TEACH +PLUS

IMPACT REPORT

FROM TEACHER LEADERSHIP TO STUDENT IMPACT

Driving Change for Pennsylvania Students



2025 – 2026

TEACH PLUS

Impact Report
2025 – 2026

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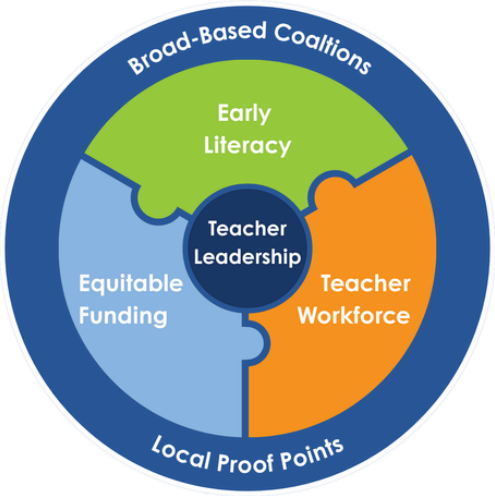


LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Laura Boyce

At Teach Plus Pennsylvania, **our big goal is to make Pennsylvania the fastest-improving state in the country in 4th grade reading by 2035**. To advance this goal, our policy and practice programs, along with our coalitions, work to improve early literacy instruction, strengthen the teacher workforce, and advance equitable funding, with teacher leadership at the heart of all three.



In 2025 – 2026, we launched two new programs (the BEAM Network and the Literacy Forward Network) and increased the visibility of our organization and coalitions across the commonwealth. Most importantly, our impact grew, with significant policy wins and documented successes in schools:

- **Early literacy**: Our coalition advocacy helped secure Act 47, Pennsylvania's first comprehensive early literacy law.
- **Teacher workforce**: We increased funding for student teacher stipends to $40 million, and an external evaluation of the Philadelphia Affinity Group Network documented higher retention for participating teachers.
- **Equitable funding**: Our Policy Fellows documented how adequacy funding is benefiting schools and students, and we secured the second and third installments of adequacy funding.

We have much to celebrate, but considerable work remains. Only one in three Pennsylvania 4th graders scored at or above proficient in reading on the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress. That reality gives urgency to our work.

In 2026 – 2027, we will build on this progress as we launch Project TEAM, a new strategic staffing pilot in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, and Public Impact. As we work to achieve ambitious goals for our programs and coalitions, teachers' expertise will continue to guide us. Thank you for your partnership and belief in what teachers can accomplish for Pennsylvania's students. I look forward to all we will achieve together.

Warmly,
Laura Boyce
Executive Director

EARLY LITERACY

Two-thirds of Pennsylvania's 4th graders scored below proficient in reading on the *2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Addressing this challenge requires evidence-based reading instruction, strong state policy, and teachers prepared to turn that policy into effective classroom practice.

Literacy Forward Network

The Literacy Forward Network launched in early 2026, bringing teachers from three southwestern Pennsylvania school districts—Woodland Hills School District, Gateway School District, and Jeannette City Schools—together to **strengthen reading instruction through teacher-led professional learning**. Teacher leaders began structured literacy coursework through Carlow University, while Teach Plus Pennsylvania led monthly cohort meetings and ongoing coaching. Together, these opportunities helped teachers deepen their expertise, learn from one another, and prepare to share their knowledge with colleagues.

End-of-year survey feedback reflected a strong sense of belonging and greater confidence in supporting colleagues and improving student outcomes. At a June convening, teacher leaders and school leaders from all three districts developed and shared plans to launch professional learning communities in fall 2026, extending that learning to colleagues across their districts.

In 2026 – 2027, the network will work with school and district leaders to implement and assess professional learning communities, structured literacy routines, and teacher leadership development across partner schools, using data to guide improvements.



Teach Plus teacher leaders felt more prepared to support their colleagues

100%

Teach Plus teacher leaders changed their approach to curriculum and instructional planning.

