

Education Anew

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE
COMMUNITIES FOR JUST SCHOOLS FUND

2017-2020



PREPARED BY:

T Taveras3 Consulting
Excellence. Integrity. Commitment



Credits

At 15 years old, Akilah Johnson was the creator of the winning Google Doodle honoring Black culture and Black activism. At 16 years old, she agreed to work with us. We are immensely grateful to Akilah for creating the Communities for Just Schools Fund's logo, our presence in the world. Your vision, your creative brilliance, your light will forever shine. We thank you, and we love you always, Akilah.

To the phenomenal consulting and support teams at Taveras3 Coaching and Consulting and Wonder: Strategies for Good, we thank you for your patience, the long hours you put in with us, the laughs, the tears, this final product.

Thanks to the amazingly talented graphic designer Dionne Aiken for working her magic to bring this strategic plan to life, beautifully.

Finally, and primarily, thank you to our community partners. This plan, CJSF's work, is for you. Without you, there is no justice, there is no peace. As organizers, you are and always have been stretching this country to be its best self, to put its best foot forward, not for the sake of it but because there is no other way to victory, to freedom. You, more than anyone else, have known the promise this nation holds at its core, and you refuse to allow it to be less than that. Thank you for the gift of you, right now and as you have traversed this earth before.

We thank you all.

~The CJSF Team

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“A high-quality, comprehensive system of education in which young people are centered in the education process...”

THE COMMUNITIES FOR JUST SCHOOLS FUND

ORIGINALLY LAUNCHED IN 2010 AS THE JUST AND FAIR SCHOOLS FUND, CJSF UNDERWENT A SIGNIFICANT TRANSITION FIVE YEARS LATER, IN 2015. With a new name, new fiscal sponsor (the New Venture Fund), new staff, new location in Washington, D.C., and a growing donor membership, CJSF continues to support its grantees in the evolving field of school discipline reform. Education Anew: A Strategic Plan will position us to augment and promote the systems reform work of our community partners, lead philanthropic discussions on the topic of equity in schools, and engage with government agencies and representatives as they consider and implement related actions.

In March 2016, the Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF) hired Taveras3 Consulting to assist with developing a strategic plan for the period 2017-2020. Through the strategic planning process, the donor members and staff of CJSF aimed to identify a set of goals and strategies that would help the Fund build on past accomplishments, expand its strategic priorities to reflect work happening in the field, and enhance the resources and supports the Fund provides to its grantee partners.

“Education Anew: A Strategic Plan will position us to augment and promote the systems reform work of our community partners...”



OUR PURPOSE: WHO ARE WE?

To connect the power of communities with necessary resources for the health and longevity of the nation's schools, the nation itself, and the world.

OUR VISION: WHAT DO WE WANT?

A high-quality, comprehensive system of education in which young people are centered in the education process, treasured for their humanity and the power they carry, and their learning is valued and fostered such that they will contribute to, and lead, a successful American society. Schools are places where all young people receive preparation to thrive in school, in career, and in life. School is a welcoming, nurturing, and safe place for students where they have a deep sense of belonging and where they are challenged to grow. As such, our communities are stronger and our future is limitless.

OUR MISSION: HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

At the Communities for Just Schools Fund, a national donor collaborative, we bring together the resources of philanthropy with the power of grassroots organizing to ensure that all schools welcome students and nurture their full potential.

OUR GOAL: WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO?

Proliferation of the mindset and values that fuel the creation of education models in school districts and statewide that acknowledge and recognize the nation's racial illness and resulting historical trauma and affirm and nurture the genius, value, and cultural heritage of young people and their communities.

THEORY OF CHANGE:

Changing the system of education to create equitable, healthy, safe, and nurturing schools and learning environments requires youth, parent, and teacher-led perspectives and voice.

COMMUNITIES FOR JUST SCHOOLS FUND'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:



FUND

We fund organizations that change schools and the system of education through community organizing.



BUILD

We build the capacity of our grantee partners by growing their strategic know-how on everything from communications to data analysis.



CONNECT

We are dot-connectors. We foster relationships between our grantee partners and philanthropy, policy, research, advocacy, national movement leaders, and others.



LEAD

We lead efforts, together with our grantee partners, to make school discipline reform and positive school climate a priority for philanthropic organizations, policy-makers and national allies.



