



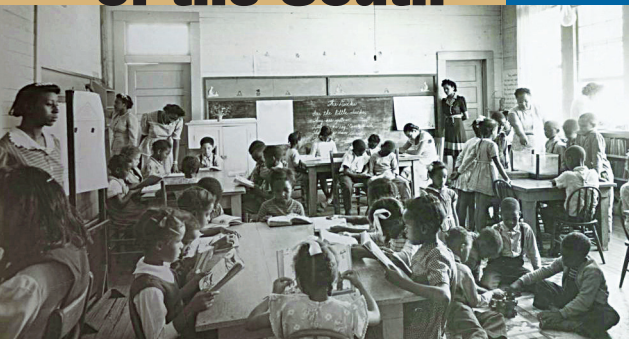
Southern Education Foundation 2020 and 2021 Annual Report

Yesterday
a Rich **Legacy**



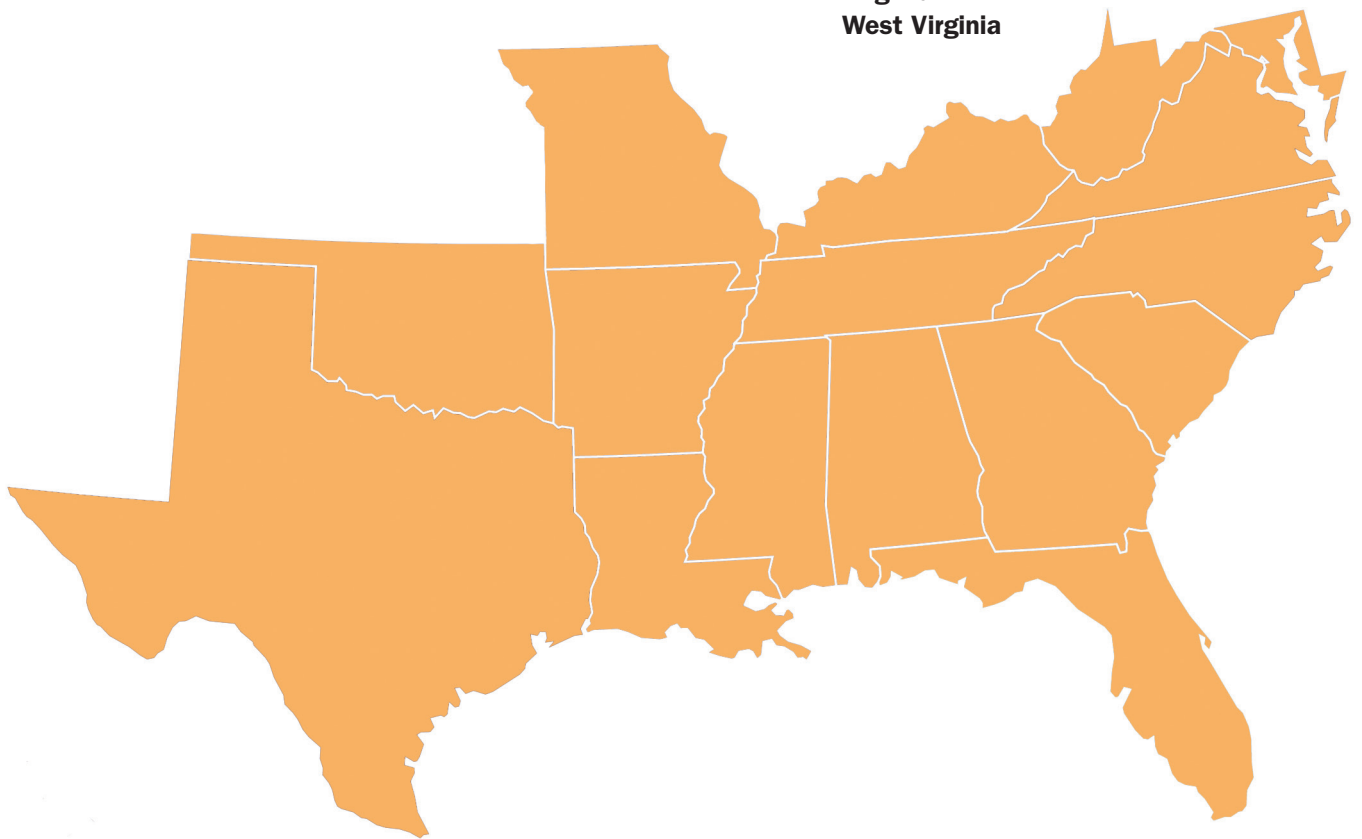
With Our Roots
in the History
of the South

We Are
Reaching
for a
Bright Future



**The Southern Education Foundation
focuses its work in 17 states:**

**Alabama
Arkansas
Delaware
Florida
Georgia
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maryland
Mississippi
Missouri
North Carolina
Oklahoma
South Carolina
Tennessee
Texas
Virginia
West Virginia**



The SEF Footprint

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Letter from the President



Raymond C. Pierce

Greetings,

We have experienced a dramatic shift in this great nation of ours, and in the racial reckoning and global pandemic of these past two years, diversity, equity, and inclusion have risen to the forefront of difficult conversations. **COVID-19** has forced schools, parents, and students to adapt to different ways of learning and teaching. The needs of many have become the driving need for us all.

In examining our historical roots, the issue of education and equity was as important at our inception as it is now. Since 1867, when the **Southern Education Foundation** was first established as the **Peabody Fund**, our organization has championed equity in education for all citizens. What does that mean, exactly?

After the Civil War, our philanthropic founder, **George Peabody**, set out to help educate newly emancipated African Americans and “common people” through the first public education system in the South. Peabody provided funding to establish schools to educate the formerly enslaved and poor White children.

At the time, Black people had already started their own “field schools,” makeshift classrooms where they were teaching letters and reading to children, using any materials they could find. The assistance from Northern philanthropy further boosted their thirst for education and their ability to get it.

