affairs Trust

David Dugger and Annemarie
Toebosch

Dennis Vitrella

Great Minnesota Schools

Hannah and Lars Esdal

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John and Denise Graves Foundation

John Portz

Labrador Foundation

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Margulf Foundation

Mike Sullivan

Minneapolis Foundation

Natalee and Keith Johnson

NewSchools Venture Fund

Nora Whalen and Ben Goldfarb

Robertson Foundation

TeachPlus

Tim Penny

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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