

Learning Reimagined: The Next Chapter

Reflecting on
philanthropy's role in the
future of education equity



Executive Summary

In partnership with IDEO.org, we revisited and expanded upon [research we jointly conducted in 2020](#) to explore educational disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This updated report integrates insights from over 65 educators, policymakers and advocates to guide a more resilient and equitable future for learning. Grounded in a systems-led approach, this report considers what is required on an individual, community and systems level to bring about change. In addition, the research underscores how emerging forces such as AI, climate change and mental health are influencing and impacting learning systems.

This report is organized into four key insight and action areas for the sector.

1. Elevate proximate leaders as decision-makers

Leaders that reflect the identities of their communities are more than knowledge holders. It's essential to shift power and resources in their direction. Doing so requires putting new ways of work into action that underscore trust in proximate leaders and that elevate young people to be included at the forefront of change.

2. Embrace learning that builds on and supports local, cultural nuance

The stronghold of Western norms define global education standards. The field urgently needs to embrace localization and cultural nuance. Doing so requires reimagining learning outcomes and measurement based on the lived realities of communities, while ensuring that curricula, educational standards and evaluation benchmarks prioritize cultural contexts.

3. Create enduring infrastructure to safeguard movements

Sustained and structural commitment to decolonizing our learning systems is necessary to ensure continued, tangible progress towards equity. Doing so requires shifting from baseline efforts towards brave new ways of centering racial, gender and economic equity. Additionally, it requires prioritizing sector-wide, global collaboration while honoring the place-based nuances of how equity is experienced and understood.

4. Build equitable learning systems to meet the moment

As it's often said, change is the only constant. To thrive, we must develop our muscles to adapt quickly to what emerges. AI, climate change and mental health are currently three major forces that are disrupting learning systems. Building awareness of these forces—how they are evolving, at what pace and in which directions—we invite the field to consider and be mindful of how they can be interwoven and integrated into efforts to advance equity within education.

We conclude the report by outlining paths towards accelerated progress by offering mindsets and considerations for the field. In addition, we share examples of intentional actions carried out by partner organizations together with reflections and learnings as they pertain to the themes of this report. We hope these insights inspire mindset shifts and joint actions necessary for building more equitable learning systems and accelerating progress for all learners.



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Background

In March 2020, learning faced an abrupt halt, triggering rapid shifts in teaching methods and raising fundamental questions about the global learning landscape.

In response, we joined forces with IDEO in August 2020 to explore emerging disruptions and envision the future of learning through **Learning Reimagined: Radical Thinking for Equitable Futures**. This report examined societal, technological and communal trends, emphasizing themes like technology and mental health's impact on educational advancement.

Four years later, in collaboration with IDEO.org, we revisited our insights, engaging 65+ experts—including educators, academics, policymakers, advocates, implementers and practitioners—to chart a more resilient path forward. This renewed research highlighted ongoing challenges and opportunities and emphasized the importance of centering diverse perspectives and solutions to sustain positive change.

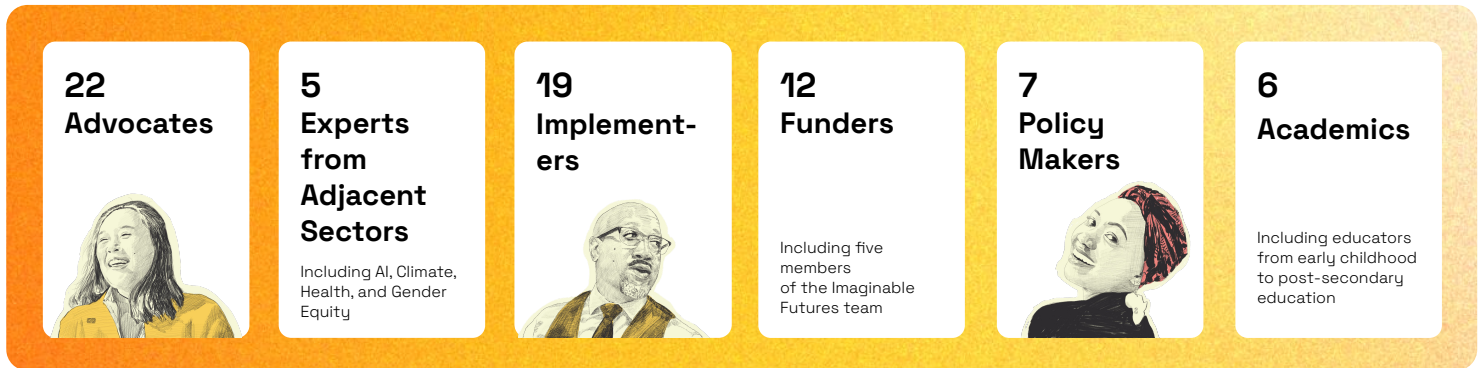
Our ultimate goal in sharing these learnings is to build more resilient and responsive learning systems. We hope this serves as an invitation to rally peer funders and education leaders around how to impactfully redistribute power, re-evaluate standards of success and collaborate more effectively. In these shared efforts, we can responsibly center equity and elevate proximate leaders.