The Communities for Just Schools Fund's strategic priorities for the period 2017-2020 are to **Fund, Build, Connect, Lead**. These strategic priorities are aligned with the Fund's purpose, vision, mission, and ultimate goal and will help CJSF:

- Provide critical resources to grantee partners in their work to improve school climate and culture.
- Leverage our influence to increase funding for community organizing to ensure the academic and life success of young people.
- Solidify our position of support and connection in the movement for equity in education.

FUND

Continued funding of school discipline reform efforts with an expanded understanding of how those efforts fit within a broader movement to create healthy school climates by addressing structural racism and implicit bias that are at the root of education inequities.



BUILD

Strengthen the organizational infrastructure of core grantee partner groups for effectiveness, sustainability, and institutional and individual wellness.



CONNECT

Build network connectivity between relevant stakeholders, including primarily CJSF's grantee partners, to take action around a shared agenda that advances education justice.



LEAD

Partner with others in philanthropy to better support young people of color, and increase understanding and support of community organizing to create high-quality, student-centered, healthy, safe, and equitable learning environments.





“We are missing out on their greatness.”

BACKGROUND

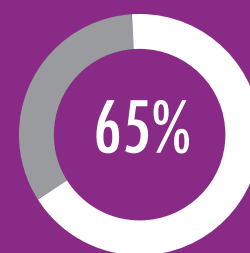
WHY SCHOOLS?

School systems that are woefully underfunded and outdated trap would-be scientists, entrepreneurs, artists, lawyers, doctors, teachers, musicians, and athletes in a web of inequity. We are missing out on their greatness.

In these days and times, when education is as fundamental to human survival as breathing air, structural atrocities play out in schools against the youngest among us: Shakara, Brian Burney, Janissa Valdez, Ahmed Mohamed, Kiera Wilmot, and so many others. The abuses these students suffered at the hands of school police and other adults in the school building are but the tip of an iceberg of inequity in education.

American schools are lagging behind their global peers. In 2015, about 65% of American fourth-grade students were reading below the proficiency level. At the same time, as overall suspension numbers are decreasing (by 20% in the 2013-2014 school year from 2011-2012),

racial disparities persist and have even increased in places. In the 2013-2014 school year, Black pre-school students were almost four times as likely as whites to be suspended out of school one or more times. Black pre-school students are 19% of the overall pre-school enrollment and 47% of pre-schoolers receiving one or more out-of-school suspension. By contrast, white pre-schoolers are 41% of the enrollment and 28% of those receiving one or more out-of-school suspension. American Indian or Alaska Native, Latino, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and multi-racial boys are 15% of students and 19% of those receiving one or more out-of-school suspension. Black girls are 8% of students enrolled in public schools and 14% of students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions. Girls of other races were not disproportionately



American fourth-grade students were reading below the proficiency level.



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BOYS
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suspended. While data indicate that LGBTQ youth of color are more likely to be suspended, expelled, and arrested out of school than their peers, there is insufficient data available to tell the full story of LGBTQ youth of color in schools

because they are so often invisibilized, lumped with other categories of students, and ignored in research and efforts to ensure equity.

Young people who are not in their classrooms cannot participate in the educational experience that schools provide. Too many students are not in their classrooms because they are excluded from the learning environment, often on the basis of race. Racial disparities do not exist because children of color engage in different or worse behaviors or are themselves genetically, culturally, developmentally, or behaviorally worse than their white peers. Rather, schools have been created in ways that perpetuate racial and socioeconomic isolation and segregation and broken beliefs about children and people of color. Schools have yet to achieve the level of resources and strategic collaboration to be the transformative power that the nation needs them to be.

Schools are a microcosm of the world they inhabit. There are successful schools, providing high-quality education and safe, nurturing, and healthy learning environments for thriving

students and educators alike. These schools are a training ground and launch pad for college, career, and entrepreneurial success. They foster rich networks of students, parents and families, and educators, all connected with one another in an ecosystem that is centered on cultivating young people into society's next generation of leaders. These are schools of all ilk – public, private, charter.

Despite this vision, these living models of success, too many schools are designed in such a way as to inhibit equitable access to education opportunity for the young people they serve. This is particularly true of schools that serve young people of color. For too many students of color, their educational success is hindered by toxic school climates that are fueled by and exacerbate implicit and explicit bias and the mores of structural racism. This is evidenced by over-reliance on exclusionary discipline and law-enforcement referrals, racial disparities in school discipline and academic outcomes, and divided relations between students and educators, and parents and educators, groups of people who instead should be deriving mutual benefit from one another's energy as in the ecosystem described above.

