OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

The Education Trust–New York is a statewide education policy and advocacy organization focused first and foremost on doing right by New York’s children. Our second year was defined by building. A team. Critical partnerships. Momentum. We spent much of the year developing the infrastructure and capacity we will need to be part of the movement focused on education equity for all of New York’s students. And we will continue to build on this foundation moving forward.
In the past year, we published a series of reports covering critical equity issues. Here are some of the highlights:

**STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN NEW YORK (September 2017)**
A review of the 2017 New York State assessment results revealed that although schools perform worse for low-income students of all races and ethnic groups than for their non-low-income peers, schools under-serve students of color regardless of their income level. The report also found dozens of low- and average-needs districts where a disproportionately high percentage of low-income students “refused” to take the test, raising questions about institutional exclusion and pointing to the need to ensure that attention is paid to test participation rates for historically under-served groups of students.

**SEE OUR TRUTH (October 2017)**
In See Our Truth, we provided a first-ever detailed look at statewide data on educator diversity, revealing that one-third of all New York schools have no Black or Latino teachers. Through nearly 100 interviews and a series of focus groups, we sought to learn from the experiences of and amplify the voices of students and educators of color. When we listen to students, teachers, school and district leaders — and the research — it is clear that in order to ensure all students receive the high-quality education they deserve — one that prepares them for success in college, careers, and beyond — New York must do a better job improving equitable access to educators who are well-prepared, well-supported, and diverse.

**IMPROVING OPPORTUNITY & ACHIEVEMENT FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS (December 2017)**
This analysis released by The New York Equity Coalition found that 10 percent of all students who took the New York State grades 3-8 assessments in 2015-16 were either homeless or formerly homeless, and those students were half as likely to meet state benchmarks in ELA and math as their peers who had never been homeless. The policy brief was part of the coalition’s efforts to use the new federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as an opportunity for New York to provide the urgency and support to improve achievement for all groups of students. Students in temporary housing are a particularly vulnerable population, given the trauma they have been exposed to both before and as a result of their homelessness. Yet their needs often go unrecognized, or worse yet, ignored in schools.

**FOLLOW THE MONEY (January 2018)**
The level of school funding and how those resources are invested play an important role in student success — helping to determine whether students have access to strong educators, enroll in higher-level and advanced courses, are taught using modern textbooks and technology, and have the support of guidance counselors, librarians, and art and music teachers. But while much attention goes to funding gaps between districts, how resources are allocated within school districts often remains hidden, potentially masking gaping inequities from one school to another. In this report, we explained how a new budget proposal could shine a light and prompt action to close these intra-district resource equity gaps.
GRADUATING TO A BRIGHT FUTURE (March 2018)

New York continues to face significant gaps in high school graduation rates for students in high-need school districts compared to their peers in low-need school districts, and for historically under-served groups of students across the state. In this Equity Alert, our analysis focused primarily on whether the state is making progress closing these gaps and raising attainment for all students. This report also offered a first look at how school districts are implementing the “4+1” diploma options, and raised questions about whether historically under-served groups of students have equitable access to college- and career-prep pathways.

DROWNING IN DEBT (March 2018)

Drawing on new data calculations showing that New York communities with average income under $50,000 owe a cumulative $29.5 billion in student loan debt, this report identified several state budget proposals that could help make college more affordable and protect borrowers from abusive lending practices. Drowning in Debt reported that between 2016 and 2017, the amount of student loan debt New Yorkers collectively owed increased from more than $86 billion to over $90 billion. The problem was particularly acute in communities with average household income under $50,000, where the total inflation-adjusted debt burden has increased by 44 percent in just six years and with average delinquency rates that far exceed that of wealthier communities.

WITHIN OUR REACH (May 2018)

Across New York State, White students are given nearly twice as much access as their Latino and Black peers to a range of key gatekeeper courses in middle and high school, and are nearly three times as likely to be enrolled in critical advanced courses like Advanced Placement math and science. This report from The New York Equity Coalition launched a new initiative focused on the gaps in instructional access and opportunity for students of color. It also identified solutions, and called on state leaders to adopt a 5x25 Agenda, aiming to ensure that all students have access to the critical courses that will prepare them for success in the future.