Methodology

Research participants

IDEO.org engaged 65+ participants including educators, funders, policymakers, academics, implementers and advocates across the U.S., Brazil, Kenya—with a focus on Black, Brown and Indigenous perspectives. Additionally, IDEO.org engaged the Imaginable Futures team about regional portfolios and priorities.



Research approach

IDEO.org used qualitative, semi-structured interviews to allow for guided conversation that were flexible enough to accommodate additional, emerging themes and ideas. During interviews, futuring activities were used to encourage participants to imagine ideal, hopeful versions of equitable learning systems and explain what would need to be true to support those futures. The qualitative interviews were further supplemented with a global survey and comprehensive desk research.

INTERVIEWS

Targeted Dialogue

Participant-specific, targeted discussion guides for one-on-one interviews were instrumental in capturing the most important questions and framing conversations around key lines of inquiry.

Futuring Exercises

Mapping present day “signals” to identify future trends and key shifts in education. Grounding in data and statistics were used to envision plausible future scenarios.

DESK RESEARCH

Context & Inspiration

Primary research was complimented by an exploration of global trends in education and philanthropy. Case studies, analogous inspiration and targeted review of Imaginable Futures’ existing research were also used.

SURVEYS

Additional Perspective

Online surveys deepened the research by helping us reach out to a broader group of individuals in order to glean deeper insights into current trends in education.

Systems-led approach

In order to advance equity within learning, we believe in taking a systems-led approach that centers proximate leaders, fosters collaboration and redistributes power.

In this report, we organize our learnings and opportunities within different spheres of change happening at an individual, community and systems level. In addition, we review emerging forces such as mental health, climate and AI that are rapidly shifting the learning ecosystem as it stands today. Our hope is that funders and local education leaders can find inspiration within the following pages to continue shaping a global learning system that is rooted in equity, together.

INSIGHT 1 | INDIVIDUAL

Elevate proximate leaders as decision-makers

INSIGHT 2 | COMMUNITY

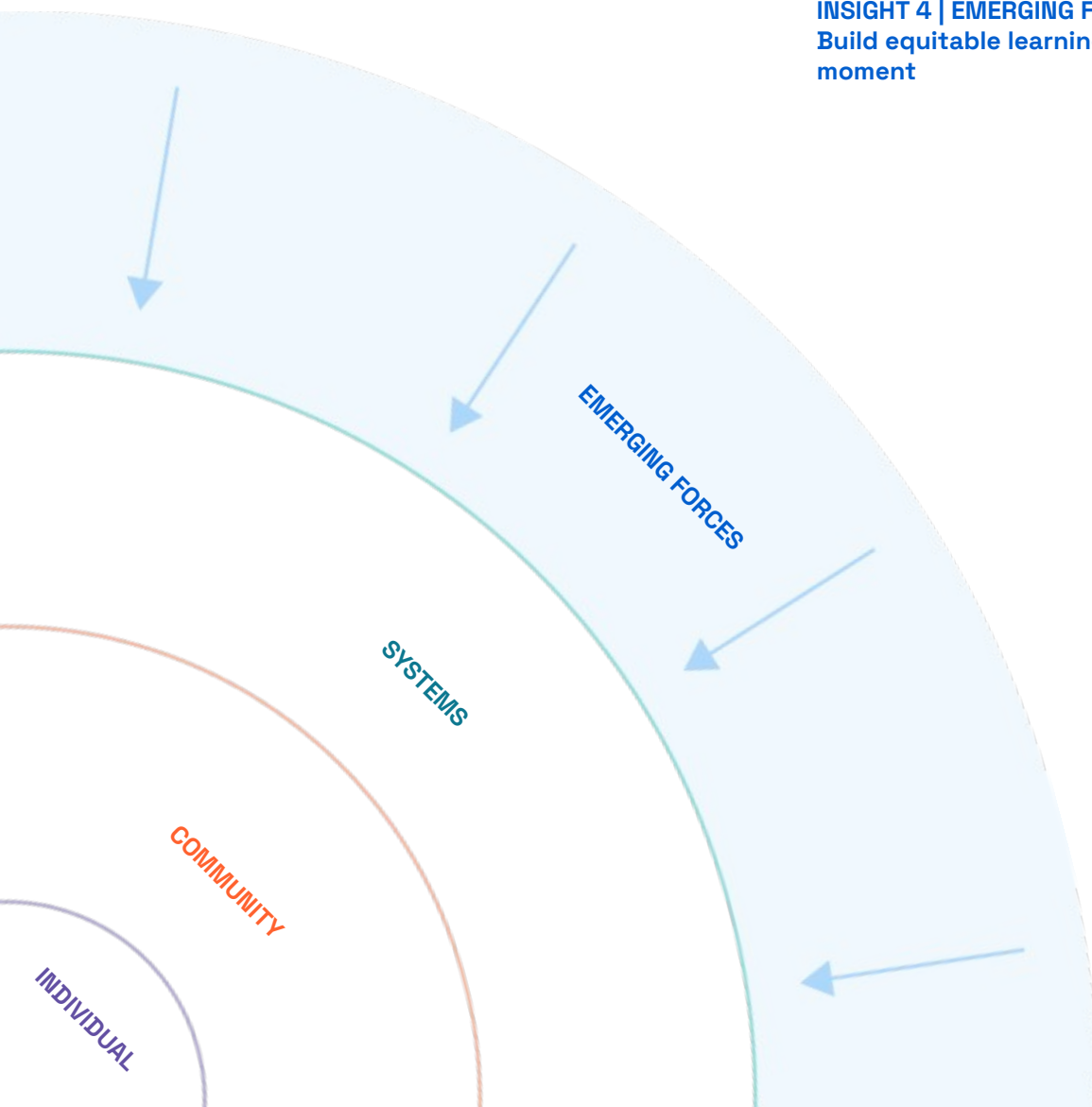
Embrace learning that builds on and supports local, cultural nuance

