



# Whole Child, Student-Centered Learning

## A Push for Schools to Prioritize the Whole Child.

Engaging and supporting the whole child—including their social, emotional, cognitive, and academic growth—is critical to success in school and in life. Teach Plus Teacher Leaders led efforts from the schoolhouse to the Statehouse to ensure that schools have the information, resources, and professional learning opportunities necessary to meet the needs of the whole child, based on the science of learning.

### TEXAS

Teach Plus Teacher Leaders' policy brief, "The Mental Health Equation," resonated with state lawmakers, who passed legislation based on its recommendations. The findings in the brief were based on a statewide survey of Texas educators on whether they had children in their classes who had experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), and whether they thought they needed training to ensure those students could thrive. In the brief and through testimony and op-eds, Teach Plus Teacher Leaders advocated for all teachers to receive training in trauma-informed instruction practices.



*"I am a teacher, but I am also a first responder to my students' mental health. However, what about the teachers who are not trained to understand students' mental health problems? We must ensure that teachers are trained in trauma-informed strategies so they are better equipped to help their students."*

—Teach Plus Policy Fellow Travon Jefferson, Houston, Texas.

## COLORADO

Teach Plus Teacher Leaders have long recognized that Colorado's youngest learners of color, in grades K-3, were being disproportionately impacted by expulsions and suspensions. Teach Plus Teacher Leaders culminated years of advocacy and relationship-building across urban and rural schools to influence and shape the passage of legislation to limit the expulsion and suspension of students in the early grades and to make discipline practices more equitable for such students. Then, pivoting to a strategy to ensure that students and families are well-equipped to thrive under the new law, Teach Plus Teacher Leaders developed bilingual resources to help families understand the law and become better-informed advocates for their children.



*"As a teacher, I know that education reform does not need to look like more standards, tests, and measurements. Instead, education reform requires the social emotional supports to help children reach their greatest potential in all areas of their lives."*

—Teach Plus Policy Fellow Paige Dulaney, Northeast Colorado.