At the Communities for Just Schools Fund, we see a better way: A high-quality, comprehensive system of education in which all young people

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are centered in the education process, they are treasured for their humanity and the power they carry, and their learning is valued and fostered such that they will contribute to, and lead, a fully successful American society. CJSF is seizing this moment in time to double down on its support of a network of community organizers across the country that is creating systemic change so that every school can provide equitable access to educational opportunity and effectively nurture society's leaders for the benefit of all.

discipline reform that continues to swell in number and in concept by the day. There has been significant traction nationally in reviewing and modifying school discipline codes and practices, improving learning environments for young people and educators, and increasing academic attainment.

Yet, there is still work to do. There remain troubling and persistent racial disparities in suspensions, expulsions, and law-enforcement referrals, and in other education outcomes as well. School discipline issues (e.g., zero tolerance policies and practices and other issues that contribute to racial disparities in school discipline and the school-to-prison pipeline) make up only one small part of the overall umbrella of systemic and institutional hurdles facing students of color as they seek to achieve life success. As such, the field of organizers and funders who, to date, have set their sights squarely on school discipline, is intentionally broadening its scope from school discipline to equity in education for a more integrated, shared vision of school safety, school design, and school climate, together with school discipline. The school discipline movement is evolving toward a larger holistic strategy to re-shape the national conversation and mindset about children and people of color so that, ultimately, equity will be an instinctual element of educational and societal practice rather than a legally mandated one.



PHOTOGRAPHER, FERNANDO LOPEZ

THE MOVEMENT

The coordinated efforts of students, parents and families, educators, advocates and activists, community groups, researchers, foundations, and government agencies have brought to bear a movement for school



OVER THE PAST SIX TO TEN YEARS,
PHILANTHROPY HAS SUPPORTED
SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFORM THROUGH
A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY THAT HAS
INCLUDED FOUR PRIMARY GOALS:

1

Create exemplars of positive discipline reform and disparity reduction.

2

Increase awareness of effective alternatives among key stakeholders, especially state and local policymakers, teachers' unions, judges, and the general public.

3

Build pressure for local and state-level policy reform through smart and effective advocacy from parents, students, and civil rights organizations.

4

Strengthen federal policy to increase monitoring of disciplinary practices and provide funds for implementation of positive alternatives.

Those goals remain laudable and necessary and will continue to serve as guideposts for our work and for the movement. At the same time, the Communities for Just Schools Fund will help support grassroots organizers in bringing about a broader coordinated approach to eliminating structural racism, implicit bias, and false and broken narratives about young people of color and their families that contribute to school discipline disparities and other inequities.

The opportunity, the imperative, is to fix our schools so that we can remedy what ails this nation. The entry point for many organizers working to fix our schools has been school discipline reform, which is expanding in scope (e.g., to include a focus on creating healthy school climates and ensuring equity in education) and representation (e.g., to include teachers and educators), and CJSF grantee partners are leading the charge into the next phase of the work. This is taking place in a changing national and global environment that includes a resurgence of white nationalism and xenophobia, the Movement for Black Lives, public attention on racial justice and police reform, initiatives like the YouthFirst! Initiative to end the criminalization of Black and Brown youth and close youth prisons, and renewed philanthropic attention to tackling structural racism as well as critical successes in the school discipline reform movement.



WHY COMMUNITY ORGANIZING?

CJSF remains firm in its approach to advance systemic reform in education by providing critical resources and additional supports to community organizing groups all over the country.

Community organizing has been the essential catalyst for movement activities and a viable tool for systemic reform since this nation's very beginning. Community organizing consistently brings public attention to issues of social inequity and systemic deprivation of communities, unifies power to force system actors and policy makers to do what is in the best interests of the communities they are to serve, and develops strong leaders who contribute to every sector of society.

Community organizing has brought about seismic shifts in policy, practice, and the devastating social constructs that birthed today's America. From community outreach to sit-ins to democratic education to direct action trainings and workshops to creating and pushing for model policies, organizers maximize community power and transform society for everyone's benefit. Today, grassroots organizers are working toward a cure, once and for all, for the nation's racial illness. For many of them, their focal point, their entry point, is education.

CJSF is a national donor collaborative that supports community organizers to dismantle barriers to opportunity for young people of color and create systems of education that are



healthy, welcoming, nurturing, affirming, and provide high-quality learning to all students. Since the Fund's beginning in 2010, we have played a central role in supporting a national movement to end "zero tolerance" school discipline, out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and student referrals to law enforcement, all of which disproportionately impact Black and Brown students by derailing their education and reducing their chances for a productive and successful life.