INSIGHT 3 | SYSTEMS

Create enduring infrastructure to safeguard progress

INSIGHT 4 | EMERGING FORCES

Build equitable learning systems to meet the moment



01 · AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Let's elevate proximate leaders as decision-makers

FROM Holding Knowledge → TO Holding Power



Reverence for proximate leaders' knowledge doesn't always translate into resourcing.

Most organizations led by proximate leaders experience a “reputation to resources” gap⁽¹⁾ where they are called upon to share their stories or champion their organizations' philosophy in public settings, but struggle to access necessary funding to implement those visions. This pattern of underfunding limits their capacity to be leaders and build power in the broader, surrounding ecosystem and leaves them consistently in a context of scarcity. Proximate leaders are critical to the movement. Without them, efforts to reimagine learning systems fail to be contextualized in the needs of the community and fail to tap into and elevate the abundance of assets and solutions that already exist.

The sector must champion proximate leaders as change agents—ensuring they have not just our attention but the critical resources needed to further their visions for learning equity.

“When I was working at a foundation, I found it was important to not just be focused on 'what grant will I make to get this money out the door?' Instead, it has to be about creating a different kind of space for proximate led nonprofit organizations to be supported, collaborate and advocate for the solutions they believe will work best. We're still learning as funders how to create that space. We talk a lot about trust based philanthropy and shifting power, but the actual practice of doing it is hard. The philanthropic sector needs to continue to deepen its commitment to embracing these changing practices.”

— Erin Ganju, Co-founder and Former CEO, Room to Read, Global



WHAT WILL IT TAKE

Evolve trust-based philanthropy from philosophy to action.

Amongst some funders, we are seeing shifts towards funding philosophies grounded in trust instead of control and compliance. However, there is an opportunity to move beyond philosophy into tactically supporting proximate leaders.⁽²⁾ Doing this requires confronting the conscious and unconscious biases that get in the way of recognizing and enabling communities as authentic authorities of their own experiences and their visions for the future.

“We must be aware [of our limits] before creating a framework to support or help a population. Otherwise, we're just measuring our assumptions of a population. We *have to* trust what communities have to say about the [people] they serve.”

— Dr. Zainab Okolo, Policy Change Advocate and Mental Health Expert, United States

Include young people at the forefront of change.

A long-held norm in philanthropy is to place value in reputation and expertise over new ideas that might come from young people.g. In education, young people are not only central to learning systems but are also experts in their own generational experiences. Inclusion will require creating opportunities to develop leadership skills, new systems for decision making and asking sector veterans to show up as listeners and learners, rather than always taking the lead.

“[Youth have introduced] a certain willingness that wasn't there in the past, in opening up spaces that are crucial to discuss inequity. Because Brazil is a place that was built on an intensely violent colonial occupation, and a slave economy for centuries, there is a contemporary struggle for previous generations in talking about this. Right now, we need [young people], partly because they insist we discuss issues of inequity in education.”

— Dr. Pedro de Moraes Garcez, Professor, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

Opportunities & Inspiration

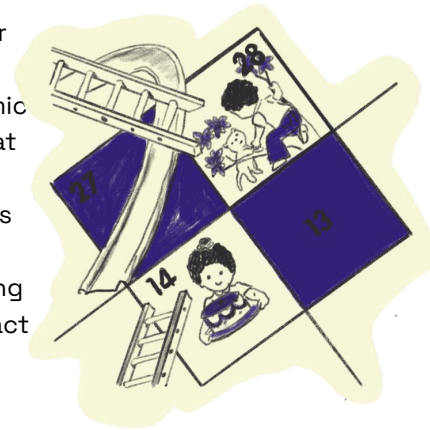
01. Build a sector-wide dashboard to track progress towards unrestricted funding going to proximate leaders.

There is growing recognition that proximate leaders are often systematically underfunded, which has led to efforts to increase unrestricted funding. What might it look like to build on this momentum by establishing bold goals and tracking progress using a dashboard to enhance sector-wide visibility and accountability? In Brazil, we [aspire to deploy at least 50%](#) of our financial resources towards Black and Indigenous-led organizations in Brazil to both support those historically underfunded as well as help signal to white-led foundations that we all must be bolder in our anti-racism commitments and more intentional around funding to those most proximate.