George Peabody’s philanthropy inspired others to act and grow our nation’s commitment to education. He was joined by other philanthropists who also focused their efforts on educating Blacks in the South. They included **John Slater**, whose **Slater Fund** supported the training of African American teachers and the expansion of public schools, and Quaker philanthropist and abolitionist **Anna T. Jeanes**, whose racially integrated **Jeanes Fund** tirelessly trained and prepared thousands of Jeanes Teachers and Jeanes Supervisors to provide education to Black and impoverished children. Slater raised public awareness for providing education to emancipated Southern freedmen, and Jeanes sparked the creation of the Black teaching profession.

In 1937, those funds and the **Randolph Fund**, named for the first Jeanes Supervisor, joined forces to become the Southern Education Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3). Today, we build on our historic roots in education equity through three primary strategies: conducting and promoting educational research to inform policy and practice, developing leaders for education equity, and conducting and supporting legislative and legal advocacy to advance educational opportunity.

As an advocacy organization, we engage communities and policymakers at all levels to address critical education issues that have a lasting impact on society.

We partner with public and private organizations to effect research-backed meaningful change for Black students, other students of color, and students from low-income families through local, state, and federal policies.

We develop leaders and strengthen equity-centered systems by creating professional learning opportunities for educators, district leadership, and emerging leaders that will improve outcomes for every child.

We conduct empirical research and analysis of key education issues, then widely share recommendations and solutions to increase access to high-quality education and opportunity for all students.

Our rich legacy includes the abolitionists and philanthropists who awakened America to the need for the government to provide education for all children, Black or White, rich or poor, urban or rural. It includes the formerly enslaved who took it upon themselves to seek out and access education for themselves and their children. That legacy is the heart and soul of the Southern Education Foundation.

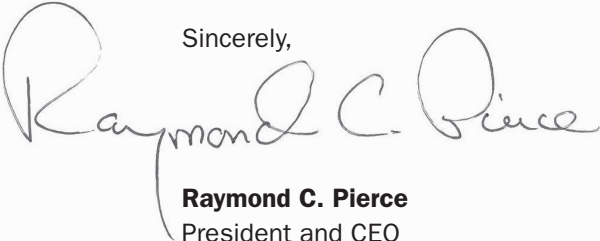


Four of the five living members of the Little Rock Nine attended the 2018 SEF Forum.

As I look back to our origin and marvel at the wisdom and bravery of those pioneers for education opportunity and equity, I ask myself: In the coming years, how will we deepen our mission? I can say wholeheartedly that we will challenge ourselves to remain thought leaders. We will push initiatives forward and break boundaries in education research, leadership development, and governmental policy guidance. Most importantly, we will continue to ask the difficult questions, dig deep to uncover resources and solutions, and widely share meaningful evidence and evidence-based policies.

The Southern Education Foundation is on an important journey to improve the lives of so many. We invite you to join us on our continued quest for access, opportunity, and action in education.

Sincerely,



Raymond C. Pierce
 President and CEO
 Southern Education Foundation

Government Affairs and Advocacy

Fighting in the public square for educational equity is what we do.

Throughout the 1930s, directors of SEF, such as Arthur D. Wright, James H. Dillard, Curtis Dixon, and R.L. Cousins, fought to equalize educational opportunities for all and made significant progress in reducing educational inequities for the South and for African Americans.

Strengthening the capacity of advocates and policymakers is what we do.

In 1889, speaking before the Alabama legislature, Peabody Fund Agent J.L.M. Curry declared: “Education is the fundamental basis of general and permanent prosperity. Poverty is the inevitable result of ignorance. Capital follows the schoolhouse.”



Georgia State Capitol

Schoolchildren don't pay taxes, and only occasionally take a field trip to the state capitols where their public education is shaped and funded. They don't see the legislation that undermines equitable access to a high-quality education and the opportunities education offers. But SEF does, and we constantly defend gains in equity and support efforts to achieve education justice. We stay armed with timely data, critical partnerships, and clarion messaging to build on our 155 years working in the political arenas of the South. Students and their families are counting on us.

Policy Work

Pushing back, pushing forward for educational equity

Safeguarding public funds by opposing school vouchers

While monitoring state legislative activity, SEF called out discriminatory bills and campaigned for equalizing ones. School vouchers, which siphon public education funds into private schools, continue to be popular measures, and our advocacy in this space included these highlights.

2021 Legislative target:

Georgia Educational Scholarship Act (HB60)

Our research showed: Georgia's public schools would lose \$45 million in the first year and \$2.5 billion over a decade if this voucher proposal succeeded.

Our message: The Georgia Educational Scholarship Act “is a violation of Georgia's constitutional mandate to fund education adequately ... by positioning the state to spend hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer funds and school districts to lose as much in per-pupil funding for public schools, HB60 perpetuates unequal opportunities for the state's public school students.”

— *Letter from SEF and nine Georgia civil rights and education advocacy organizations*

Outcome: Bill withdrawn in March 2021

2021 Legislative target:

Georgia Special Needs Voucher Expansion Bill (SB47)

Our research showed: The bill would funnel taxpayer dollars to unaccountable and unregulated private schools through a program that hasn't been proven effective. Some students would waive their federally guaranteed protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Our message: “We should invest in ensuring that public schools have the funding they need to educate each child—no matter their

disability, exceptionality, or health condition. Georgia students deserve nothing less.”

— *SEF Legislative and Research Analyst Sujith Cherukumilli*

Outcome: Passed and signed into law effective July 1, 2021



Tennessee Supreme Court

2021 Judicial target:

Education Savings Act (ESA) in Tennessee (*Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County v. Tennessee Department of Education, et al.*)

Our amicus brief showed: The ESA violates the Tennessee Constitution’s promise to provide for a high-quality public education for every student in the state and serves only to exacerbate inequity.

Our message: “It is disheartening to see the Tennessee legislature using school privatization under the guise of improving education, when we know that diverting money from public schools into private ones serves only to increase inequity and disenfranchise Black and Brown students and students from low-income families.”

— *SEF President and CEO Raymond C. Pierce*

Outcome: A Tennessee Court of Appeals ruled that ESA is unconstitutional. The case is under appeal.



