The Education Trust–West

Harnessing Evidence for Equity

2023-24 Research Agenda

For over two decades, EdTrust-West has conducted research focused on increasing educational equity in schools, districts, community colleges, and universities across California. We leverage mixed-methods approaches, harnessing insights gleaned from quantitative data as well as the rich nuance and depth that emerges from stories gathered from engagements with students, educators, and families. In doing so, we seek to identify opportunities for building education systems worthy of California's incredible young people – particularly students belonging to communities of color, those learning English, and those experiencing poverty – too few of whom currently receive the support needed to attain their dreams.

The goals of our research and data analysis are threefold. We work to:

► Document and uplift the assets and aspirations that California's students and families carry with them as they navigate public education;

► Measure and expose educational outcome and opportunity gaps for students of color, multilingual learners, and students from low-income households and identify the root causes and structural inequities at the heart of those gaps;

► Gather evidence of effective approaches to closing opportunity and outcome gaps to inform the design of impactful state-level policy solutions and guide local shifts in practice and programming.

In this agenda, we share the high-level research questions EdTrust-West is investigating in 2024. In keeping with a commitment to advocacy grounded in evidence, those questions go hand-in-hand with the policy priorities outlined in our **2023-24 Policy Agenda**. Our research team conducted a landscape scan and engaged a diverse array of stakeholders – including partners, educators who sit on EdTrust-West's **Educator Advisory Council**, advocates and community organizers who comprise our **Communities Organized for Racial Equity in Education (CORE) Collective**, and the education equity leaders who serve on our **Strategic Advisory Council** – to help identify urgent questions where EdTrust-West has the most potential to add unique value by taking a clear, unwavering racial equity focus in our inquiry.

As we pursue answers to the questions included in this agenda, we commit to regularly communicating findings directly with school and college campus communities and practitioners as well as elevating them more broadly to TK-12 and higher education leaders and state legislators. In doing so, we hope our research translates directly into action by equipping advocates, families, community members, and decision-makers with clear, accessible data that shines a light on students' educational experiences. The value of our findings lies in their ability to bolster the work of local equity champions and galvanize local and state political leaders to unflinchingly pursue the evidence-based changes needed to achieve racial equity in California's education systems.

TK-12 Education

Diverse & Effective Educators

▶ Where are there gaps in access for students of color and multilingual learners to high-quality educators who reflect the diversity of students in their classrooms?

▶ What conditions within the state's educator pipeline – including recruitment, preparation, induction, and retention – create and perpetuate inequitable access to properly credentialed teachers?

▶ What supports and incentives can the state leverage to attract and retain a robust cohort of educators at all stages of the education continuum who reflect the diversity of the state's students?

Rigorous, Culturally Affirming Instruction

▶ What conditions support multilingual learners to grow and thrive in math learning? Where are the largest gaps in math opportunity and outcomes for multilingual learners and how can the California Mathematics Framework be leveraged to close those gaps?

▶ What successes and challenges are schools and districts experiencing as they work to implement legislation requiring high schools to offer ethnic studies courses and prepare for ethnic studies to become a graduation requirement for the class of 2030?

Inclusive, High-Quality Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

▶ As the state expands access to transitional kindergarten, how do TK participation rates differ by students' race/ethnicity, and what are the root causes for these differences? What are the experiences of families of color with public TK programs, and what information and conditions shape families' decisions about whether to participate in public TK programs?

▶ What challenges to implementing TK are local education agencies facing that impact program access and quality – particularly those serving the largest populations of students of color, students from low-income households, and multilingual learners?

Adequate & Equitable Funding

▶ How are state and federal dollars being allocated within districts, between schools? What equity gaps exist in spending within districts, and what are the primary drivers of those gaps in the districts where they are largest?

▶ What policies and procedures are used by districts to effectively ensure that resources are targeted to schools and students with the largest gaps in educational opportunities and outcomes?

Higher Education Access and Success

💲 Financial Aid Access

▶ Where have schools and districts in California made progress in increasing financial aid application completion rates for students who are underrepresented in higher education? What remaining equity gaps exist after the first year of implementing the state's universal financial aid application requirement (AB469)?

📊 Shifting from Remediation to Acceleration

▶ How can schools, districts and the state increase college readiness for Black, Native American, and Latinx students by increasing access to, and success in, A-G courses and dual enrollment?

▶ How are community colleges progressing in implementing legislation requiring the elimination of remedial coursework and placing students in transfer-level courses with support (AB705 and AB1705)? What policies and practices can community colleges leverage to eliminate remedial coursework and support students to succeed in credit-bearing, transfer-level courses?

🤲 Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Students in Higher Education

▶ What does data collection on the experiences and outcomes of parenting students, and use of that data, look like across the California State University System?

▶ How are parenting students experiencing California's higher education institutions, and what do they believe colleges and universities can do to foster a robust sense of belonging for parenting students on their campuses?

As we unearth answers to each of these critical research questions over the course of the next year, we'll share findings through reports, fact sheets and briefs, Data Equity Walks, our Research in Brief series, and interactive data tools.

Our research is conducted by and for the communities we advocate with and can only be accomplished through partnership and collaboration. In that spirit, we invite you to connect with us to explore the following opportunities to contribute to our research, uplift recent related research, and help amplify findings and share data to drive critical equity conversations in any of the following ways:

1. **Submit a proposal** for a Research in Brief to translate research findings for policymakers

2. Reach out to explore hosting a **Data Equity Walk** in your community, school, or college

3. **Join our email list** to stay updated on the latest EdTrust-West research and access resources

4. **Reach out to our research team** to discuss a specific research question or topic