CJSF awards grants to grassroots organizations that are led by young people, parents and caregivers, educators, and other community members to advocate on behalf of students who are disproportionately impacted by the over-use of exclusionary school discipline practices, including suspensions, expulsions, and arrests in schools.

Youth, parent and family, and teacher organizing have been pivotal strategies for illuminating the use of exclusionary school discipline practices and referrals of students of color to law enforcement in schools and districts across the country, demanding an end to these harmful practices, and building youth and parent leadership. According to the formal evaluation of CJSF's impact since it was started in 2010, almost all of our grantee partners can point to positive changes in school discipline at the school and district levels. Also, the coordinated efforts of organizers, advocates, educators, government officials, funders, and other allies to end school pushout has led to more than a twenty-percent drop in suspensions since 2010 and the release of federal guidance on school discipline.

More resources are necessary for intense organizing efforts to convert the policy reform wins into actual change in schools with focused attention on effective implementation of those policy wins. Such implementation will transform the climate and culture of schools and classrooms to ensure education equity and student success. This will require expanded focus on affirmative and proactive issues for creation of equitable learning environments. Implementation efforts of CJSF grantee partners include pushing for divestment from law enforcement

and increased investment in guidance counselors; social workers; social-emotional supports; culturally relevant pedagogy; community schools with a focus on school climate; teacher-of-color pipelines; professional development that includes anti-bias/ racism training for educators; among other issues.

The organizations supported by CJSF are local in focus and have national impact and reach. They organize community members to stand up for equitable, healthy, and supportive school climates that produce better academic and social outcomes for the students who enroll than school climates with a heavy police presence, zero tolerance school discipline policies, and over-reliance on exclusionary discipline methods. CJSF's community partners educate and mobilize students, parents and caregivers, educators, and community leaders on highly beneficial alternatives to suspension, expulsion, and school-based arrests.

The Communities for Just Schools Fund seeks to change the education system, power dynamics between young people and adults and between system actors and community, and beliefs about young people of color and their families and communities.

EDUCATION ANEW:

A Strategic Plan will guide the grantmaking strategy and technical assistance and capacity-building program of the Communities for Just Schools Fund to seize on this moment in history and grow the movement for equity.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2017-2020

FUND



Address structural racism and implicit bias that are at the root of education inequity through a continued focus on school discipline reform and expanded emphasis on creating healthy school climates.

The Communities for Just Schools Fund's primary role is as a funder. CJSF funds organizations that change schools through community organizing. Our grantee partners have a track record as students and families and teachers in pushing for policies that reduce exclusionary school discipline and that make schools safe places to learn. These organizations are invested for the long term – working to ensure that policies are implemented in a way that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of students and in their own communities.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, CJSF WILL PROVIDE:

- **GENERAL SUPPORT, MULTI-YEAR GRANTS** for core grantee partners working to reform school discipline policies and practices in their schools and districts and implement and institutionalize school discipline policy wins. These grants also will help partners expand the focus of their organizing to create healthy school climates.
- **PLACE-BASED FUNDING** in (1) Washington, D.C., and Miami, Florida, to (a) build organizing groups' capacity and presence in those places, (b) support organizing groups in creating cross-sector partnerships with local funders focused on education equity, and (c) develop assessment tools for measuring the success of community organizing to improve the climate and culture of schools in mixed environments of traditional and charter schools; and, (2) Ohio, the Mississippi Delta, and Massachusetts related to implementation of CJSF's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Initiative.
- **RAPID RESPONSE GRANTS** to fund efforts related to addressing opportunities and challenges that arise in efforts to advance education equity, dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, and ensure healthy and equitable school climates. These funds are intended to support our partners in moving fast as opportunities and challenges arise.