THE 5X25 AGENDA

Our education system denies students of color access to rigorous instruction in a range of courses that will prepare them for success in college, careers, and civic life. But it does not have to be this way. The New York Equity Coalition launched a 5x25 Agenda, calling on New York’s leaders to fulfill 5 Commitments to every student in the Graduating Class of 2025, the cohort of students who entered sixth grade in fall 2018. In the first three months of the campaign, coalition members collected more than 500 petition signatures and letters of support from legislators, superintendents, business leaders, parents, students, and community members and submitted them to state education leaders.
THE NEW YORK EQUITY COALITION

The New York Equity Coalition came together in 2016 with a shared belief that ESSA presents a critical opportunity to improve New York’s education system — a system riven by massive systemic inequities in access, opportunity, and performance, especially for students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, and English language learners. As a coalition, we advocated for critical components in the ESSA plan submitted to the federal government, including protections to ensure that academics remain front-and-center in the new accountability system; requirements for meaningful parent engagement in developing school improvement strategies; and measures to reduce suspensions and improve college- and career-readiness. This year, our coalition of civil rights, education, parent, and business organizations grew to 23 member organizations and broadened its focus to include other education equity issues that contribute to the gaps in access and opportunity that hold too many students back from a bright future and from the state achieving its economic potential.

EQUITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

We are committed to supporting parent-serving community-based organizations in their state-level advocacy on important equity issues. From Buffalo to the Bronx, our Equity Partnership Program helps these trusted partners take on issues such as course access, educator diversity, school improvement, and addressing disproportionate school discipline.

- WESTERN NEW YORK
- NEW YORK CITY
- LONG ISLAND
- WESTCHESTER COUNTY

COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

We presented our work at a number of significant events, including conferences hosted by the New York State Council of School Superintendents; the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislative Caucus; and SOMOS. In April, we hosted a town hall forum on educator diversity in Buffalo that was viewed by about 1,000 people. And we partnered with the New York State Education Department to amplify student voices during two social media campaigns.
We continued developing relationships with media outlets across New York State and promoted our equity agenda through more than 125 news articles, editorials, opinion pieces, and broadcast segments.

"ALL STUDENTS SHOULD HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ACADEMIC RIGOR THAT CAN GIVE THEM A COMPETITIVE EDGE IN SCHOOL AND IN LIFE. WHEN ONE GROUP IS BLOCKED, EVERYONE LOSES." – THE BUFFALO NEWS EDITORIAL BOARD
BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR EQUITY

LAST YEAR, NEW YORK…

Maintained its commitment to rigorous academic standards for all students

Adopted a new accountability system that includes many of our coalition’s priorities to ensure urgency, resources, and support for underperforming schools

Enacted legislation calling for transparency and action to improve teacher diversity

Enacted legislation requiring the state’s largest school districts to reveal how much they are investing in each school, for the first time ever

THIS YEAR, WE AND OUR PARTNERS WILL CALL ON STATE LEADERS TO…

Build stronger pathways to postsecondary success, including by ensuring that all students have access to college- and career-prep courses

Ensure that the students with the greatest needs are taught by educators who are well-prepared, supported, and diverse

Enacted legislation calling for transparency and action to improve teacher diversity

Empower parents with actionable data on school performance and resources

FULLY IMPLEMENT A STRONG AND MEANINGFUL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM WITH A FOCUS ON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

ENSURE THAT THE STUDENTS WITH THE GREATEST NEEDS ARE TAUGHT BY EDUCATORS WHO ARE WELL-PREPARED, SUPPORTED, AND DIVERSE

BUILD STRONGER PATHWAYS TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS, INCLUDING BY ENSURING THAT ALL STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO COLLEGE- AND CAREER-PREP COURSES

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