02. Launch programs that nurture the success and wellbeing of proximate leaders.

Investing in the leadership of those closest to the impact of change is crucial for sustaining educational equity. These leaders often work tirelessly to advance equitable change and earn community trust, but the depth and scope of systemic barriers can prevent them from building self care practices and social capital that can further nurture their leadership. We draw inspiration from [Promise Venture Studio](#) in the U.S. which unites leaders from historically marginalized communities to drive their collective power through peer mentoring, social capital and rejuvenation. By thinking beyond traditional leadership development programming to include restorative practices, Promise aims to accelerate and sustain the impact of equity-driven social ventures in early childhood.



03. Establish sector-wide norms to cede power to lived experts.

There are an increasing number of organizations that are shifting power to lived experts and creating mechanisms to bring marginalized voices to the table. One example includes the [Firelight Foundation](#), which builds youth resiliency in Kenya. Working with deeply embedded community-based organizations, they used community research and co-creation to build a community-led plan for youth development. The implementation now seeks to ensure that these interventions are effective, sustainable and ultimately owned by the community. Imagine a future where funders collaborate to establish sector-wide norms around engaging communities and shifting power.



WATCH OUTS

The burden to create change often falls on marginalized communities.

Proximate leaders pushing for more equitable systems are often the most impacted by systemic inequities. It is critical to create the conditions for them to do this work in a way that centers rest, joy and healing. It is important to also recognize that successful proximate leadership might look different than Western standards for leadership, and it is not the responsibility of proximate leaders to resolve or cater to that.

Let's embrace learning that builds on and supports local, cultural nuance

FROM Western Standards → TO Cultural Nuance



Today, global learning standards predominately reinforce Western norms and knowledge.

Whether related to Indigenous and Quilombola communities in Brazil, the colonial legacies in sub-Saharan Africa or the historical racial inequities in the US, there is a growing awareness and recognition⁽¹⁾ of the importance of culturally relevant education for marginalized communities. Globally, Black and Indigenous educators are advocating for culturally relevant curricula, culturally-sensitive evaluation standards and recognition of Indigenous knowledge in educational systems. That said, because the dimensions of equity that are most relevant vary from place to place, educators must be supported and empowered to localize curricula and infuse local nuance into teachings that encourage expansiveness and inclusivity.

If the sector supports Brown, Black and Indigenous educators and empowers them to redefine what great learning looks like, it can transform the experience of the next generation to come.

WHAT WILL IT TAKE

Integrate measurable outcomes with holistic learning goals.

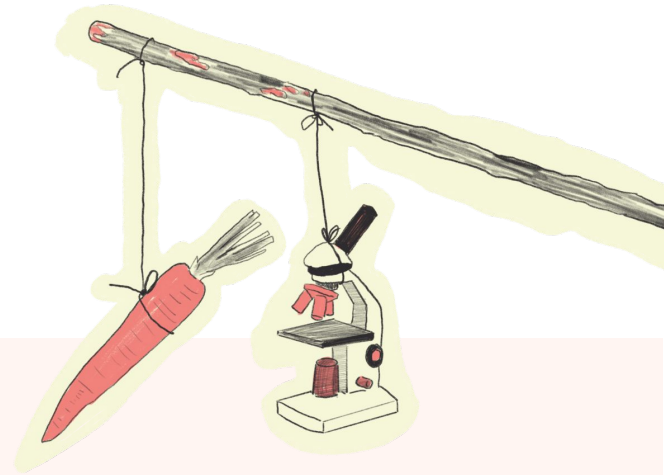
There is a tendency for funders and implementers to focus on traditional, measurable outcomes such as absenteeism and numeracy. While we know these outcomes are critical markers towards flourishing, it is crucial to recognize and rally around other dimensions that help learners thrive—from developing civic engagement to emotional intelligence to critical thinking and analysis. The field needs to expand its definition of flourishing beyond traditional outcomes and towards greater representation of learner realities and needs.

“We need schools and school systems that seek to understand what students want and need, rather than tell them what they should want and need.”

— **Dr. Matt Riggan, Co-Founder and Executive Director, The Workshop School, United States**

“Knowledge is global—but application must always be local. I’m in love with the idea of co-creation, because you get an outside perspective working hand in hand with local actors, making sure that the knowledge that is coming from outside can be applied to fit local circumstances. Then you have a wonderful combination of global knowledge and local action taking place.”

— **Dr. Dzingai Mutumbuka, Former Minister of Education, Zimbabwe**



Curricula, educational standards and evaluation benchmarks must prioritize cultural context.

Although organizations such as UNESCO provide a global framework for education policy, there’s a crucial need for frameworks that explicitly create space to incorporate racial, social and cultural nuances. Beyond culturally sensitive curricula, we need responsive evaluation benchmarks to celebrate diverse types of knowledge (e.g., Indigenous knowledge) and create a more inclusive education landscape.