Florida State Capitol

2021 Legislative Target:

Educational Scholarship Programs in Florida (SB 48)

Our research showed: This costly bill would pave the way for an industry of unaccountable private education providers, funding a program model that has not proven it provides academic benefits for participating students.

Our message: “Instead of the costly and unproven voucher experiment, Florida should expand the community schools program. Every child in Florida deserves a thriving public school in their community. By rejecting SB48, you will be supporting the nearly 3 million children in Florida waitlisted for fully funded public schools.”

— *Letter from SEF and seven diverse educational advocacy groups*

Outcome: Replaced by a similar bill (HB 7045) that was passed and became effective July 1, 2021, allowing school choice vouchers.

Safeguarding public funds by pressing for high-quality charter schools

When education tax dollars go to charter school students, public officials must hold those schools accountable for student outcomes. SEF is always in that conversation.

2021 Legislative Target:

Proposed appropriation of \$500 million in federal funding for charter schools in FY2022

Our research pointed out: The original mission of charter schools was to serve as hubs of innovation and experimentation that share their best practices in teaching and learning with public schools at large. Not all charter schools share this mission, and some actually exacerbate inequity in education by drawing students with the highest academic achievement and the funds that follow them out of public schools.

Our message: “What we do not want to do is invest \$500 million in schools that will only serve to further create inequities in a system that already struggles to provide every student—especially students of color and students from low-income families—with a high-quality education.”

— *SEF President and CEO Raymond C. Pierce*

Outcome: The final appropriation was \$440 million for the federal Charter School Program.

Safeguarding public education funds by opposing tax-credit scholarships

Public-school students—especially those who are historically marginalized—suffer when education tax dollars aren’t collected. That’s what happens with tax-credit legislation designed to benefit students who don’t need help. SEF keeps the spotlight on these attacks on educational equity.

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2020 Legislative Target:

Proposed \$5 billion federal Education Freedom Scholarship Program in FY21

Our research showed: Tax-credit scholarships do not improve student achievement, and in most cases benefit students from wealthy families, thereby exacerbating funding inequities. Reporting requirements are inconsistent and sometimes absent. Historically in the South, educational choice programs were used to undermine school integration efforts.

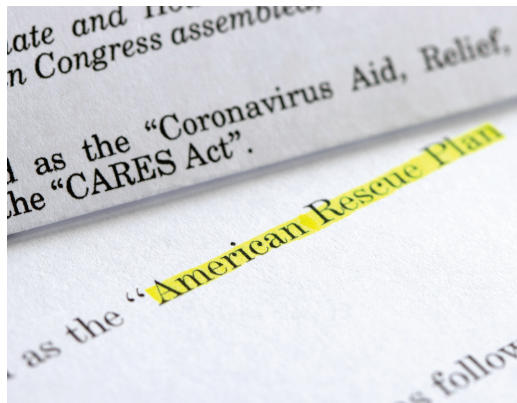
Our message: “The Education Freedom Scholarship would stray far from its stated goal of expanding opportunity for students and exacerbate funding inequities in communities already devoid of adequate resources for public schools.”

— *SEF Director of Public Policy and Advocacy Fred A. Jones, Jr.*

Outcome: The bill did not pass.

Encouraging the use of pandemic relief funds to address inequity in K–12 education

Will the flood of federal dollars meant to help students and schools cope with COVID-19 reach those most in need? SEF raised that



concern and urged policymakers to direct this watershed funding into efforts to address inequities in primary and secondary education.

2021 Target:

Southern states receiving \$64.2 billion in COVID-19-related educational funds from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Our research showed: This historic infusion of federal funding provides new opportunities, which include updating school infrastructure in low-wealth rural and urban school districts; recruiting and retaining a high-quality teacher workforce; articulating measurable equity goals; and demonstrating public transparency. SEF provided five recommendations for ensuring that these funds uplift students in greatest need. They range from addressing the digital divide to implementing whole child supports to defending against COVID-19 through purchasing personal protective equipment and upgrading ventilation systems.

Our message: “We are particularly concerned about long-standing inequities, exacerbated by the pandemic, which will persist unless we take action. As such, SEF encourages state and local education agencies throughout these nine Southern states to prioritize the needs of their most vulnerable students—students with disabilities, students from low-income families, students of color, English learners, and other historically underserved students and their families.”

— *SEF President and CEO Raymond C. Pierce*

Outcome: All but two states in the Southern region of the U.S. included at least one of SEF’s recommendations in the ARPA plans they submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Fighting legislation and policies that would suppress important discussions in schools about race and racism

Limiting what students learn about our nation’s history with race and racism in the classroom prevents them from gaining the knowledge they need to change the effects of racism. SEF monitored and pushed back on efforts to curtail how race is taught.

2021 Legislative Target:

Georgia bills (SB 5EX and SB 6EX) to redraw districts and change election rules for school board and county commission in suburban Gwinnett County

Our research showed: A small group of state legislators attempted to undermine local control by changing the election rules and the numbers of districts so that school boards would not represent the

interests of the local community. The bills' sponsor said the bills were intended to prevent the teaching of critical race theory.

Our message: “What is being taught in K–12 history and civics classes are lessons about the true history of our nation—good and bad—including the issues around race and the vestiges of racism. These classroom discussions—through curricula and other means—are crucial to help students understand our history and learn from it, so that they can help build a future that lives up to the ideals upon which this country was founded: that all are created equal.”

— *SEF President and CEO Raymond C. Pierce*

Outcome: Both bills were withdrawn, but new legislation has since been introduced in Georgia and elsewhere, and SEF is monitoring these developments.

Providing resources to advance educational equity for all students is what we do.

In 1910, The Peabody Fund (a precursor to SEF) provided a salary for the first state official employed to promote the education of African Americans in the South—a “State Agent for Negro Schools” in Virginia and later throughout the South.



Jeanes Teachers and patrons at Country School East Baton Rouge Parish

Election Guides

Educating voters to elect equity-minded leaders in key Southern races

Children’s education—and all the decisions that go into giving them a fair shot at learning in public school—is greatly influenced by elected leaders. To help voters in key Southern races determine which candidates support equitable public education, SEF published *Election 2020: Education Equity on the Ballot* (and SEF followed up in early 2021 with a similar guide for the U.S. Senate runoff election in Georgia).

