



The Communities for Just Schools Fund (CJSF), a project of the New Venture Fund, is a national philanthropy that provides resources in support of community-led organizations working to ensure positive and supportive school climates that affirm and foster the success of all students.



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. There are far too many students who find themselves being policed and targeted for exclusion from their schools because of flawed school policies and practices and flawed perceptions of them and their communities.



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 students, parents and caregivers, school officials and teachers, police departments, and community leaders on highly beneficial alternatives to suspension, expulsion, and school-based arrests.



Currently, the Communities for Just Schools Fund includes support and participation from: the Andrus Family Fund, Arcus Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, Cricket Island Foundation, Einhorn Family Charitable Trust, Ford Foundation, Hyams Foundation, NEA Foundation, Open Society Foundations,

Public Welfare Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Skillman Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and anonymous donors.



"Education is a calling. It tethers us to who we used to be, who we should have been."
- Allison R. Brown, Executive Director, 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 (three staff members total, including the Executive Director, Senior Program Officer and Government Liaison, and Program Assistant), new location in Washington, D.C., and a growing membership of donors, CJSF continues to support its grantees in the evolving field of school discipline reform. That support is taking place in a changing national and global environment that includes the Movement for Black Lives, public attention on racial justice and police reform, and renewed philanthropic attention to tackling structural racism as well as critical

successes in the school discipline reform movement. The field of school discipline reform is evolving to be more expansive in scope (e.g., to include a focus on creating healthy school climates and ensuring educational equity) and in representation (e.g., to include teachers and educators), and Communities for Just Schools Fund community partners are leading the charge into the next phase of work. In the current landscape, CJSF is well positioned to augment and promote the systems reform work of its 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.

CJSF's activities include: 1) direct grants to organizations and campaigns; 2) capacity-building support for established and emerging organizations and leaders; 3) donor education and engagement to expand philanthropic knowledge and support of these issues; and 4) fund leveraging to increase the resources available for the field of school discipline reform and healthy school climate advocacy.

Of significant note and in light of the mission and vision described above, we also are pleased to announce a few fundamental changes to CJSF's grants. Where possible and where aligned with desired strategic outcomes for justice in education, CJSF grants to core community partners will be:

- 1) two-year grants, at minimum, rather than one-year grants;
- 2) general operating support grants rather than project support grants; and



- 3) at least \$50,000 to each grantee in the form of grant dollars and technical assistance and capacity-building supports.