100%





EARLY LITERACY

> [Teach Plus Pennsylvania] is aligned with the movement that believes all our children deserve the opportunity to learn how to read well.
>
> Dr. Kymyona Burk
> Former MS State Literacy Lead







Secured for early literacy implementation

$20 MILLION

Pennsyvlania Literacy Coalition

Founded and led by Teach Plus Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Literacy Coalition brings together more than 90 organizations to advance policies that help every child learn to read.

Together, **we helped secure Act 47 of 2025, Pennsylvania's first comprehensive early literacy law.** The law requires evidence-based reading curricula, teacher training, universal screening in kindergarten through 3rd grade, and targeted support for struggling readers. By bringing teacher expertise, parent perspectives, and research to policymakers through legislative meetings and coordinated advocacy, the coalition helped build support for its passage.

Coalition advocacy also helped secure $20 million across two state budget cycles to support implementation. Through its *Proof Points: Lessons from Pennsylvania School Districts Driving Literacy Growth* report and legislative school visits, the coalition highlighted effective reading instruction and advanced efforts to align teacher certification with the science of reading. At the March 2026 Pennsylvania Literacy Summit & Day of Action, more than 150 advocates participated in over 60 legislative meetings to sustain that progress.

> We must ensure every teacher has the knowledge, tools, and support to deliver effective reading instruction, and every child has the opportunity to become a confident, capable reader.
>
> Rachael Garnick
> Director, Pennsylvania Literacy Coalition



TEACHER WORKFORCE



Teacher quality is the most important in-school factor affecting student achievement. To make Pennsylvania the fastest-improving state in 4th grade reading, we must help aspiring teachers get the preparation they need and keep excellent teachers in our classrooms. Teach Plus Pennsylvania advances both priorities: Our advocacy helped secure $40 million for student teacher stipends and a $10 million increase for Grow PA scholarships in the fiscal year 2027 state budget, making teacher preparation more affordable, while our affinity networks strengthened the professional support, belonging, and leadership opportunities that help teachers of color thrive and stay.

Philadelphia Affinity Group Network

The Philadelphia Affinity Group Network is a Teach Plus Pennsylvania initiative focused on retaining educators of color by fostering community, elevating teacher voices, and developing leadership. Teach Plus Pennsylvania provides coaching and support to 29 affinity groups serving School District of Philadelphia and charter school educators. These groups center the experiences of educators of color while welcoming K–12 educators who support the network's mission.

In 2025 – 2026, **the network grew to more than 300 educators**, added facilitator mentorship, and brought participants together for October and June convenings. These opportunities helped educators build relationships and support one another across schools.

Evaluation and survey results reflected meaningful gains: For the second year in a row, Philadelphia Affinity Group Network educators were retained in Philadelphia at higher rates than educators who did not participate in the network. An external evaluation found that 94 percent of the 2024 – 2025 cohort returned to education positions in Philadelphia the following year. Additionally, participants' sense of belonging rose from 47 to 94 percent, while voice and empowerment increased from 55 to 96 percent.





TEACHER WORKFORCE



Belonging, Empowerment, and Mentorship Network

The Belonging, Empowerment, and Mentorship (BEAM) Network is a new Teach Plus Pennsylvania initiative, launched in early 2026, that aims to increase teacher retention in southwestern Pennsylvania through affinity groups that strengthen belonging, empowerment, and connection. Modeled on the Philadelphia Affinity Group Network, BEAM creates spaces where educators of color can support one another and build relationships that help sustain their careers.

In 2025 – 2026, 15 teacher facilitators were recruited and selected through a rigorous process. Throughout the spring of 2026, through Teach Plus Pennsylvania coaching and professional learning, these leaders developed the skills and relationships to support and lead their groups.

During spring 2026, these leaders developed the skills and relationships to support and lead their groups through Teach Plus Pennsylvania coaching and professional learning. June's Freedom to Thrive celebration brought educators and partners together around a shared commitment to belonging. By June 30, **BEAM had received 120 completed participant interest forms**, demonstrating early demand ahead of the launch of facilitator-led groups across the region in 2026 – 2027.



