

Moving the Needle on the Equity Focus Areas

Teach Plus works to break down barriers in five core equity focus areas—all of which have been more important than ever during the COVID pandemic. Teach Plus is also focused on school finance equity, advocating to increase resources, and ensuring equitable funding for schools.

Teacher Preparation, Development, and Leadership

Recruitment and Retention of a Diverse Workforce

Whole Child, Student-Centered Learning

Rigorous Curricula, High Standards, and Meaningful Accountability

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

In 2020, Teach Plus teacher leaders took to op-ed pages, social media, and Zoom to advocate for and lead change from the classroom to the Capitol. Responding to teachers' reports of widening opportunity gaps for low-income students and students of color, Teach Plus launched a campaign to advocate for stimulus funding to stabilize K-12 education funding, close the digital divide, and protect early education and childcare. In this work, Teach Plus and Teach Plus teacher leaders pursued multiple advocacy pathways, including writing letters to Congress, meeting with Congressional staff, and participating in coalitions.

Following the election, Teach Plus President and CEO Roberto Rodríguez was invited to serve on the Biden-Harris Education Agency Review Team, representing teachers' voices in the conversation about the direction of the new administration. Teach Plus presented its Federal Policy Agenda to the transition team, and shared it with Members of Congress. At the same time, Teach Plus teacher leaders advocated in their state capitals on the same core issues.



"The lack of connectivity has caused significant learning gaps and losses in my area even before the pandemic and it is much worse now. The digital divide is keeping thousands of students across Mississippi from continuing their education during the pandemic." —Teach Plus Policy Fellow Alexandra Melnick, Leland, Mississippi, in the Clarion Ledger.

IN CALIFORNIA, Teach Plus Board Member and Policy Fellowship alumna Bootsie Battle-Holt and teacher leader Al Rabanera served as co-authors with Ed Trust-West of the "Pathway to Equitable Math Instruction" toolkit.

IN INDIANA, Teach Plus teacher leaders helped to advocate for the successful passage of a bill with a provision for the Indiana Department of Education to publicly report teacher vacancies data alongside other teacher supply and demand data.

IN TEXAS, Teach Plus teacher leaders spearheaded a statewide campaign with the Texas Impact Network to encourage districts to apply for the Teacher Incentive Allotment (TIA), which provides districts with funding to adopt strategic compensation systems to retain outstanding teachers, especially in the highest-need districts. As a result, more than 700 districts have indicated their intent to apply for TIA funds.

Teacher Preparation, Development, and Leadership

2020 was a year that highlighted the central, pivotal role of the teacher. We saw teachers rise to the challenge and begin to reinvent their profession. Teach Plus teacher leaders advocated to preserve and improve teacher preparation, and led professional learning in their schools and districts. They advocated to include high-leverage content in teacher preparation and maintain a high bar for educator preparation programs and for teacher licensure.

IN CALIFORNIA, Teach Plus teacher leaders successfully advocated to preserve licensure requirements measuring candidates' proficiency in reading instruction.

IN NEW MEXICO, the Public Education Department agreed to Teach Plus teacher leaders' proposal to create a position to oversee and facilitate teacher professional learning across the state.

IN INDIANA, Teach Plus teacher leaders successfully advocated for the passage of legislation requiring teacher preparation programs across the state to incorporate trauma-informed instruction into their curricula. As a result, new teachers across Indiana will be prepared to identify and support students in their classrooms who have experienced trauma. To complement this advocacy effort, Teach Plus teacher leaders published a brief, *"Preparing New Teachers for the Classroom: A Vision for Social and Emotional Learning in Indiana,"* highlighting their recommendations for teacher preparation programs working to implement the new legislation.

IN TEXAS, the Teach Plus teacher leaders' advocacy led to the state maintaining a high bar for licensure, while adding a measure of student growth to the accountability system for teacher preparation programs in the state.

Teach Plus is continuing to champion school-based, distributed leadership. **In Texas,** Teach Plus is supporting teacher leadership in Harmony Public Schools' 58 schools across the state, providing coaching support to eight Assistant Area Superintendents, more than 60 principals and deans, and more than 200 teacher leaders leading their peers through collaborative inquiry cycles in professional learning communities. Ninety-two percent of project participants incorporated new strategies and skills in exercising teacher leadership as a result of working with Teach Plus.



"I see three key challenges for new teachers: the lack of practice with 'real life' lesson planning; an absence of understanding of assessment; and an unpreparedness for dealing with the social-emotional landscape of the public school classroom."—

Teach Plus Policy Fellow Brandi Sapp, Goshen, Indiana, in the South Bend Tribune.



"Not only are you [the Public Education Department] improving your professional-learning opportunities and delivery, but you have committed to creating a director of professional learning position in the department, as well as being interested in constructing a website around teacher training. As part of the Teach Plus Fellows team that urged you to do so, I am grateful."—Teach Plus Policy Fellow Kelly Pearce, Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the Albuquerque Journal.

High-Quality Early Childhood Education

Teach Plus teacher leaders are advocating to improve quality and access to early childhood education across our regions and in the nation's capital, including funding high-quality early childhood seats, federal funds to stabilize the early learning and childcare sector, kindergarten readiness, and early literacy instruction.

Teach Plus Illinois Early Childhood Educator Fellows have testified before Governor J.B. Pritzker's Early Childhood Funding Commission and have collaborated with the Illinois Early Learning Council and Professional Development Advisory Council. Teach Plus teacher leaders also supported the implementation of the Kindergarten Individual Development Survey (KIDS) in an effort to track student progress and enable teachers to develop interventions to address individual learning needs well before formal statewide assessments begin in third grade. As part of the **Kindergarten Readiness Innovator** program, 12 early childhood educators in Illinois will tackle incorporating play in kindergarten, strengthening family engagement, and improving collaboration between preschools and kindergarten.



"The first day of [kindergarten] is usually filled with so many emotions—excitement, nervousness, and hope. [W]hen I looked at the faces on my screen on the first day of school, I knew that I would have to build those authentic opportunities very differently this year."—Teach Plus Early Childhood Educator Policy Fellow Margi Bhansali, Chicago, Illinois, in What's the Plus.



"Children enter kindergarten with a wide range of skills and experiences. In a single classroom, a kindergarten teacher may have a child who is already reading and a child who does not know what letters are...Instead of asking if our children are ready for Kindergarten, maybe we should be asking if every Kindergarten classroom is ready for them."—Teach Plus Early Childhood Educator Policy Fellow Erin Jackle, Elgin, Illinois, in What's the Plus.

