
Education Policy Impacts

2007–2014

Communities for Public Education Reform (CPER) is a national funders' collaborative committed to improving educational opportunities and outcomes for students – in particular students of color from low-income families – by supporting community-driven reforms led by grassroots education organizing groups. A project of NEO Philanthropy, CPER has engaged 76 local and national fund members, investing \$34 million in 140 community groups, advocacy allies, and national coalitions over the Fund's eight year lifespan.

Powered by multi-year campaigns that involved organizing, advocacy, research, communications, and alliance building, CPER grantees played a key role in securing more than 90 policy wins at the school, district, state and federal level between 2007 and 2014. This summary of selected wins begins with those achieved at the federal level and follows with district- and state-level reforms grouped by CPER's six investment sites across the country. Organizations must remain united to defend these wins, monitor their implementation, and ensure that policies will stick.

Policy Win

What it Means

FEDERAL

NOVEMBER 2010

U.S. Department of Education revises FY 2010 School Improvement Grant (SIG) guidance, incorporating recommendations regarding the role of families and community members in school turnaround processes

For the first time, the Department of Education requires schools and districts applying for federal school improvement grants to specify how parents will be included in improvement processes, thus heightening accountability by elevating the role of parents as partners in decision-making.

JANUARY 2014

U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice release federal guidance package on school climate and discipline

First-ever issuance of guidelines on disciplinary practice to ensure that all schools comply with the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which protects against discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Guidelines provide action steps for state and local efforts to improve school climate and discipline.

MAY 2014

U.S. Department of Education issues guidance confirming that the same federal civil rights laws that apply to public schools apply equally to public charter schools

Obligates charter schools to meet requirements of federal civil rights laws, encompassing areas such as school admissions, disciplinary policy, and supports for English-language learners and students with disabilities.

CALIFORNIA CPER STATE LEVEL

NOVEMBER 2012

California voters approve Proposition 30 ballot initiative

Boosts state spending on public education by an anticipated \$6 billion a year for a seven-year period, stabilizing school funding in California for the first time since the 2008 recession. Averts drastic teacher layoffs and major cuts to social services.

JUNE 2013

California State Legislature passes Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

Directs more funds to districts serving high-need students (low-income, English-language learners, and foster youth) while shifting more budgeting authority to local districts. Will generate roughly \$10 billion more in education funding over an eight-year period.

Policy Win

What it Means

CALIFORNIA CPER STATE LEVEL CONT.

JUNE 2013

California State Legislature incorporates Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAP) within LCFF legislation

Ensures unprecedented and higher level of community involvement and accountability in school spending decisions. Requires districts to engage parents and community members in setting academic goals and linking these goals to expenditures. Also requires that district data on spending for target, high-needs populations is transparent and accessible for community monitoring.

CALIFORNIA CPER DISTRICT LEVEL

DECEMBER 2011

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) and United Teachers Los Angeles sign memorandum of understanding (MOU) on implementation of Local School Stabilization and Empowerment Initiative

Strengthens local control by shifting budgeting authority from the district to the school level, recognizing that different schools have different needs. Empowers local communities to innovate and design policies that address instruction, scheduling, governance, budgeting, and related autonomies.

MAY 2011

City of San Francisco secures \$250,000 to expand summer school programs

Restores summer school programs to up to 900 ninth graders.

MARCH 2012

LAUSD launches Breakfast in the Classroom program

Provides free breakfast to students in 300 schools (as of fall 2012), with intention to double reach in the 2014-2015 academic year.

APRIL 2012

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) adopts standards for meaningful family engagement

Strengthens family involvement in school decision-making and reform efforts.

Policy Win

What it Means

CALIFORNIA CPER DISTRICT LEVEL CONT.

JANUARY 2013

San Francisco Board of Supervisors approves \$2.3 million supplemental appropriation for San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)

Provides over 1,800 at-risk students with opportunities to recover course credits through afterschool programs, evening school, counseling services, and accessing programs at community-based satellite centers.

APRIL 2013

OUSD adopts Board Policy on School Governance

Shifts decision-making from district to local schools regarding scheduling, curriculum, staffing, and budgeting, a reform aimed at increasing community voice and public school accountability.

MAY 2013

LAUSD adopts School Climate Bill of Rights

First district in California to stop suspending students for “willful defiance,” a practice that has disproportionately impacted African American students in the district and statewide. Mandates implementation of restorative justice practices and limits the role of police in school discipline.

OCTOBER 2013

San Francisco Board of Education adopts resolution to expand A-G course offerings in SFUSD high schools

Increases students’ curricular options and engages teachers, principals, and students in developing new course offerings.