TEACHER WORKFORCE





Secured for student teacher stipends in the fiscal year 2027 PA state budget

$40 MILLION

PA Needs Teachers

PA Needs Teachers is a statewide coalition co-led by Teach Plus Pennsylvania and the National Center on Education and the Economy to strengthen teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. The coalition's advocacy helped secure **$40 million for student teacher stipends** and an additional $10 million for the Grow PA scholarships in the FY27 state budget, making it more affordable for aspiring teachers to earn their degrees and certification.

In fall 2025, the coalition brought **more than 140 stakeholders together at its fourth annual Summit to Reimagine Teaching.** Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellows advanced this work through their report, *Reimagining Teaching: How Strategic Staffing Can Empower Teachers and Accelerate Learning in PA*, sharing recommendations through a legislative hearing, briefing, and press conference.

Across four regional roundtables, legislators and community leaders examined local workforce challenges. In spring 2026, more than 70 advocates—including three groups of high school students aspiring to become teachers—brought those concerns to the Capitol, urging policymakers to strengthen pathways into teaching and help excellent teachers build lasting careers.



EQUITABLE FUNDING



Recurring adequacy funding secured over the past three years

$1.5 BILLION+

PA Schools Work

PA Schools Work is a statewide coalition working to ensure every public school has the resources students need to succeed. A governing member since 2020, Teach Plus Pennsylvania leads its Government Relations Committee, helping guide legislative advocacy.

During a prolonged budget impasse, the coalition mobilized educators, families, students, and advocates to press for continued investment in underfunded schools. The fiscal year 2026 budget, passed in November 2025, included **$565 million in additional adequacy and tax equity funding.**

Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellows published a report examining the impact of adequacy funding, while coalition research further highlighted the impacts of the first two rounds of adequacy funding, which reached 348 districts serving nearly 1.5 million students. These collective efforts contributed to a third installment of **$565 million in statewide adequacy and tax equity funding in the fiscal year 2027 budget, closing one-third of the statewide $4.8 billion adequacy gap**.

Securing Recurring School Funding in Philadelphia

Teach Plus Pennsylvania took its school funding advocacy to the local level in Philadelphia in spring 2026. Following the announcement of 340 school-based staffing cuts by the School District of Philadelphia due to a structural budget deficit, Teach Plus Pennsylvania joined advocacy and union partners in working to identify recurring local funding to reverse the cuts. After organizing rallies, press conferences, legislative meetings, and teacher testimony, an informal coalition **secured commitments from a majority of City Council members to provide recurring funding to save the 340 educator positions**.



POLICY FELLOWSHIP



Policy Fellows felt ready to influence change

100%

From Classroom Experience to Statewide Influence

The Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellowship equips teachers to shape education policy through training, research, and advocacy while remaining in the classroom. Policy Fellows work across five areas:

> "Teach Plus Pennsylvania provided me with a wealth of knowledge, experience, and confidence in policy and advocacy...areas that affect our classrooms but are often overlooked."
>
> Christina Crews
> Senior Policy Fellow
> Palisades School District



Early Childhood Education | Equitable Funding | Reimagining the Teaching Role | Advancing the Science of Reading | Expaning and Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline

During 2025 – 2026, 45 Policy Fellows and Senior Policy Fellows met with more than 100 legislators and policy leaders, published three reports and 24 op-eds, participated in six legislative briefings and hearings, spoke at 10 press conferences and rallies, and mobilized hundreds of school funding advocates.

Policy Fellows in the Equitable Funding working group published *Closing the Gap: Real-World Returns on Pennsylvania's Adequacy Funding*, which showed how districts and charter schools are using state investments to support students. One Governor's Office staffer shared, "*We love the adequacy report from Teach Plus and are using it all the time.*"

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE NATIONAL STAGE

How 25 years of teaching, mentorship, and advocacy brought Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellowship alumnus Leon Smith into the national spotlight.

In April 2026, Leon Smith was named National Teacher of the Year, bringing national recognition to a Pennsylvania educator whose influence extends far beyond his classroom. For Teach Plus Pennsylvania, the honor also celebrates a teacher leader who has spent decades investing in students and advocating for the future of the teaching profession.



LEON SMITH
2026 National Teacher of the Year

Becoming an Example

The son of two educators, Leon grew up understanding the importance of teaching. But it was an experience in high school that helped him envision his own future. When a Black male student teacher entered his classroom, Leon saw a possibility he had rarely encountered in his own education.