2020 Strategic Target:

Voters for gubernatorial candidates in Delaware, Missouri, North Carolina, and West Virginia; the candidates for North Carolina State Superintendent of Public Instruction; and the candidates for State Board of Education in Districts 1, 3, 5, and 7 in Alabama and Districts 1, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, and 15 in Texas.

Our research showed where candidates stood on these key education equity issues:

- COVID-19 response and plan for distance learning
- Culturally relevant and anti-racist curriculum and pedagogy
- Early childhood education
- Elections for state superintendent of education and state board of education
- Equitable K–12 funding
- Private school choice
- School disciplinary policies
- School district governance
- School resource and police officers

- Teacher recruitment and retention
- Usage of governor’s emergency education relief (GEER) funds and other federal COVID-19 relief funds
- Virtual and for-profit charter schools
- Wraparound services

Our message: “A strong public education system is vital to achieving equity in our society, and the events of this year have underscored places where massive inequities persist, especially with regard to educational achievement and the digital divide. This year, voters have a role to play in determining how that funding is directed and accounted for by supporting candidates who have articulated that they will invest in supporting students most in need.”

— *SEF President and CEO Raymond C. Pierce*

Outcome: The guide was widely shared in Southern states by a range of education and community organizations.

“This fellowship honors Lynn Walker Huntley by providing young attorneys who will undertake the education equity and school desegregation work to which she was committed.”

— *Former NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund President Sherrilyn Ifill*

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Supporting legal action to achieve education justice is what we do.

In 1953, SEF became the home for a team of researchers sponsored by the Ford Foundation to compile a definitive study of the conditions of Black education in the South in anticipation of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. No Southern state university would accept the research project.

Lynn Walker Huntley Social Justice Fellowship

Priming the pipeline of civil rights attorneys who specialize in education

Educational opportunities don’t just happen for students of color and students from low-income families in the Southern states. Prying open those doors is what legal advocates do, and SEF is committed to ensuring a pipeline of dedicated attorneys for the future.

In 2021, the Lynn Walker Huntley Social Justice Fellowship established a path for early-career attorneys to do this important work in five key states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Open to third-year law students, the Fellowship is intended to help early-career lawyers develop the skills and experience they need to advance education equity through research, policy analysis, and litigation. The first fellow, recent Harvard Law graduate Harry Chui, will begin his fellowship in September 2022. The fellowship is a joint program with the Southern Poverty Law Center.



Brown v. Board of Education researchers

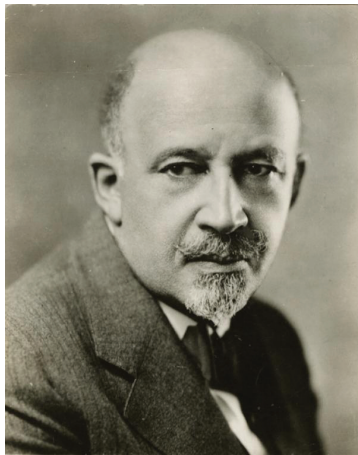
Lynn Walker Huntley (1946–2015) was SEF’s first female president, a civil rights attorney, and a Ford Foundation program officer. Among her many achievements were representing the plaintiffs in the landmark *Furman v. Georgia Supreme Court* case abolishing the federal death penalty.



Thought Leadership

Generating thought leadership around the importance of achieving educational equity, and its urgency, is what we do.

W.E.B. Du Bois, widely recognized as one of the most important Black scholars, activists, and historians in U.S. history, was one of the Southern Education Foundation's first scholars. His seminal work, *The Souls of Black Folks*, his articles in *The Crisis*, and other writings shaped and drove efforts to achieve equality for African Americans in all spheres.



W.E.B. Du Bois

Generating discussion of key education equity issues with a broader audience

Thought leadership is another important way that we elevate learning for Black students, other students of color, and students from low-income families in the Southern states. A regular column by SEF President and CEO Raymond C. Pierce is published by *Forbes*, which reaches 59 million U.S. unique visitors. These excerpts offer a sampling of how SEF promotes discussion of key issues related to education equity.

On the racist history of school vouchers:

"While public schools in the United States serve a student body that is approximately 51 percent White and 48.3 percent children of color (primarily Black and Latinx), nearly three out of every four private school students are White. It's part of a historical pattern."

On pandemic opportunities to address deep-rooted inequities:

"We owe it to our children and ourselves to take advantage of this unique moment, this shared experience, and what we have learned to advance the crucial public option of education, both acknowledging its existing inequities and committing to ending them."

On school boards as a baseline for democracy:

"During Reconstruction, recently emancipated African Americans in the South played a key role in creating a public school system where their children could be educated. It's time our community returned to the roots of that effort. We must identify and call on the leaders in our communities with the skills, talent, expertise, and drive to help govern our schools."

On the important role of lawyers in education equity:

"Existing practices and policies, like inequitable school funding formulas, present barriers to opportunity for Black and Brown students. We have not yet achieved full equity. The fight for civil rights continues, and we need civil rights attorneys to help lead that fight."

On the need for investments in communities of color to achieve racial equity:

"The work that must be done is plentiful and even a great commitment cannot meet the need, so all of us engaged in advancing equity must be very strategic about where we invest our time and resources to maximize those investments."

On supporting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs):

"The thoughts and theories of Black scholars, enhanced and sharpened by the freedom they enjoy on historically Black campuses, bring unique and needed perspectives to important national



conversations. Perspectives that sometimes make all the difference in how our nation approaches the critical issues of the day.”

On COVID-19-interrupted education:

“The negative impact of remote learning is being visited most upon Black and Brown children. Unless we act to address this problem, the negative impact for many of these students will be with them throughout their lives. Analyses show that going forward, the negative long-term effects can include reduced opportunities for higher education, lower lifetime earnings, lower rates of matriculation, and even increased rates of engagement with the criminal justice system, including incarceration.”