“The three reservation schools are the lowest scoring schools in the state...so what does that tell me? The Western education system is not how we learn.”

— **Amy LaPointe Houghton, Indigenous Educator and Activist, United States**

Opportunities & Inspiration

01. Launch global initiatives that advance place-based approaches to equity in learning.

Empower place-based communities to contextualize learning-related SDGs and develop learning benchmarks that are responsive to how equity is understood in that particular context. As inspiration, see what [100 Resilient Cities](#) accomplished for the climate sector. Tie this type of approach with Possibly, tie this with a certification program that enables certified school districts to be eligible for fast track funding and support. Already, initiatives such as the [Life Skills Collaborative](#) in India and East Africa's [Assessment of Life Skills and Values \(ALiVE\)](#) are developing culturally relevant curricula, and in the case of ALiVE, the first African-led framework and toolkit for measuring socio-emotional learning.



02. Create initiatives that celebrate educators defining what great learning looks like in their contexts.

Launch programs that reward and elevate life-changing educators and researchers in education, while also compiling a library of their methods and philosophies that might inspire peers halfway around the world. For example, [Educate!](#), which works across Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya provides alternative pathways to learning that are not in a traditional school setting. Using approaches like bootcamps for out-of-school youth (with a focus on rural girls and young women) and employment-based classes in-school, the program aims to prepare youth to learn, earn and thrive in today's economy.



03. Set aside funds to support schools on Indigenous lands.

Dedicate monetary and intellectual resources to support the localization of school systems that serve Indigenous communities. Then, feed these learnings back into the mainstream systems, and ensure mainstream systems are learning from indigenous educators. We can draw inspiration from [Fundo Casa Socioambiental](#) in Brazil, which funds organizations to strengthen their schools' pedagogical projects, reinforce culture and and elicit more community participation in education.



WATCH OUTS

Avoid adding more to educators' already heavy workloads and ensure initiatives progress at the speed of trust.

Free resources are great, but there are already expectations for teachers to do mounds of invisible, unpaid work. Ensure that license to localize is accompanied by adequate changes in scheduling and workload to ensure wellbeing. Additionally, allow changes to happen at speed of trust, determined by the community—rather than funder timelines.

Let's create enduring infrastructure to safeguard movements

FROM Global Reckoning → TO Sustained & Structural Commitment



Enduring change relies on solid structural underpinnings; without them, progress is precarious.

The racial, social and public health reckonings of 2020 underscored the need to dismantle white supremacy and colonial legacies within our learning systems. In the ensuing backlash, schools have turned into battlegrounds for political agendas, placing heavy burdens on both teachers and students. In the U.S., a study found a 33% yearly increase in the number of books banned in schools, from the 2021-2022 to the 2022-2023 school year.⁽¹⁾ In Brazil, over 200 bills have been introduced since 2014 looking to ban gender “indoctrination” or “gender ideology” in Brazilian schools.⁽²⁾

By decolonizing the very infrastructure of philanthropic practices, the sector can ensure that education leaders have resources and advocates to safeguard the progress they’ve made—and aspire to make—to build equity within learning systems.

“We have advanced in terms of laws but we don’t reinforce the structures that influence these laws. Equity is something that is not well understood yet here. Many people think it has to do with equality. But equity further demands additional resources and attention. When kids get into college through affirmative action in Brazil, the work doesn’t stop there. A young Black woman in sciences needs a welcoming environment, to be invited as part of a study group, access to resources to ensure she won’t develop PTSD. We need a pedagogical proposal in which marginalized populations feel recognized, where teachers reaffirm the right for them to be in a place that was not built for them.”

— **Suelaine Carneiro, Sociologist, Educator, Writer, Anti-racist feminist and Director of Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra, Brazil**

WHAT WILL IT TAKE

Education leaders need to push past baseline efforts to unlock meaningful progress towards racial, gender and economic equity.

For gender equity, this means focusing on issues other than gender parity in school attendance, such as the need for gender-affirming content and investing in sexual reproductive health. When it comes to racial equity, the field needs critical thinking about power, privilege and oppression. Similarly, addressing economic justice in education requires addressing stark pay disparities that leave educators struggling financially.

“In the US, we observe significant disparities in opportunities for young people, ranging from the best to the worst. It can be challenging to reconcile these differences, especially when you consider that it boils down to the nation’s will and intention. To address this, we must remain focused and avoid getting sidetracked.”

— **Ronald Chaluian, Educator and Activist, United States**

Center collaboration while honoring the place-based nuances of how equity is understood and experienced.

It’s important to acknowledge that the dimensions of equity in any given context are nuanced and diverse. For instance, gender comes up much more often in our work in East Africa, whereas race comes up more in our work in the U.S. and Brazil. Regardless of the different focuses required in different contexts, there needs to be a shared alignment around centering people and communities coming from groups that have historically been marginalized.

“[We should] really center equity-based initiatives on the local contextualized realities and strengths of organizations doing this work. To encourage collaboration, we can collectivize funder demands to reduce some of the burden on local NGOs (imagine funding at similar levels, or for similar time frames, asking for similar reports and updates). By reducing the burden on local leaders to please funders - we can shift the dynamic of collaboration in ways that honor the context surrounding each complex, intersectional issue.”

