What 25 Years of Impact Reveals About How EdTrust-West Creates Change in Education

edtrust WEST | 25 YEARS



Note from the Executive Director

EdTrust-West's Impact on California Education

When people ask about EdTrust-West's impact over the last 25 years, they often expect to hear about a particular policy victory, legislative win, report, or campaign. Yet behind every victory is a relentless, long-term commitment to reshaping public education across our state. Those accomplishments matter, and they have helped create new opportunities for students across California.

As I've reflected on our first quarter century, however, I've found myself returning to a different conclusion. The policies matter. The outcomes matter. But the real story behind our impact is the organization's ability to repeatedly take on difficult challenges, help move systems toward better solutions, and remain engaged long enough to ensure those solutions benefit students.

Over the years, California's educational landscape has changed dramatically. New challenges have emerged, old challenges have evolved, and public priorities have shifted. Through those changes, EdTrust-West has remained adaptable to an evolving education landscape while keeping our focus on improving opportunities and outcomes for students. While the issues have changed, our core approach to driving systemic progress has remained remarkably consistent and impactful.



Christopher J. Nellum, Ph.D.

To read my full note, scan the QR code

The Approach Behind Our Impact

Looking across our work, our approach has helped drive lasting progress for students.

We Identify Challenges Others Overlook

Many barriers students face are hidden in data, embedded in complex systems, or accepted as inevitable. Through rigorous research, community partnerships, and an unwavering focus on evidence, we bring clarity to equity gaps that might otherwise remain invisible.

We Help Turn Solutions Into Action

Identifying a problem is only the beginning. We bring together educators, advocates, policymakers, students, and families to design solutions grounded in evidence and real-world experience, bridging the gap between research, policy, and practice.

We Stay Engaged Until Students Benefit

A bill signing or budget allocation is a milestone, not the finish line. Students benefit when implementation challenges are solved on the ground. We stay engaged long after the headlines fade, and it's what transforms promising policy into real progress.

In What Areas Does EdTrust-West Have Impact?

In the following pages, you'll see how much of our quarter-century of impact centers on three pillars that are fundamental to our success:

1. **Expanding Access to Opportunity**
2. **Improving Students' Educational Experiences**
3. **Strengthening Systems for Long-Term Results**



1. *Expanding Access to Opportunity*

Accelerating Early College & Dual Enrollment

Students from historically underserved communities were significantly less likely to have access to opportunities to earn college credit while still in high school. We helped expose those disparities through research, elevated the issue in public and policy conversations, worked alongside partners to shape solutions that expanded access, and remained engaged as those changes were implemented.

What Changed

California expanded dual enrollment pathways statewide, allowing **532,200 high school students** to build early momentum toward college completion. Additionally, through EdTrust-West's policy leadership and coalition advocacy, we secured **more than $700 million to expand college access and college pathways**.

532,200 Students

Number of California high school students expected to participate in dual enrollment, career and technical education, and early college through the Golden State Pathways Program, representing 28% of California's total high school population.[1]

Over $700 million

Secured through EdTrust-West's policy leadership and coalition advocacy to expand college access statewide for dual enrollment pathways.

1 https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/policy-brief-early-insights-from-the-golden-state-pathways-program.pdf

Helping More Students Afford College

Far too many students missed out on state and federal financial aid simply because they lacked support navigating complex application processes. We created public data tools to make completion rates transparent, championed policy requiring application support for high school seniors, and worked directly with districts on execution.

What Changed

Between 2021 and 2023, **42,000 more California students completed financial aid applications**. The state's 2026–27 budget also invests **$4.2 billion in financial aid grants and application support** to help more students afford college.



42,000 Students

Number of additional students who completed financial aid applications between 2021 and 2023, leading to an increase of almost 1,500 additional students enrolling in college.[2]

$4.2 billion

The amount of funding for financial aid grants and application support for California students included in the state's 2026-27 budget.

2 PPIC https://www.ppic.org/publication/college-enrollment-under-californias-new-financial-aid-application-policy/?utm_source=ppic&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=epub


CUFF / BUILDING
$h = \frac{1}{2} g t^2$
RANGE : $\cos 0^\circ \equiv 1$ and $V_0 = V_x$
$R = v_x t$
$R = V_0 \cos\theta t$

2. *Improving Students' Educational Experiences*

Expanding Access to High-Quality Math Learning

Students' math achievement has remained stagnant for far too long due to limited access to high-quality instruction, closing doors to advanced coursework, higher education, and high-wage career pathways. EdTrust-West led a statewide coalition of educators and advocacy groups to establish core math equity principles, shape state framework guidance, and secure implementation funding.

What Changed

California adopted modernized, research-backed guidelines, including new math materials, that could benefit **nearly three million students** in the next two years. Through EdTrust-West's advocacy, California is investing **$200 million in professional learning for math instructional leaders in every county**.

Nearly 3 million

Estimated number of California K-8 students who could benefit from new math materials within the next two years based on adoption patterns in large, high-need districts.

$200 million

Amount of funding championed by EdTrust-West to build a strong, statewide professional learning system that is reaching math instructional leaders in every county in California.



3. *Strengthening Systems for Long-Term Results*

Directing More Resources To Schools & Students

California's school funding system failed to consistently provide adequate resources to students and communities with the greatest needs. EdTrust-West helped build the case for a fairer approach through research, coalition leadership, and advocacy, then remained engaged after reforms were adopted to strengthen accountability and ensure implementation reflected the law's original intent.

What Changed

Through the Local Control Funding Formula, California restructured TK-12 finance, directing **$142 billion** to districts and ranking **second nationally in education funding** while prioritizing students with the greatest needs.

$142 billion

Amount allocated in 2024-25 to TK-12 funding, representing a dramatic increase in school funding since the adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula in 2013.

2nd place

California ranks second in the nation for education funding progressivity, thanks to the Local Control Funding Formula, reflecting the state's sustained commitment to directing additional resources to students with the greatest needs.

Making Student Success Visible Through Better Data
Disconnected data systems made it difficult to track student outcomes from early education through college and into the workforce, obscuring systemic inequities. EdTrust-West championed the vision for a unified state data system, advised policymakers on its design, advocated for public transparency, and has remained engaged in efforts to ensure the system remains transparent, accessible, and useful to all Californians.

What Changed
California established the Cradle-to-Career Data System (C2C), giving **more than two million public school students in grades 6–12 access to college planning tools**. The system also connects **more than one billion data points** across TK–12 education, higher education, social services, and workforce earnings, helping state leaders make more equitable decisions about policies and resources.



More than 2 million

Number of public school students in 6th through 12th grade who have access to college planning tools because of the Cradle to Career (C2C) data system.

Over 1 billion

Number of data points in the Cradle to Career (C2C) data system including those related to TK-12, higher education, social services, and workforce earnings data across California.

Why This Work Matters Today & Into The Future

California's students continue to face significant challenges, including unfinished learning, barriers to college access and affordability, and rapidly changing workforce demands. Addressing these challenges will require ensuring that every community has equitable access to educational opportunities.

The examples in this brief illustrate what EdTrust-West has helped accomplish over the last 25 years. They also illustrate something larger: meaningful progress requires organizations that can identify barriers, help shape solutions, and remain engaged through implementation.

As California enters a new chapter of educational leadership and policymaking, EdTrust-West will continue working to ensure that students remain at the center of the decisions that shape their futures.

To read Chris's note and for more information, scan the QR code



Join Us in Shaping What's Next

For 25 years, EdTrust-West has worked alongside partners across California to expand opportunity, improve educational experiences, and strengthen the systems students rely on.

We'd love to continue that work with you.

Connect With Us
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