GRANTMAKING PRINCIPLES

- CJSF grantee partners are community organizers. They are standalone community-based organizations or organizations that have an organizing program.
 - The community organizers within the CJSF grantee network are eliminating zero-tolerance school discipline policies, disparities in school discipline, and law-enforcement involvement in school discipline. They are implementing reforms to create healthy, equitable, and safe learning environments for all young people.
 - Our grantee partners are part of a community of organizers within the CJSF network and can greatly benefit from engaging with the other members of that network. We support groups that are connected to broader conversations about equity in education, to other groups in their region and/or in the CJSF partner community, or that have the potential to both utilize and enhance that community, for greatest possible impact.
 - Grantee partners must authentically represent the communities they serve and have the full trust of, and deep connections with, their communities.
- Grantee partners and CJSF staff and donor members periodically will examine the progress of the work to identify trends, patterns, strengths, and areas for improvement, and strategize together how best to address challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Grants are determined by size and capacity of the organization, needs in the field, level of organizational activity in the field, and impact of the organization on the CJSF partner network and beyond, among other possible considerations. Our grantees range in size. We support groups that are larger in size (staff and operating budget), have demonstrated strong in-network leadership and a national presence related to school discipline and school climate, and their successes have reverberated to the state and national level. We also support organizations that are smaller in size, have recently (e.g., in the last five years) entered the field of school discipline reform and school climate, have been concentrated in place, and have brought about systemic change despite their small size. CJSF makes no qualitative distinction between the groups we support. All are equally necessary to move systems change, and all are equally necessary to one another's success.



BUILD



Resource the organizational infrastructure of core grantee partner groups to ensure effectiveness, sustainability, and individual and organizational wellness.

We help build the capacity of our grantee partners by resourcing their development in everything from communications to strategic development. Our commitment to our grantee partners does not end with a check. To build the field, we meet, we listen, and we collaborate and strategize side by side with our grantee partners – leaders who are succeeding at strengthening their schools and communities, and who have much expertise and lived experience to share.

To build their capacity and provide technical assistance from 2017-2020, CJSF will fully develop a comprehensive program of supports that includes the following:

- Tailored technical assistance to grantees to build and connect their historical awareness; organizing skills; data advocacy and collection; fundraising and wealth generation; communications; and wellness.
- Learning exchange opportunities between and among grantee partners and technical assistance to grantees to foster peer-to-peer learning, strengthen their organizational infrastructure, and maximize their impact.
- Convenings for grantee partners and at their direction to foster learning and collaboration with one another and with practitioners in other fields.

- The Education Anew Fellowship and Best Practices Institute. The Education Anew Fellow will work closely with CJSF staff and grantee partners, and with staff and fellows of the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) to develop the CJSF Best Practices Institute (BPI) and to support conversations and collaborations between the community organizers CJSF supports and the educators with whom SEF works, all for the greater benefit of education justice nationwide. SEF and CJSF will leverage a rich opportunity for collaboration and engagement between educators and grassroots organizers.
- Revenue generation and wealth building strategies using grantee partners' existing expertise.
- Connection to global efforts for education justice and related activity that will supplement and strengthen their work. Identification of international opportunities from which participants and audiences can gain from our grantee partners as well. In this, we will be mindful that (a) work to advance equity, particularly racial equity, in education is occurring on a global scale; (b) international pressure helped bring about systemic reform that included civil rights protections for communities of color; and (c) CJSF must be aware of global connections our grantee partners have already developed and could develop.
- Management and leadership development, including succession planning, financial management, staff compensation, and individual leaders' care of themselves and overall wellness.

BUILD



CONNECT



We are dot-connectors. We foster relationships between our grantee partners and philanthropy. We ensure that policymakers hear from the grassroots – and that local organizations can benefit from the resources and reach of national movement allies.

Peer-to-peer learning and collaboration as well as network-building across sectors are key components of CJSF's strategy. We invest considerable time and resources in creating space, not only for shared learning and teaching by and with our partners, but also in the trust building required for organizers to work collaboratively to dismantle systems of oppression, particularly those that impact our nation's youngest and most vulnerable.

CJSF grantee partners are active in many different local and national networks and carry out their work in coalition with other organizations that are and have been critical to the building and success of the movement for school discipline reform and equity in education. CJSF has formal and informal connections with these same national organizations, coalitions, and others.

Connections between CJSF grantee partners and other organizations are vital and must be resourced to build the movement for structural change in schools. To assist grantee partners to strategically leverage relationships and continue to provide leadership in the field; to multiply their impact; and to foster meaningful and productive relationships between our partners and other relevant stakeholders, CJSF will:

- First and foremost, position organizers' expertise as front and center in education justice work.
- Offer learning circle experiences for grantee partners that are primarily issues-based and provide an opportunity for grantee partners to connect to and learn from each other about particular topics, build their knowledge base about issues such as intersectionality and anti-blackness, and share strategies in real time. Examples of CJSF learning circles already in practice are – sanctuary schools and Black-Brown solidarity; justice reinvestment; and data collection, analysis, and advocacy. We will continue to create and develop learning circles in service of the grantee partner network and needs in the field of school



discipline reform and creation of healthy school climates.