— **Erin Ganju, Co-founder and Former CEO, Room to Read, Global**

Opportunities & Inspiration

01. Fund opportunities for movement leaders to collaborate and organize.

Whether it's a summit, conference or other type of gathering, there is an ongoing need for funding that brings practitioners together to align on baseline definitions of equity in education—with room to further localize definitions using local context. We are inspired by the work of [Generation Hope](#), which frames its direct service programming, technical assistance model, and policy advocacy not as distinct levers of change, but as strands that, when braided together, create more enduring and sustainable progress. Their inaugural national conference, HOPE 2024, is an example: bringing together student parents, education leaders, nonprofits and philanthropists to create a space for brave and new thinking that transcends silos of practice, policy or systems.



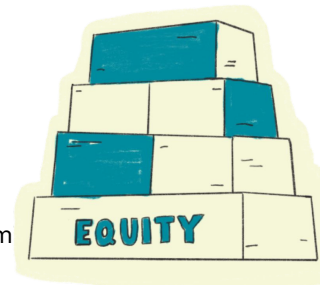
02. Establish and maintain outlets dedicated to promoting equity in education.

While new outlets are one way to foster collaborative efforts and shared goals, it's also worthwhile to invest in securing explicit commitments to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) within ongoing forums. For example, [GEO](#) is a community of funders committed to transforming philanthropic culture who have made a public commitment to focus on racial equity. Additionally, [Grupo de Institutos, Fundações e Empresas \(GIFE\)](#) has included an anti-racist and decolonial lens in their newest strategic plan, achieving a significant step towards addressing historical inequities impacting Afro-Brazilians and other Indigenous communities.



03. Invest in long-term backbone support for organizations led by leaders from historically marginalized communities.

Nonprofits in education are often dependent on the changing priorities of philanthropic interest, and it's essential to ensure that leaders—especially those helmed by leaders from historically underrepresented communities and who may lack the networks to woo funders—are not overly dedicating energy to secure resources. This can be addressed through generous general operating funding and/or securing endowments that ensure long term financial stability. For instance, the Endow Now campaign by Schott Foundation launched the [Racial Justice in Education Endowment](#), a fund that is raising endowments for three education justice alliances in the US all led by individuals from marginalized communities.



WATCH OUTS

Without structural changes, like long-term funding that shifts power to movement leaders, the status quo will remain.

Governments, funders and multilateral institutions mobilized emergency funding to address COVID-19 and the effect it had on education. While a small number of funders continue to support these issues, most post-pandemic funding has reverted back to shorter timelines and tighter restrictions, with funders espousing the tenets of trust-based philanthropy while making grants that have the opposite ethos.

Let's build equitable learning systems to meet this moment

FROM

Reacting from Instinct



TO

Responding with Intention



Learning systems that are more equitable are, in turn, more resilient.

These learning systems are by definition more representative of local context, diversified in terms of perspective, skill sets and leadership and ultimately are better able to grapple with major forces influencing learning in the present and future. This is especially important in a moment where we're living amidst compounding crises, which was reflected across the conversations that informed this report. The educators, academics, policy makers, advocates and implementers that IDEO.org spoke to all described how major societal shifts are impacting learning. While in our first report, the COVID-19 pandemic had upended life as we knew it, society is now grappling with a 'new normal' and rapidly shifting realities.

Our research surfaced three major forces that are critical in this moment for learning systems: AI, climate change and mental health. This chapter summarizes the realities and complexities of how the learning sector is grappling with these forces in their everyday work.



01. While educators' caution towards AI is understandable, embracing this technology with a focus on equity can empower them to stay ahead in a rapidly evolving landscape.

We're still trying to bridge the digital divide and AI runs the risk of exponentially widening existing gaps in access and connectivity that were laid bare during the COVID-19 era of online learning where the most vulnerable learners were the ones first left behind. Nevertheless, our social and economic realities are evolving drastically as a result of AI and education is no exception.

While some educators are understandably cautious of AI, there is an opportunity to meaningfully leverage the technology. By investing in structures, supports and safe spaces where educators and policymakers can experiment with this new frontier of education, we can better enable them to imbue equity within the tools being developed.

"In New York City, initial apprehensions about AI centered on potential misuse. The conversation has evolved to recognize AI's potential as a powerful learning tool, while acknowledging the critical need to educate students, teachers, and administrators about its capabilities and limitations. It's important to ensure that AI becomes a force for educational equity, not a source of further disparity."

— Dr. Cheri Fancsali
Policy Researcher, United States

02. While climate change presents a significant challenge to education, it also offers an opportunity to innovate and adapt our systems. Recognizing this urgency can drive impactful changes that enhance resilience and sustainability.

There's a growing awareness of the numerous and far reaching climate implications on education—from climate emergencies that force communities to live more nomadically and pause learning for extended periods, to the impact of climate change on healthcare, food availability and population density.