On the public focus over how race is taught in public schools:

“We must be honest with ourselves and with our children about our nation’s history, good and bad, for we cannot fix that which we pretend is not flawed.”

On the importance of developing educational leaders for equity:

“Without it, we will never achieve our goal of creating systemic change to advance equitable education opportunities and deeper learning outcomes for African American students, other students of color, and students from low-income families from preschool through post-secondary education in the South.”

On zero-tolerance and other harsh measures for students who misbehave:

“Black and Brown students and students with disabilities are disproportionately punished and punished more harshly for nonviolent infractions of the rules. If we are going to commit to improving our public schools, we must face down this issue of misbehavior and address it comprehensively and straight on. Otherwise, we run the risk of putting students, especially students of color, even further behind academically.”

On the Georgia State Board of Education resolution that set parameters for how racism is taught:

“Policymakers, conservative activists, and their allies should focus on finding ways to overcome the persistent disparities in our public schools and to implement plans that are inclusive of all of the realities of our history, regardless of how uncomfortable they may be.”

On Florida’s decision to provide private school vouchers—funded with public education dollars—to parents in school districts requiring that masks be worn in schools:

“This decision undermines local control and authority over local schools and drains funds from an already underfunded public school system.... It is time for the Florida Board of Education, the Governor, and leaders throughout the nation to put their faith and their trust in the people whom local communities have entrusted with their children’s education and safety, and let them do their jobs.”





On tackling the widening digital divide from the pandemic:
“Families in Baltimore or Edgecombe County, North Carolina, or East LA with total household incomes around \$30,000 to \$40,000 (or lower) struggle just to pay an internet bill. Parents are parking outside libraries and fast food restaurants so their kids can get online. Our country is better than that.”

Leadership Development

“Research consistently demonstrates that leadership is critical to creating more equitable and inclusive schools. Addressing deep, persistent disparities in education requires visionary leadership with a strong equity orientation, a clear sense of purpose, and the ability to mobilize others. That’s why leadership development remains a critical component of the work of the Southern Education Foundation. For 155 years, we have worked to cultivate change agents ready and willing to fight to break the links between race and opportunity, and to ensure that education can be the great equalizer we believe it to be.”

— *Kenita Williams, SEF Chief Operating Officer*



Anthony D. Jones

Despite decades of public education reforms, race and class remain among the most reliable predictors of student success in school, particularly in Southern states. This is largely because students of color and students from low-income families have been taught within school systems that retain vestiges of discriminatory policies and practices. SEF believes in the power of leaders to change this. We believe that education equity and social justice can be advanced by bold leaders who have the perspective, understanding, confidence, and skills to navigate the complex landscape of public education and the challenges of racial and social inequity. Therefore, SEF offers research-based, practitioner-informed professional learning opportunities for individuals across the continuum, from rising leaders to C-level professionals.

Southern Education Leadership Initiative

Leading creatively through COVID-19

The dynamic, diverse students chosen for the 2021 Southern Education Leadership Initiative fellowship refused to let the coronavirus pandemic prevent their work: creating school systems that give Black and Brown children access to the educational opportunity they deserve. Their indomitable spirit infused their twin goals of strengthening personal leadership development and influencing systemic change.

“My work as a SELI fellow has the potential to reform the health screening process within public schools in the state of Georgia. Moving to Colorado, I continue working with rural schools and students of color in south-central and southeast Colorado as I finish my doctoral degree in school psychology. ‘The battle of my people must be a moral one, not a legal or physical one,’ W.E.B. Du Bois said, and as the social context of America has changed, there have been decades-long battles for greater representation within the various fields of psychology. I use the leadership skills gained through my SELI fellowship to advocate at the University of Denver for more culturally aware and relevant research, and engage with programs that focus on achieving educational equity.”

— *Anthony D. Jones, MSW, doctoral student in the University of Denver Morgridge College of Education and graduate research assistant in the Center for Rural School Health and Education*



Antonia Adams

“By being persistent and being passionate, not only through SELI but for the rest of life, I’ll be making an impact as a leader.”
— Antonia Adams, 2021 Ginny Looney
Servant Leader Award honoree



Ginny Looney

Antonia Adams is one shining example. She brought her social media skills, effervescent personality, and dance moves to promote pathways to higher education for South Carolina high school students from rural, low-income communities. Thanks to her placement as a SELI fellow at the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, students across the state know her as **@LiveLoveAntonia**. On Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, she challenged high school seniors who see college financial aid as yet another obstacle to higher education.

“But is that really a good reason to give up money to earn a degree? We think... **NOT!**” she said in a post that teased her step-by-step video series.

Managing a National College Attainment Network Grant, Adams used data to pinpoint the areas in her state with the lowest Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates. She recruited a team of FAFSA guides who reached out to high schools, colleges, and churches across South Carolina to assist students one on one.

“A nontraditional student reached out to me to say, ‘Thank you so much for helping me with my FAFSA,’” said Adams, whose parents attended segregated Southern schools. “She got the aid that she needed to go to school and provide a better life for her family, and that matters more to me than my career trajectory. I know that by being persistent and being passionate, not only through SELI but for the rest of life, I’ll be making an impact as a leader.”

SEF recognized Adams’s outstanding work and commitment by honoring her with the 2021 **Ginny Looney Servant Leader Award**. An Atlanta attorney, **Looney** was dedicated to ethics and restoring faith in government. Adams plans to attend law school after earning her degrees in business economics and political science from the University of South Carolina’s Honors College. The Looney Award granted her an additional stipend and a \$500 donation to the Southern education effort of her choice. Adams selected Women In Unity, a nonprofit organization that supports positive change in the lives of disadvantaged children and families in her hometown of Edgefield, SC.

Adams is now working with the commission as a college access consultant, and her 10 college process ambassadors are busy on social media, documenting their paths to college while promoting student success resources.



a program of the Southern Education Foundation

Developing educational leaders is what we do.

In 1962, SEF supported more than 100 summer training programs for college students (as well as teachers and principals) across the South.