- Host strategy sessions, co-host events, and provide advice and support for joint action involving organizers, educators, researchers, policy experts, civil rights advocates, former and current federal agency representatives in education, criminal and juvenile justice, health, and other relevant fields.
- Co-design with grantee partners the content and learning outcomes of convenings, webinars, and other CJSF-sponsored learning activities.

- Support cross-site exchanges between grantee partners to share strategies, models, tools, and more.
- Provide platforms of engagement for grantee partners and philanthropy to connect with one another, learn from one another, and develop independent relationships.
- Continue to outreach and network with the intent to build connectivity for our grantee partners to policymakers, legal advocates, researchers, and systems actors.

CONNECT





LEAD



We lead efforts, together with our grantee partners, to make school discipline reform and positive school climate a priority for philanthropic organizations, for policymakers, and for national allies. We are part of a larger movement to make schools work for students of color by elevating the power of organizing to create long-term sustainable change.

IN THE FIELD

The Communities for Just Schools Fund operates at a unique vantage point, with critical access to funders in its donor membership, community organizers through its grantee network, the broader field of education justice movement leaders, and government actors and practitioners. As such, our mission to bring together the resources of philanthropy with the power of grassroots organizing to ensure that all schools welcome students and nurture their full potential is at the root of its efforts to both amplify the voices of community partners and develop platforms for donor engagement and education.

Amplification of partners' voices and perspectives happens in a variety of different settings – e.g., as invited speakers and facilitators at convenings and meetings, in written materials and public-facing pieces, at CJSF's donor member quarterly meetings, and on CJSF's SchoolHouse: Equity in Education podcast.

Our grantee partners are working not only to force systems to stop excluding young people of color from educational opportunity by excluding them from the classroom environment and subjecting them to police and police equipment, they also are working in the affirmative to push systems of education to be the systems they want and need and thus create learning environments that are safe, healthy, and equitable for all young people. In recognition of that proactive line of work, the first year of CJSF's strategic plan implementation (June 2017 to May 2018) will be an exploratory year during which we will identify three essential components of healthy school climate that are the primary goals of our grantee partners in order to (a) help define those three components in ways that are reflective of youth, family, teacher, and community voice; (b) lift up for philanthropy and others the most effective strategies related to each of those components, e.g., in the Best Practices Institute; and (c) connect communities of learning and knowledge for those three components (researchers, practitioners,



technical assistance providers, etc.) with the grantee partner network for shared learning, incorporation of community perspective where it is missing, and baseline understanding. Examples of the components that we are considering are:

- restorative justice,
- cultural competence and racial justice training for teachers,
- culturally relevant curricula and pedagogical practices,
- more Black and Brown teachers in schools, and
- social and emotional learning.

Additionally, in 2016, CJSF staff and funders agreed that the Fund will explicitly name and intentionally work toward racial equity in education. For us, racial equity means utilizing specific principles, practices, and interventions to account for and overcome the historical maltreatment and systemic deprivation and abuse of Native, Black, Latino, and Asian communities in this country. The education system, as with all other systems in this country, has been ingrained with and crafted from the belief in a racial hierarchy that places whiteness at the top. Education systems, schools, must develop curricula, pedagogical

practices, training and professional development from an intimate understanding of the nation's history and resulting inter-generational trauma in order to understand and address current realities.

Within the racial equity frame for CJSF's work, we also have created a gender justice focus to support groups that are working to address the ways in which young people of color encounter systemic racism at the intersections of race and sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, including for example the ways in which young people of color experience gender normativity in schools, which accounts for much of the school pushout we see.

To connect and grow the power of the communities at the forefront of movement activity to create equitable schools, CJSF will:

- Lift up its partners' voices in the spaces we occupy.
- Promote community organizing as a viable tool for systemic reform in education.
- Participate in discussions with education justice leaders about creating and/or shaping a cohesive, compelling message or coordinated set of messages about community organizing and education justice.