Still, we have yet to see significant investments to adapt learning systems to evolving climate realities, which is worrying because climate harm affects individuals of marginalized identities, as well as those in rural areas most significantly. We heard that the moment is ripe to invest in learning systems that encourage climate mitigation—as opposed to just climate adaptation—and to accommodate for learners who are forced to take extended pauses, suddenly shift locations or other needs we can't yet imagine.

03. As we move past the immediate crisis of the pandemic, there is a growing opportunity to address and support the mental health needs of students, ultimately improving educational outcomes.

As the immediate crisis of the pandemic wanes, enduring mental health repercussions are emerging that will continue to plague educational outcomes. We see reason for optimism in the way education systems globally are responding. For instance, Socio-Emotional Learning has become a more mainstream pedagogical approach. Teachers and educators understand clearly the need for equipping learners with skills needed to understand and navigate themselves and others, while parents and students are catching up.

Additionally, there's broad public discourse about the impact of holding multiple intersectional identities and mental health. Greater attention is being drawn to the mental health statistics of the LGBTQ+ community, leading to increased investment in mental health support specifically for queer young people. Moving forwards, we believe that with continued investment and attention, there's significant opportunity for education to positively impact emotional wellness.

"We are in the process of rebuilding education in Brazil, but we need to think about environmental education as a priority challenge as well. When I think about public schools [here], we must have an environmental education curriculum that goes beyond colorful trash cans."

— **Suelaine Carneiro, Sociologist, Educator, Writer, Anti-racist feminist and Director of Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra, Brazil**

"People have to be on the move more and face potentially seasonal disruptions. Educational systems are not set up to be flexible and accommodating for such learners who have to move between systems a lot or take pauses. "