Principals at the SEF summer training program evaluation meeting

SELI 2021 Fellows

These **17 SELI Fellows** represent the essential pipeline of dedicated, informed, and highly skilled leaders committed to changing education for students in the South.



Antonia Adams, University of South Carolina Honors College (South Carolina Commission on Higher Education).

Melody Andrews, Howard University educational leadership and policy studies doctoral program (UNCF).

Salih Cevik, University of Georgia educational administration and policy doctoral program (Intercultural Development and Research Association).

Maria Angelés DeSantos-Quezada, University of Texas at Austin education leadership and policy master's program (LatinxEd).

Haley Gray, Vanderbilt University Peabody College master of public policy program with a concentration on K–12 education policy (Intercultural Development and Research Association).

Kelly Jasiura, Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy master's program (Georgia Department of Education).

Anthony Jones, Jackson State University social work graduate program (Georgia Department of Education).

Joseph-Emerly Kouaho, University of Georgia educational administration policy doctoral program (Southern Education Foundation).

Theo M. Moore II, Tuskegee University integrative and public policy and development doctoral program (Alabama Possible).

Octavian Moten, University of Memphis sociology graduate program (Stand for Children Memphis).

Taylor Newkirk, University of Maryland College Park master of public policy program (Griffin-Spalding County [Ga.] Schools).

Allie Schneider, Yale University cognitive science undergraduate concentration in social cognition and education (Georgia Budget and Policy Institute).

Virginia Sciolino, Wesleyan University religious studies bachelor degree (Foundation for the MidSouth).

Emille Taylor, Washington University in St. Louis double major in statistics and educational studies and minor in American culture studies (Latin American Association).

Lexi Tomkunas, University of Connecticut human development and family sciences doctoral program (Voices for Georgia's Children).

Huseyin Uysal, University of Florida doctoral program in curriculum and instruction specializing in ESOL/bilingual education (Texas Appleseed).

Addy Weaver, University of Maine social psychology graduate program (DeSoto [Tex.] Independent School District).

Racial Equity Leadership Network

Learning and succeeding through the program pause

C-level school district leaders feel the weight of persistent disparities and challenges for students of color and students from low-income families. How can they break historic cycles of inequity? Every day, they make decisions that influence learning and opportunity, often without crucial resources and tools. These leaders get support for their best decision-making through the **Racial Equity Leadership Network (RELN)**. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic postponed the fourth RELN cohort, the alumni network increased their support for one another and celebrated success over adversity.

RELN alumna **Valerie Bridges** was recognized for her outstanding commitment and skill when she was named North Carolina's Superintendent of the Year for 2021. Bridges joined RELN's first cohort around the same time that she became superintendent of Edgecombe County Schools. Every RELN fellow recruits a support team, identifies an equity problem to tackle in their district, and collects fresh ideas, data, and tools to share with their staff. Along with system change, they gain personal development through habits like journaling.

Dr. Bridges' leadership has created an environment of inclusion and positivity through the Micro School concept – a holistic approach to education that gives each student constant oversight and support while inspiring them to excel. The results speak for themselves. Bridges' district had a 70 percent increase in schools meeting or exceeding growth requirements, while student discipline referrals decreased by approximately 50 percent.



T. Lamar Goree

“RELN helped us not to run over people’s thoughts with solutions. That sounds simple, but that has been such a win for me, as we are developing policy to support having high-quality teachers in front of all children. We’re building that conversation and bringing everyone along with those policy changes that do involve money, and RELN has definitely provided the courage and conversation to move forward with those policy changes.”

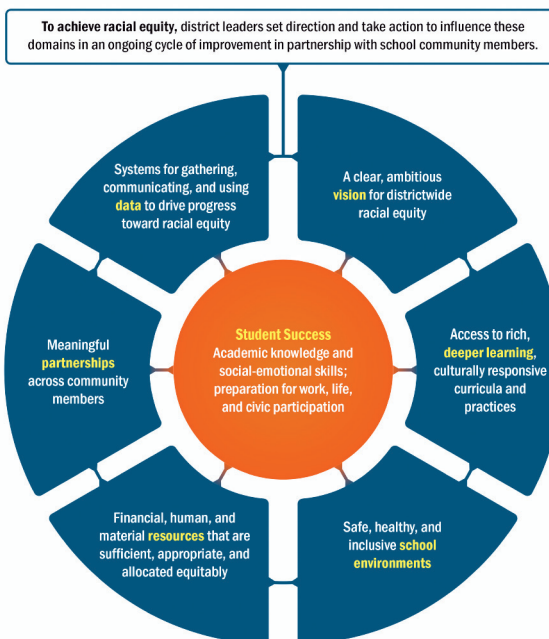
— T. Lamar Goree, Superintendent of Cadoo Parish (La.) Public Schools, where teachers in 2022 will receive bonuses up to \$2,500 for their efforts during the pandemic.

Equipping educational leaders for systemic change is what we do.

In the 1920s, SEF began providing graduate trainings for African American principals, creating a pipeline that eventually helped integrate Southern state universities. The training helped qualify educators to pursue further graduate education, and because no state universities would enroll them due to their race, their states granted them out-of-state tuition vouchers. When those practices were ruled unconstitutional, state governments had to open “substantially equal” Black graduate schools or admit qualified Black graduate students to state-supported White universities. The Ford Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and other national funders supported these SEF trainings.

DARE Tool

Sharing our free new tool to advance educational equity



Faced with research data showing how deep inequities persist for children of color and those from low-income families, educational leaders can make a difference with a new resource: the **Districts Advancing Racial Equity (DARE)** tool.

In 2020, SEF helped produce this practical, peer-reviewed resource. It provides guidance to help district leaders to investigate their systems, set equity-oriented goals, and track progress over time so that all students receive the best possible education. Created in collaboration with the Learning Policy Institute, the tool is a more formalized version of a resource developed through the RELN program.