- Create and disseminate to education leaders, funders, and other key audiences, issue briefs, white papers, and other publications to elevate and spread solutions proven to work in improving school climate.
- Develop and assist grantee partners in creating case studies of successful district and statewide models of healthy school climate to disseminate lessons, promising practices, and tools to practitioners and other stakeholders.
- Co-host a biennial high-profile national forum – Education Anew: Shifting Justice – to bring together organizers, policy advocates, practitioners, policymakers, scholars, and funders from the intersecting fields of education justice and juvenile justice.
- Develop a deeper level of involvement with the education justice movement in five localities – Washington, D.C.; Miami, Florida; the Mississippi Delta; Boston, Massachusetts; and Dayton, Ohio. These five areas of local focus will allow CJSF to develop comprehensive understanding of issues related to school discipline, school climate, and equity in education. It will provide opportunities for us to observe and resource community engagement with the state education plan design and roll-out processes under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and determine the effectiveness of ESSA as a federal tool for equity activism and advocacy. Comparison of these five places of local focus with one another and with work happening in the other areas in which CJSF funds as well as with the national landscape will inform the development of criteria to measure successful organizing, and will reveal key areas of synergy and overlap for CJSF to help foster strategic connections.
- Ensure that arts and culture are embraced throughout our grantmaking and programmatic supports as necessary vehicles for effective organizing and for creation of healthy and equitable learning environments.
- Provide leadership in uniting education justice and education reform, conceptually and literally, wherever possible.

IN PHILANTHROPY

As a funder, CJSF works within philanthropy to provide information and guidance related to (a) best practices for philanthropic engagement with community organizers, (b) the unique nature of community organizing as a viable tool for systemic reform in education, and (c) the specific wins, including policy wins and changed mindsets, achievable with community organizing in partnership with other sector activity.



CJSF's donor members are institutional leaders in the field of philanthropy, and many of the individuals who sit at the CJSF donor member table are leaders themselves in the field of philanthropy and in the field of school discipline reform and healthy school climate. They also are invaluable partners with CJSF staff in our strategic development and efforts to help bring about systemic change. They have a true stake in the work of the Fund and help drive our work as well.

Of significant note, in 2015, CJSF announced a few fundamental changes to its grantmaking. Where possible and where aligned with desired strategic outcomes for justice in education, CJSF grants to core community partners are:

- 1 two-year grants, at minimum;
- 2 general operating support grants; and
- 3 at least \$50,000 in total over the term of each grant in the form of general operating grant dollars and technical assistance and capacity-building supports.

To solidify its position as a hub for intersectional philanthropic work for equity in education and leverage its influence to increase funding for community organizing, CJSF will:

- **ENGAGE** local and national funders that share the Fund's values and vision.
- **CREATE** platforms and tools for donor education that will include funders' briefings, webinars, and other learning opportunities.
- **HOST QUARTERLY MEETINGS** in local places for interaction with grantee partners.
- **HOST THE SCHOOLHOUSE PODCAST**, webinars, and funder briefings for funder learning and sharing opportunities.
- **DEVELOP** a set of metrics for philanthropy to assess the unique and nuanced impact of community organizing and to measure public mindsets about young people and communities of color.

LEAD



APPENDIX

A. METHODOLOGY

THE FOURTEEN-MONTH STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS LED BY TAVERAS3 CONSULTING INCLUDED AN IN-DEPTH RESEARCH and assessment process to review internal documents, such as past strategy papers, surveys of grantees and donors, evaluation reports, grant applications, docket write-ups, CJSF budgets, and communication materials, including CJSF's newsletter, webinars, and podcasts. The consultants also conducted an environmental scan to identify relevant trends in the larger context. In addition, the consultants attended and facilitated in-person quarterly meetings of CJSF donors, and interviewed individual donors and staff, as well as selected grantees and field leaders.

The field leaders interviewed included: Jonathan Stith, National Coordinator, Alliance for Educational Justice; Kaitlin Banner, Staff Attorney, The Advancement Project; Liz Sullivan-Yuknis, Program Director, Dignity in Schools Campaign; and Eric Braxton, Executive Director, Funders Collaborative for Youth Organizing.

The following CJSF grantees were interviewed: Joyce Hall-Parker, Director, Citizens for a Better Greenville; Neva Walker, Executive Director, Coleman Advocates; Gina Womack, Executive Director, Families & Friends of Louisiana Incarcerated Children; Daniel Kim, Director of Youth Organizing, Padres y Jovenes Unidos; Julia Daniel, Board Member, Power U Center for Social Change; Zakiya Sankara-Jabar, Executive Director, Racial Justice NOW!; and Maria Degillo, Coordinator, Voices of Youth in Chicago Education (VOYCE).