— **Dr. Dzingai Mutumbuka, Former Minister of Education, Zimbabwe**

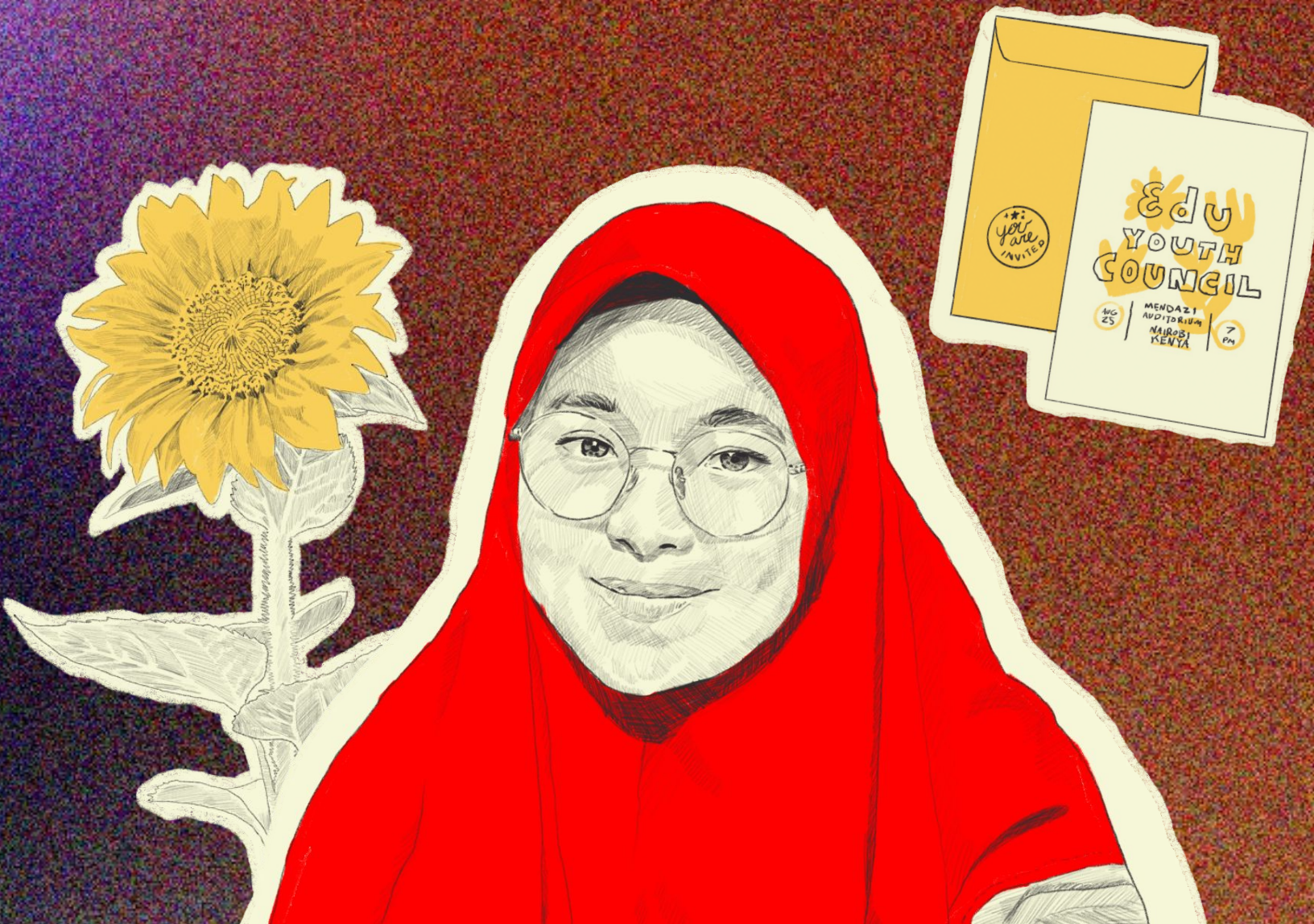


"What I do know is that pretending everything is "ok" is the fastest way towards mental health challenges for today's youth. They know better and turning away [from the issue] isn't an option. Instead, we must make space for hard conversations on mental health, with opportunities to process feelings while identifying solutions."

— **Dr. Zainab Okolo Policy Change Advocate and Mental Health Expert, United States**

LOOKING AHEAD

How might we accelerate progress?



How might we accelerate progress?

In addition to the opportunities presented throughout this report, there is also a need for accompanying mindset shifts that underscore progress. Here are some mindsets and considerations to hold as you gear up to continue working towards equitable learning systems.

INDIVIDUAL

Elevate proximate leaders as decision-makers

- Consider the holistic needs of proximate leaders and invest in the full journey of their leadership (i.e., from getting started to building influence to rest and recovery).
- Continue to call attention to and work through implicit biases that stall progress.

COMMUNITY

Embrace learning that builds on and supports local, cultural nuance

- Embrace plurality and let go of 'one-size-fits-all' definitions of what great looks like, (i.e., prioritizing approaches that can scale globally).
- Embrace risks; striving for transformational change will require investing in people and ideas that challenge the status quo.

SYSTEMS

Create enduring infrastructure to safeguard progress

- Adopt an intersectional and gender lens; understanding how the multifaceted layers of identity come together to shape people's experiences.
- Embrace long-term thinking, accepting that systems change is generational work.



Early steps towards reimagining the future of learning

These insights have led us to identify initiatives within our portfolio at Imaginable Futures that contain seeds of the changes education leaders invite us to invest in. In the spirit of inclusive collaboration, we reflect on how we envision these initiatives growing with broader support from peer funders, practitioners and researchers.

INDIVIDUAL

Elevate proximate leaders as decision-makers

In the US, one in five students in postsecondary education is a student parent. To make postsecondary education more responsive to the needs of this sizable student population and to ensure that student parents shape the solutions that affect their lives, Ascend at the Aspen Institute [recruited three cohorts of Parent Advisors](#) - 35 leaders that actively guided the direction of the student parent field by directing funding to promising programs and pushing state legislation forward, including a first-in-the-country law in Oregon requiring higher education institutions to track the parenting status of their students.

COMMUNITY


Embrace learning that builds on and supports local, cultural nuance

Achieving equity in learning requires a strong knowledge base to identify impactful solutions and raise early warning signs wherever policies or programs are causing harm. Over 90 researchers, professors, educators, advocates and organizers gathered in Nairobi in April 2022 to unpack and identify support needed to increase the share of [education research carried out in/for/by Africa](#).

SYSTEMS

Create enduring infrastructure to safeguard progress

Although supporting the passage of the Quota Law in Brazil was not initially part of our strategy at IF, close partners emphasized its critical importance. The law's enactment guarantees ongoing seats for Black and Indigenous Brazilians in higher education, a crucial step towards long-term systemic change in Brazil. Consequently, we [pivoted to support partners such as Instituto Ibirapitanga and Instituto de Referência Negra Peregrum in their advocacy efforts](#), leading to the law's successful passage in 2023.



READ MORE ABOUT
LATEST INSIGHTS
AND LEARNINGS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & CITATIONS

With humility, creativity and endurance—we invite you to join us to build learning systems worthy of generations to come.



A moment to thank all of the voices and thought leaders that influenced this work.

This report wouldn't be possible without the generosity of the 65+ experts whose wisdom, knowledge and perspectives shaped the insights and opportunities found within the content of this report. The research itself was a joint effort between our team at Imaginable Futures and IDEO.org.

Imaginable Futures

Imaginable Futures envisions a world of universal well-being where every person has the opportunity to build a brighter future for themselves, their community and the world. As a social change funder, Imaginable Futures supports people, ideas and initiatives that contribute to more equitable and healthy systems so that all learners, families and communities can thrive. Investing at the intersection of learning and equity, Imaginable Futures collaborates with communities and partners to disrupt patterns of inequity and catalyze meaningful change for learners of all ages in Brazil, Kenya, South Africa and the United States.

IDEO.org

IDEO.org is a nonprofit design firm. Our mission is to design a more just and inclusive world. Together with our partners, we co-design products, services, systems and strategies that advance social impact. IDEO.org has worked in more than 45 countries, and designed interventions reaching over 65 million people.

INDEX • CITATIONS

SECTION 01 • AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

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Thank you!

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