"*If I become a teacher, I want to be the example I never had*," he later recalled.

For 25 years, Leon has worked to become that example at Haverford High School. Teaching AP U.S. History and AP African American Studies, he combines high expectations with care, helping students find their voices and recognize their potential. He helped introduce AP African American Studies in response to student interest and established an Educators Rising chapter to encourage young people to consider careers in teaching.

A Voice Beyond the Classroom

Leon's commitment to students has also shaped his advocacy for educators. **As a 2022 – 2023 Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellow and 2023 – 2024 Senior Policy Fellow,** he championed student teacher stipends, stronger pathways into the profession, and policies that support teacher recruitment and retention. Today, he continues that work as a member of Teach Plus Pennsylvania's Regional Advisory Board.

> "Teach Plus opened my eyes to the positive impact teachers can have outside of the classroom."
>
> Leon Smith
> Alum, Policy Fellowship

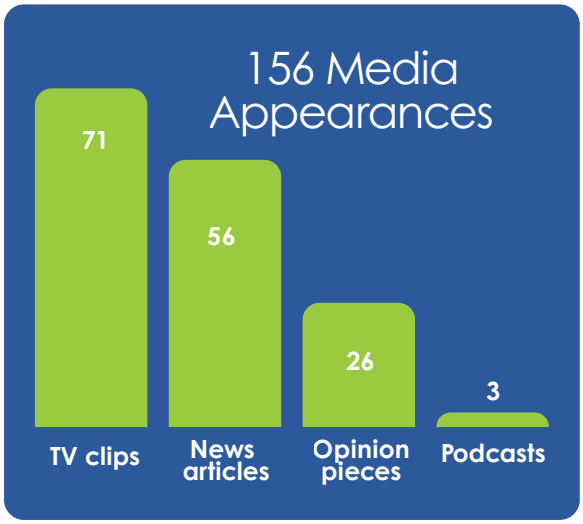


Now, as National Teacher of the Year, Leon has an opportunity to bring his experience and advocacy to audiences across the country. His journey demonstrates the far-reaching influence of teacher leaders—and the importance of ensuring that educators have a voice in shaping the future of public education.

IN THE MEDIA

Elevating Teacher Voices and Shaping the Conversation

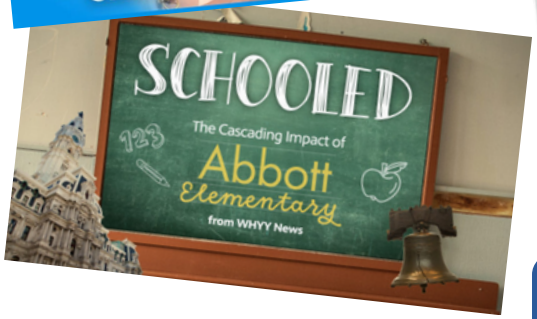
In 2025 – 2026, Teach Plus Pennsylvania and our teacher leaders brought educator voices into the public conversation across Pennsylvania and beyond. Through **news stories, opinion pieces, broadcast interviews, and podcasts**, we helped spotlight both the challenges facing our schools and the solutions educators know can make a difference.