The DARE tool can be downloaded for free from the SEF website (southerneducation.org). It includes:

- synthesis of what is known about district actions that can support racial equity
- evidence-based ways for creating systems that strengthen students of color
- framework for understanding a district’s complex ecosystem of policies and practices
- qualitative and quantitative indicators to support data-informed decision-making and track progress toward greater racial equity

Before the DARE tool, SEF did not have a systemic way to share this strategic knowledge with district leaders outside RELN who wanted to create educational equity.



a program of the Southern Education Foundation



Valerie Bridges

RELN alumna and Edgecombe County Public Schools Superintendent
Dr. Valerie Bridges was named North Carolina Superintendent of the Year for 2022.

Equity Scorecard Series

Helping education leaders use data to identify and address racial disparities

During March and April 2021, SEF piloted a three-part professional learning series on using data to drive transformational change in school systems. The series trained nearly 40 school superintendents on how to create and effectively utilize Equity Scorecards, a tool used to shine a light on racial disparities by systematically analyzing data on key indicators of student outcomes. For these district leaders, the series provided a powerful tool to identify, analyze, and address race-based opportunity gaps in institutional policies and practices, call out race as a central driver of educational inequity, combat deficit discourse by focusing on systems instead of people, and identify paths for ameliorating disparities.

Both a tool and a process, the Scorecard helps systems and institutions organize data on key indicators of student access and outcomes. Practitioners learned ways to examine that data through a racial equity lens, so that district and school leaders can identify and address gaps, test solutions, and measure and monitor progress toward achieving racial equity.

Publicizing Urgent Digital Divide Research

Responding to pandemic learning gaps with evidence-based research

Students of color and students from low-income families have historically faced disparities affecting their academic achievement. Educational crises like that caused by COVID-19 create even greater challenges to accessing a high-quality education. Only weeks after the pandemic began, SEF conducted research and provided evidence-based guidance to help educators and policymakers innovate during this crisis, centering justice and equity. In March 2020, as schools were moving to remote learning, SEF joined Common Sense Media and other leading organizations to launch WideOpenSchool.org, a free online resource to support families and educators transitioning to remote learning in response to the coronavirus.

The following month, SEF produced resources highlighting the best solutions for supporting students who were put at a disadvantage by remote learning. Here are the highlights:

April 2020

Issue: Nearly 20 percent of African American children ages 3–18, and 21 percent of families earning less than \$40,000 per year, have no access to the internet at home.

As national media headlines carried messages like this
(Washington Post, April 14, 2020):

How COVID-19 has laid bare the vast inequities in U.S. public education



SEF experts were guiding educators by publishing *Distance Learning During COVID-19: 7 Equity Considerations for Schools and Districts*. These seven questions started with “How is your district reaching students and families who don’t have internet access?” and ended with “What expectations do you have of parents for distance learning?” Published within a month after the pandemic began, this report shared success stories (buses equipped with Wi-Fi in Charleston County School District) and resources (Baltimore City Public Schools’ parent learning packets).

August 2020

Issue: Persistent inequities created by distance learning include students not receiving summer learning and teachers lacking support for their own mental health needs.

As national media headlines carried messages like this
(Washington Post, August 16, 2020):

‘A national crisis’: As coronavirus forces many schools online this fall, millions of disconnected students are being left behind

“This dashboard highlights the need for more resource equity and for investments in technologies like universal internet access to ensure that all our children get a high-quality education, whether in school or at home.”

— SEF President & CEO Raymond Pierce

SEF experts provided insights into how school districts could mitigate the digital divide by publishing *Advancing Equity in Distance Learning Dashboard and Briefs*. Data from 48 school districts across 20 states reflect the demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic diversity of public schools in the South. SEF began tracking, across 20 indicators, how these districts were providing academic, social-emotional, and other support to students, and helping teachers and parents transition to distance learning. As state legislatures made decisions about public education budgets, SEF pointed to possible funding priorities: social-emotional resources for teachers, summer learning opportunities for students, and increased aid to rural districts.

January 2021

Issue: Up to 12 million K–12 students remain digitally underserved going into 2021.

As national media headlines carried messages like this
(*Washington Post*, January 20, 2021):

Education

Internet regulation takes on greater urgency as pandemic highlights digital divide

“The digital divide predated COVID-19 and will persist beyond it without further action. We need leaders in government, corporations, philanthropies, and the education sector to seize the moment and work together on practical and lasting solutions.”

— Report coauthor Lane McBride, Boston Consulting Group managing director and partner

SEF experts were guiding educators by publishing *Looking Back, Looking Forward: What It Will Take to Permanently Close the K-12 Digital Divide*. They pointed to an urgent need: more than 75 percent of the digital connections made for education will expire in three years. Three main culprits in the digital divide are unavailable broadband, cost, and human barriers such as lack of digital skills or distrust of providers. Closing the divide will require \$6 billion to \$11 billion for the first year, and \$4 billion to \$8 billion annually. Federal and state policy should support greater investment in broadband and affordable options, and public, private, and social sector partnerships are essential to digital equity.

July 2021

Issue: Teachers’ stress, which was exacerbated by the pandemic, creates poorer outcomes for students, especially those of color and from low-income families.

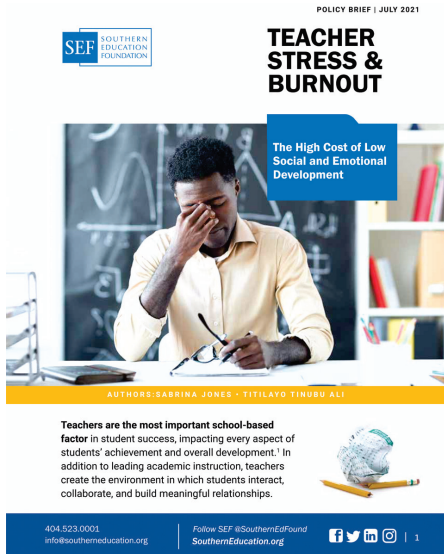
As national media headlines carried messages like this
(*Washington Post*, July 10, 2021):

Returning to school was supposed to be great. The reality was more complicated.

SEF experts provided insights into supporting teachers by publishing *Teacher Stress and Burnout: The High Cost of Low Social and Emotional Development*. While the benefits of social-emotional learning (SEL) for students are well documented, teachers rarely are given the opportunity to recognize and manage their emotions, show empathy, build relationships, and collaborate effectively. The resulting absenteeism and turnover are most likely to affect students of color and students from low-income families. SEF recommends ensuring that new teachers especially receive this training.