FEBRUARY 2014

SFUSD adopts Safe and Supportive Schools Resolution

Bans use of “willful defiance” as grounds for student suspension or expulsion, similar to the policy adopted in Los Angeles in 2013.

FEBRUARY 2014

SFUSD and San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) sign MOU regarding school discipline

Institutes historic new protections that limit police involvement in school discipline. Mandates tracking police presence in schools; implements a graduated response system; and requires training for SFPD on restorative justice approaches.

Policy Win

What it Means

CHICAGO CPER STATE LEVEL

JUNE 2006, JUNE 2007, JUNE 2008, JUNE 2009, JUNE 2010, JUNE 2011, JUNE 2012, JUNE 2013, AND JUNE 2014

Illinois State Legislature approves state funding for Grow Your Own Illinois (GYO)

Institutionalizes and credentials GYO model state-wide, enabling hundreds of teacher candidates of color from low-income communities to participate in this teacher certification program. Over \$20 million in state funding received between 2006 and 2014; 100 new teachers of color GYO graduates by 2014.

APRIL 2012

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) modifies pass-level threshold for state's Test of Academic Proficiency (TAP) "basic skills" teacher admission test

Reduces exam barriers disproportionately barring teachers of color from entering the teaching profession in Illinois.

JULY 2012

ISBE approves alternative exam options for Illinois teacher admission test (TAP)

Allows teacher candidates to submit ACT or SAT scores in lieu of TAP, further removing barriers to prospective teachers of color. Nearly 9,000 prospective teachers of color utilize option to submit alternative test scores in the first year.

MAY 2014

Illinois State Legislature passes Senate Bill 2793

Requires all publicly funded schools in Illinois to provide data on issuance of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and removals to alternative settings; and to disaggregate this data by race and ethnicity, gender, age, grade level, English proficiency, incident type, and discipline duration. Mandates that districts with highest expulsion and suspension rates submit school discipline improvement plans.

MAY 2014

Illinois State Legislature passes House Bill 3948

Amends GYO statute to allow potential candidates with bachelor's and associate's degrees to enter the GYO program, thereby widening GYO's potential applicant pool.

Policy Win

What it Means

CHICAGO CPER DISTRICT LEVEL

NOVEMBER 2008

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) approves funding for student-designed drop-out prevention pilot programs in eight schools

In response to student leaders' organizing and advocacy, CPS pilots new programs based on students' self-identified interests and needs.

JUNE 2012

Chicago Board of Education approves overhaul of CPS Student Code of Conduct

Secures substantial revisions to disciplinary policy in Chicago. Eliminates automatic 10-day suspensions, cuts maximum suspension time in half for all offenses, and reduces school spending for police presence in schools.

SEPTEMBER 2012

City of Chicago and Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) approve new teacher contract

An outcome of the September 2012 CTU strike and unprecedented alliance building between the CTU and community groups, new contract includes mechanisms that reduce reliance on high-stakes tests in teacher evaluations. Components include agreement to hold weight of standardized tests to minimum in evaluation processes and pilot of student feedback in teacher assessment.

AUGUST 2013

CPS eliminates 15 previously mandated high-stakes exams from school calendar

Allows teachers and students to focus on classroom teaching and learning by reducing time for test preparation and administration.

APRIL 2014

Noble Network of Charter Schools eliminates fines for disciplinary infractions

Removes mechanism that systematically pushed out low-income students.

JULY 2014

CPS approves additional revisions to the Student Code of Conduct

Institutes stronger limitations on the use of expulsions and suspensions and recommends the use of restorative justice practices.

Policy Win

What it Means

COLORADO CPER STATE LEVEL

MAY 2008

Colorado State Legislature passes the Innovation Schools Act

Establishes a procedure for local schools to have authority over personnel, budgeting, and curriculum development processes, thus creating opportunities for innovating reforms realized in Denver schools.

MAY 2009

Colorado State Legislature passes the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act

Enables high school students to earn a high school degree and college credits concurrently, a step that increases education options and expands college opportunities to undocumented immigrants.

MAY 2010

Colorado State Legislature passes Ensuring Quality Instruction through Educator Effectiveness (EQUITEE) Act

Revamps teacher evaluation model to focus assessment criteria on evidence of students' academic growth.

APRIL 2011

Colorado State Legislature passes House Bill 11-1126

Strengthens meaningful parent voice by mandating parent notification and engagement in district-generated school improvement plans for low-performing schools.

MAY 2012

Colorado State Legislature passes Smart School Discipline Law

Requires that Colorado school districts incorporate a graduated discipline approach. Promotes alternatives to suspension and expulsion, such as restorative justice approaches. Streamlines reporting of discipline incidents and requires release of new types of disciplinary data. Student expulsion rates dropped by 25% in first year after law took effect.