The CJSF donors interviewed included: Leticia Peguero, Executive Director, Andrus Family Fund; Desiree Flores, Social Justice Program Director, and Daniel Werner, Social Justice Program Associate, Arcus Foundation; Itai Dinour, Education Portfolio Manager, Einhorn Family Charitable Trust; Luna Yasui and Sanjiv Rao, Program Officers, Youth Opportunity and Learning, Ford Foundation; Nahir Torres, Program Officer, Teen Development, Hyams Foundation; Harriet Sanford, Executive Director, NEA Foundation; Christopher Scott, Senior Policy Analyst, Open Society Policy Center; Andrew Maisel, Program Associate, Equality Fund, Open Society Foundations; Liz Sak, Executive Director, The Cricket Island Foundation; Nadia Brigham, Program Officer, W. K. Kellogg Foundation; Alli Jernow, Program Director, and Heidi Dorow, (former) Senior Program Officer, Wellspring Advisors. Allison Brown, Executive Director of CJSF, and Jaime Koppel, Senior Program Officer, also were interviewed.

A set of programmatic and organizational recommendations emerged from the planning process:

- Maintaining the focus on school discipline and helping organizers implement policy wins at the district and state levels to achieve systemic impact.
- Catalyzing grassroots advocacy to ensure implementation of the Every Student

Succeeds Act (ESSA), improve learning environments, and create educational opportunities for students of color in high-poverty schools.

- Creating a robust Grantees' Learning Network to foster peer-to-peer learning and collaboration.
- Developing partnerships with relevant donor affinity groups, and philanthropic networks to expand funders' involvement in the work of CJSF.
- Launching a high-profile communications campaign to expand support for CJSF's mission and goals within and outside philanthropy.
- Strengthening CJSF's internal operations.

B. STRATEGIC PLANNING QUESTIONS

THE QUESTIONS GUIDING THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS INCLUDED:

IDENTITY

- What has the Just and Fair Schools Fund, and now the Communities for Just Schools Fund, been to you – a school discipline reform grantmaking collaborative or something more? What do you think it could be? What do you want it to be?



- How is CJSF positioned in the universe of other funder collaboratives (e.g., education, equity/justice, youth, racial and social justice pooled funds)? In other words, how do you think it compares in terms of resources, reach, and impact?
- How do these other donor collaboratives and funders see CJSF?

TRENDS

- What are major changes in the larger context – nationally and internationally – and in philanthropy that may affect what CJSF can and should do?
- How can CJSF stay relevant and responsive to those trends?

FIT

- How should CJSF's work intersect with other education-focused movements, as well as with racial and social justice movements, such as Black Lives Matter?
- Where should CJSF seek to lead and where should CJSF seek to amplify others' work?
- What is the state of the Fund in the current landscape of activism (and the evolution occurring in the field of school discipline reform), policy reform, government action, and resistance to social justice efforts?

What is the Fund's positioning, or "fit"?

- What does the Fund want to change about its fit? What will it take to get there?
- What efforts are underway that do not "fit" with CJSF's, about which CJSF should at least be aware?

FOCUS FOR THE WORK

- How should CJSF define success?
- What does the "ideal school" look like?
- What are models of healthy school climate that CJSF could promote and support?
- Which states and/or school districts are at the tipping point for change around school discipline reforms?
 - How can CJSF build the capacity of grantees in those places to implement such changes?
 - How can CJSF help amplify the voices of and ongoing involvement of grantees in places where policy reforms have been made – with a goal of ensuring successful implementation?
- How should CJSF create an intentional focus on movement building related to equity in education?



- Where does CJSF want to go (i.e., vision, theory of change, desired results)?
- How does CJSF implement the plan (i.e., strategies, goals, objectives, activities) to create the conditions for “ideal” schools?

CAPACITY & SUSTAINABILITY

- What type of funders’ collaborative is CJSF? Are there other models of donor collaboratives or other collaborations between philanthropy and communities that CJSF should explore?
- How big should CJSF be? Is continued growth of the Fund’s resources and portfolio of grantees financially sustainable?
- What are potential new donors that CJSF can attract to the work of the collaborative, as members of the Fund and/or as supporters of community-based organizations who are working toward equity in education?
- What value-add can CJSF offer funders?
- What are partnerships/relationships that are working for CJSF? How can these be leveraged and/or sustained? What other partnerships need to be considered?
- What tools does CJSF have at its disposal?
- What are CJSF’s capacities (strengths)? What are its weaknesses? How should
- Weakness be viewed and address?





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