“If we want our schools to be optimal learning environments, we need to provide teachers with the opportunity to build their own social and emotional skills, such as self-management and relationship skills. Teachers can then use these skills to manage their own emotions, co-regulate their students’ stress, and contribute to creating a healthier school climate.”

— Report coauthor Sabrina Jones, 2021 SEF Leadership for Educational Equity Fellow



Teacher support is what we do.

In 1913, the Jeanes Fund supported 125 “lead teachers” working and traveling across the South to improve curricula and instruction in small, rural schools for African Americans. Over time, the number of Jeanes Teachers and Supervisors across the South grew into the hundreds. Jeanes Supervisors were the first to awaken the consciences of many for the improvement of all schools. The Jeanes Fund eventually merged with three other foundations to become SEF.

Strategic Initiatives

HBCU Highlights

Building and protecting the HBCU pipeline

The **HBCU OpEd Project** is positioning researchers at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as thought leaders in the South and beyond. Through this project, 20 professors from Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse College, and Spelman College were selected to be Public Voices Fellows and paired with experienced journalist mentors, to learn how to translate their research into policy-relevant content published by news media. SEF’s partner is The OpEd Project, an ambitious and successful program created to increase the public impact of our nation’s top underrepresented thinkers and to ensure that diverse ideas help shape important national and local conversations.

The **impact of the pandemic on HBCU students** is the focus of two SEF-funded research teams expected to report on their findings in late 2022. One team is examining the effect of the pandemic on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) workforce development for Black male HBCU students. The other team is exploring how COVID-19’s impact on employment has affected HBCU students’ ability to attend college. SEF’s funding partner is the TIAA Institute, which will publish the reports as TIAA Institute Research Dialogues. The Institute builds and shares knowledge in higher education, particularly in academic workforce trends and issues, higher education leadership, innovation, and financial sustainability. To address the issues identified in the reports and present them to legislators throughout the Southern states, SEF will develop policy and practice recommendations.

Collaborating across strategic sectors

The educational challenges that face historically marginalized children and their families are massive, and no one organization or group can manage it all. SEF partners strategically to fight educational inequities.

Liberal Arts: Our HBCU Cornerstone

Broadening HBCU student knowledge

All students need critical thinking skills that are informed by a broader understanding of the world. These skills are essential for maintaining a society with democratic participation and effective citizenship. Students from Clark Atlanta University, Dillard University, Norfolk State University, Tuskegee University, and Virginia Union University are benefiting from an SEF pilot program,

HBCUs are tied to what we do.

In 1866, Atlanta University received its charter as the first HBCU in the South. In 1893, the Slater Fund, established by John Slater in 1882, was supporting Atlanta University and several other Black colleges, including Spelman College, Talladega College, Philander Smith, Jackson College, Meharry Medical College, and Benedict Institute. The Slater Fund eventually merged with three other foundations to become SEF.



Winston-Salem State University was established in 1892 as the Slater Industrial Academy.

Liberal Arts: Our HBCU Cornerstone, an initiative to strengthen liberal arts education for STEM field students funded by a planning grant from the Teagle Foundation.

This pilot program, Liberal Arts: Our HBCU Cornerstone, uses transformational texts to prepare students for leadership roles, especially in STEM fields, that require creative thinking with the imagination and broad worldview necessary to solve problems.

Outcomes Based Contracting

Contracting for better outcomes

Five school districts that serve a total of more than 4,000 students are participating in a pilot program that aims to dramatically improve student outcomes—and tie those results to contractor payment. The Outcomes Based Contracting (OBC) pilot project began as an initiative at the Center for Education Policy Research (CEPR) at Harvard University. Transferred to SEF in 2021, it focuses on math tutoring contracts and ties payment of contracts to improved student outcomes in math. This project is targeting pervasive equity gaps in Boston Public Schools, Denver Public Schools, Duval County (Florida) Public Schools, Ector County (Texas) Independent School District, and Fulton County (Georgia) Schools. The goal is to support collaborative partnerships between districts and vendors that better meet student needs and achieve better results.

Research confirms that math preparedness and success, particularly in algebra, is a gateway to more advanced course-taking and increases the likelihood of high school graduation. While many school districts use tutoring to help support student achievement in math, those programs do not always improve outcomes for students. Supporting achievement in mathematics through improved tutoring services for Black students, other students of color, and students from low-income families can help advance educational equity and their chances of success later in life.



John Slater

2020 Southern Education Foundation Statement of Finances

Investment Income and Gain (Losses)	\$ 3,031,632
Other Revenue	532,917
Net Assets Released from Restrictions (1)	869,391
Total Unrestricted Revenue and Gains	4,433,940
Program Services Expenses	1,742,554
Management and General	1,392,065
Fundraising	197,943
Total Expenses	3,332,562
Change in Assets without Donor Restrictions	1,101,378
Change in Assets with Donor Restrictions	52,663
Cash and Cash Equivalents	2,780,189
Investment Securities	23,737,328
Total Assets	27,828,839
Total Liabilities	1,343,258
Net Assets	26,485,581
Ratio of Net Assets to Total Expenses	795%
Program Services as a Percent of Total Expenses	52%
Revenue Coverage of Program Services	254%

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“This is an invitation to young people to imagine a world beyond racism, where respect for human rights is a reality and where unity and fairness rule.”

— *Lynn Walker Huntley*
former President and CEO,
Southern Education Foundation

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Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Photographs and Prints Division, The New York Public Library. (1930–1960).
W.E.B. Du Bois Retrieved from <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/7847a051-093d-dd93-e040-e00a1806577a>



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Connect with SEF @SouthernEdFound



The Southern Education Foundation, founded in 1867, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported by partners and donors committed to advancing equitable education policies and practices that elevate learning for Black students, other students of color, and students from low-income families in the southern states. We develop and disseminate research-based solutions for policymakers and grow the capacity of education leaders and influencers to create systemic change.