MARCH 2013

Colorado State Legislature passes Colorado ASSET bill (Advancing Students for a Strong Economy Tomorrow)

Grants in-state tuition rate to eligible, undocumented youth, making higher education more affordable. An estimated 500 students will utilize these benefits each year.

Policy Win

What it Means

COLORADO CPER STATE LEVEL CONT.

MAY 2013

Colorado State Legislature passes Breakfast After the Bell Bill

Establishes nutrition program that provides free breakfast to student body in schools where more than 70% of student population qualifies for free or reduced-priced meals; makes a daily, nutritional breakfast available to over 80,000 students.

MAY 2013

Colorado State Legislature passes the Future School Finance Act

Overhauls Colorado's way of financing public schools, potentially enabling increased resources for pre-school, English-language learners, and implementation of More and Better Learning Time innovations. (A setback subsequently occurred when Colorado voters defeated a ballot measure, spurred by the passage of this law, to increase taxes for the specified reforms.)

COLORADO CPER DISTRICT LEVEL

2007

Denver Public Schools (DPS) adopts a weighted student funding system

Establishes enhanced transparency in budgeting process. Increases per pupil allocations to low-income students, English-language learners, and special education students.

AUGUST 2008

DPS eliminates "zero tolerance" policies

Interrupts school to prison pipeline for African American and Latino students by reducing district suspensions and referrals to law enforcement agencies. Secures adoption of restorative justice program in Denver schools. Results: out-of-school suspensions dropped by nearly 20% (2008 to 2011); expulsions dropped by over 40% (2009 to 2011).

NOVEMBER 2009

DPS approves plans for three high-performing middle schools in northwest Denver

Expands high-quality school choice options for students in region with high concentration of low-income Latino families.

Policy Win

What it Means

COLORADO CPER DISTRICT LEVEL CONT.

AUGUST 2011

DPS implements Success Express shuttle bus service

This free shuttle bus system serving K-12 students helps ensure students' equitable access to school choice. Mitigates transit as barrier to school attendance and extended learning opportunities.

NOVEMBER 2011

DPS adopts SchoolChoice plan

Strengthens low-income families' access to educational choice by instituting uniform K-12 enrollment mechanism citywide, replacing 60 previous separate enrollment processes.

JULY 2012

DPS launches extended learning time pilot programs in seven schools

Increases classroom instructional time and provides curricular opportunities in the arts, music, and physical education.

FEBRUARY 2013

DPS and Denver Police Department reach discipline agreement

Limits role of law enforcement in Denver schools; provides due process protections for students and parents; requires community input on the policing process; and mandates training for armed officers in schools.

MISSISSIPPI CPER STATE LEVEL

MARCH 2011, MARCH 2012, AND MARCH 2013
Mississippi State Legislature preserves funding for Mississippi Adequate Education Program (MAEP)

Restores millions to public education, rejecting cuts proposed by governor and state legislature each year. Since 2009, state has underfunded MAEP by approximately \$1.3 billion.

JULY 2011

Mississippi State Board of Education adopts guidelines for P-16 Community Engagement Councils and makes compliance an accountability standard

Incorporating community input, specifies responsibilities and processes for establishing and operating new community engagement mechanisms required in poorly performing school districts.

Policy Win

What it Means

MISSISSIPPI CPER STATE LEVEL CONT.

APRIL 2013

Mississippi State Legislature passes the Mississippi Public Charter Schools Act of 2013 with key accountability provisions

Provisions dictate that charter operators must be nonprofit organizations; bans virtual charter schools; mandates that students attending a charter must live in the district where the charter is located; and requires approval from local school boards in high-performing districts on all charter applications.

MISSISSIPPI CPER DISTRICT LEVEL

SEPTEMBER 2012

Tunica County School District revises student handbook

Modifies district practices regarding student discipline.

NEW JERSEY CPER STATE LEVEL

2007 AND 2010

New Jersey Department of Education preserves utilization of the Special Review Assessment (SRA) and the Alternative High School Assessment (AHSA)

Safeguards alternative student assessment measures, enabling more students to meet HS graduation requirements.

JUNE 2009, JUNE 2010, JUNE 2011, JUNE 2012, AND JUNE 2013

New Jersey State Legislature preserves School Funding Reform Act

Maintains critical legislative vehicle for delivering state and local education funding equitably, providing additional funding (or "weights") for supports to high-needs student populations, such as students with limited English proficiency, with disabilities, and who qualify for free and reduced-priced meals. (Formula has yet to be fully funded.)

JUNE 2013

New Jersey State Legislature cuts funding for vouchers in state's FY 2014 budget

Keeps public tax dollars in public schools.

Policy Win

What it Means

NEW JERSEY CPER STATE LEVEL CONT.