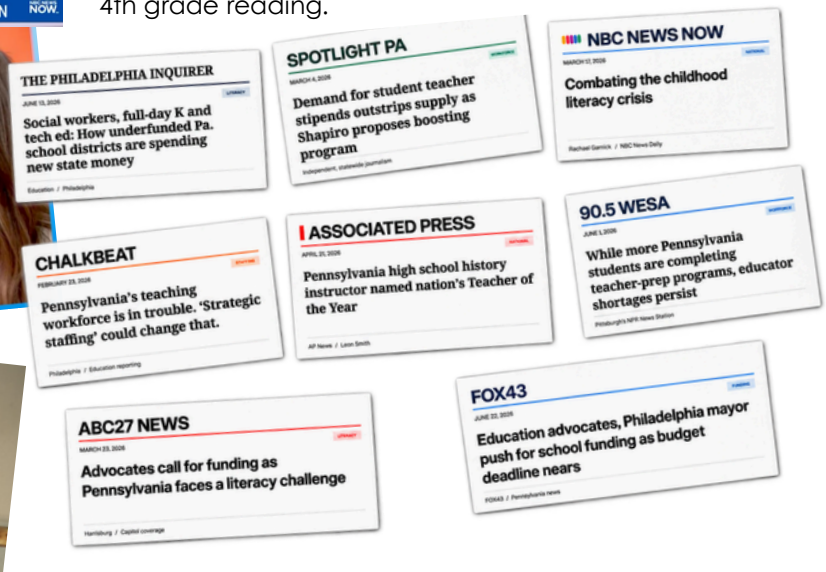




From early literacy and school funding to teacher preparation and retention, our media presence helped turn classroom expertise into public understanding and policy momentum. Each story, segment, and byline helped build support for our big goal: making Pennsylvania the fastest-improving state in the nation in 4th grade reading.







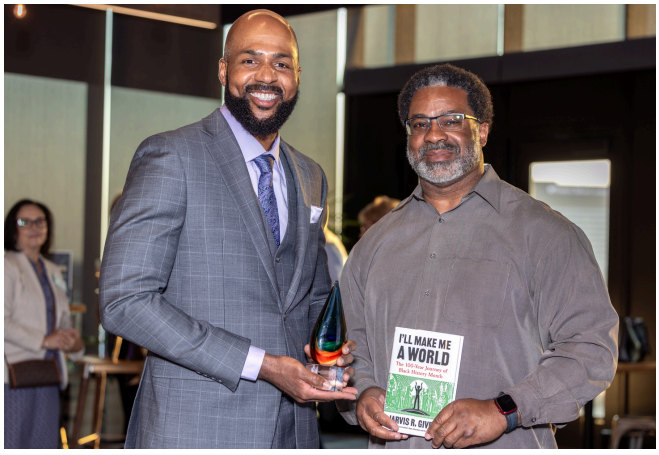
@TeachPlusPA
@teach-plus-pennsylvania
@TeachPlusPA
@TeachPlusPA

EMPOWERED TO LEAD, DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

In April 2026, more than 170 education supporters gathered in Philadelphia for Teach Plus Pennsylvania's **second annual Empowered to Lead, Driven to Succeed celebration**. The evening honored the educators, partners, and supporters working to strengthen public education across the commonwealth.



A highlight of the celebration was the presentation of the Education Champion Award to newly named National Teacher of the Year Leon Smith, a Teach Plus Pennsylvania Policy Fellowship alumnus and Regional Advisory Board member. Presented by Sharif El-Mekki, CEO of The Center for Black Educator Development, the award recognized Leon's leadership and commitment to elevating educator voices.



Raised through the 2026 Empowered to Lead, Driven to Succeed celebration

$150,000





FINANCIAL STATEMENT

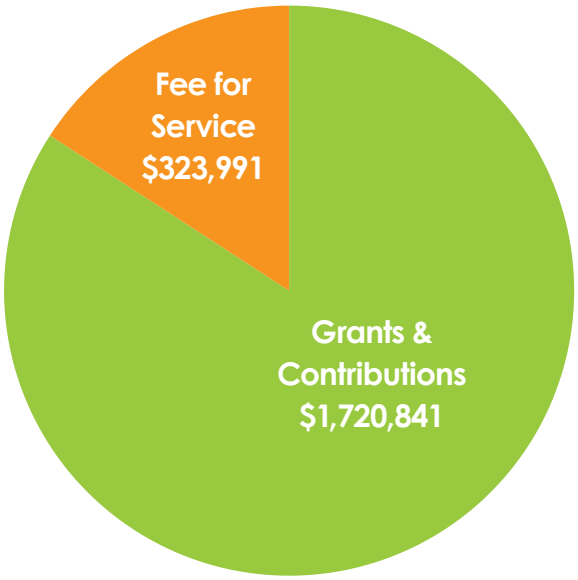
Donors & Funders*

- Anonymous
- Aramark
- Berstein Family Foundation
- Center for Black Educator Development
- City Fund
- Duane Morris
- Grable Foundation
- Heinz Endowments
- Hillman Family Foundations
- JKJ
- McElhattan Foundation
- Morgan Lewis
- Nancy Scharff
- National Center on Education and the Economy
- Neubauer Family Foundation
- Spring Point Partners
- Stone Foundation
- Teach for America
- William Penn Foundation

**Fiscal year ended June 30, 2026; gifts are over $10,000.*

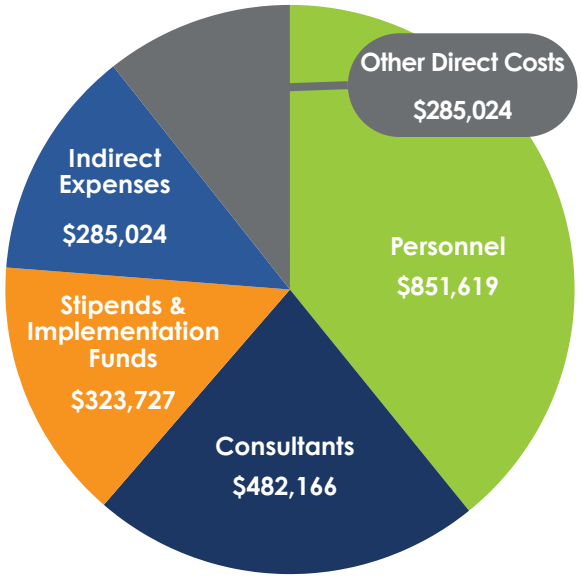
Revenue

$2,044,832



Expenses**

$2,174,238



Programs

BEAM Network
Literacy Forward Network
PA Teacher Network
Pennsylvania Policy Fellowship
Philadelphia Affinity Group Network
Project TEAM

Coalitions

PA Needs Teachers
PA Schools Work
Pennslyvania Literacy Coalition

***This fiscal year was shortened to nine months (October 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026) to align the program and fiscal years across all Teach Plus states. Reserves and multiyear grants secured before fiscal year 2026 are not included.*

FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD



Nancy Scharff

Dear Supporters of Teach Plus Pennsylvania,

First, thank you to our teacher leaders whose powerful advocacy and program work are detailed in these pages. You are the force for strengthening education in Pennsylvania. And thank you to our supporters who are helping Pennsylvania become the fastest-improving state in the nation in 4th grade reading by 2035.

Teach Plus Pennsylvania is driving change in three critical areas – equitable funding, teacher workforce, and early literacy. Established research and our own teacher leaders' on-the-ground experience tell us what needs to be done—and Teach Plus Pennsylvania is doing it! This year, Teach Plus Pennsylvania has achieved the following:

- Increased state-wide school funding
- Strengthened teacher preparation and ongoing support that enables teachers to stay in the field
- Aligned literacy instruction with the research

We couldn't be prouder or more hopeful about the work Teach Plus Pennsylvania is doing to improve 4th grade reading in Pennsylvania. With your continued support, we'll keep moving ahead!

With gratitude,
Nancy Scharff
Advisory Board Chair

Mission

Our mission is to empower excellent, experienced, and diverse teachers to take leadership over key policy and practice issues that advance equity, opportunity, and student success.

Regional Advisory Board


Laura Boyce


Dr. Donna L. Ervin

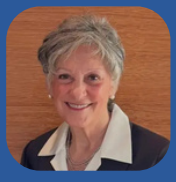

Chris Havener


Charles Hopkins


Phil Jaurigue


Tim Malarkey


Dr. Payal Mital


Rep. Allyson Schwartz


Leon Smith


Laura Sosik


Dr. Maria Toglia


Ryan Unger

TEACH +PLUS

Impact Report
2025 - 2026

TEACHER LEADERSHIP FOR STUDENT SUCCESS



Our Staff

Laura Boyce

Sharaé Curd

Mal Davis

Stacie Dow

Karen Drexler

Michelle Gainer

Rachael Garnick

Liz Halfhill

Dr. Aaron Johnson

Michael McCarron

Emily Sagor

Celeste Voyer

Our Website

www.teachplus.org/PA