NOVEMBER 2013

New Jersey Department of Education releases proposal to suspend a requirement that students pass exit exams to graduate

Eliminates exit testing requirement for at least three years, as state transitions to administering the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness of College and Career (PARCC) exams.

DECEMBER 2013

New Jersey State Legislature passes Tuition Equality Act

Enables undocumented New Jersey high school graduates to attend New Jersey public colleges at in-state tuition rate.

JUNE 2014

New Jersey State Legislature passes Senate Bill 966

Establishes criteria and conditions for closing public schools. Pending final approval from the governor.

JULY 2014

New Jersey governor signs executive order governing implementation of the PARCC exams in the coming school year

Creates commission that will study and present recommendations on student assessments. Temporarily reduces weight of new PARCC tests on teacher evaluations.

NEW JERSEY CPER DISTRICT LEVEL

2007

Paterson Public Schools (PPS) provides multi-lingual interpretation at all Board of Education meetings and district-sponsored parent meetings

Supports the ability of non-English-speaking parents to understand and participate in district-sponsored meetings.

JUNE 2008

Jersey City Public Schools tests lead levels in Jersey City schools' drinking water

Protects students against potentially toxic levels of lead in school facilities. District adopts school environmental check list to safeguard against future safety issues.

DECEMBER 2008

Newark Municipal Council authorizes deployment of additional school crossing guards

Increases student safety at dangerous intersections on school routes.

Policy Win

What it Means

NEW JERSEY CPER DISTRICT LEVEL CONT.

MARCH 2010

Newark Public Schools (NPS) revises School Leadership Council guidelines

Incorporates greater parent and community accountability and engagement measures.

AUGUST 2011

PPS restores fine arts budget in Paterson elementary schools for 2011-2012 school year

Restores funding for arts and libraries after earlier budget cuts.

OCTOBER 2013

PPS institutes one-year moratorium on out-of-school suspensions for minor infractions

Eliminates out-of-school suspensions for minor misbehaviors like dress code violations and tardiness. PPS subsequently developed and implemented positive discipline approaches during moratorium period.

FEBRUARY 2014

NPS expands College and Career Knowledge course in all Newark high schools starting in the 2014-2015 academic year

Increases access to learning opportunities that better prepare Newark high school students for college and career success. Students played critical role in designing new curriculum.

JUNE 2014

New Jersey State Board of Education returns fiscal control of Newark Public Schools to the local Newark Advisory Board

Restores partial local control over district's budgeting.

JUNE 2014

New Jersey State Board of Education returns control of operations to the Paterson Advisory Board

Restores partial local control over district's key operations, including security and transportation.

Policy Win

What it Means

PHILADELPHIA CPER STATE LEVEL

JULY 2008

Pennsylvania State Legislature adopts fair funding formula

For first time in state history, institutes mechanism for distributing state education funding based on student needs, as determined by state-commissioned costing out study. Allocations include weights for poverty and English-language status.

APRIL 2013

Pennsylvania State Legislature passes Act 3 of 2013, an amendment to the Public School Code of 1949

Establishes a legislative commission to develop a formula for distributing increases in special education funds using accurate student counts and weights.

PHILADELPHIA CPER DISTRICT LEVEL

OCTOBER 2009

School District of Philadelphia (SDP) includes accountability and engagement requirements in its Imagine 2014 Renaissance Schools Plan

Requires turnaround schools (including those converted to charters) to serve the same neighborhoods, with no additional enrollment requirements; and mandates parent and community access to data and input on turnaround model.

JANUARY 2010

Philadelphia School Reform Commission (SRC) and Philadelphia Federation of Teachers reach agreement on a new contract

Expands school-based hiring, with greater teacher input in site-selection committees, and institutes a peer assistance and review system.

JUNE 2011

Philadelphia City Council approves \$8.2 million supplemental budget allocation for accelerated schools in the 2011-2012 school year

Preserves critical services, including alternative education pathways for older, under-credited students to graduate high school.

Policy Win

What it Means

PHILADELPHIA CPER DISTRICT LEVEL CONT.

AUGUST 2011

SDP revises School Advisory Council (SAC) guidelines

Strengthens the ability of parents, students, and community members to collaborate with school staff and participate in school decision-making. Mandates and defines student participation; makes membership process more transparent and consistent; sets process for member elections; and provides training and support for SAC implementation.

AUGUST 2012

SRC adopts revised Student Code of Conduct

Reverses district's zero tolerance policies. Prevents students from being pushed out for minor infractions and strengthens principals' discretion in handling disciplinary cases. Results: in first year of implementation, expulsions dropped from 237 to 30.

SEPTEMBER 2012

SDP re-opens 10 of 26 full-service kitchens that were closed down during the 2010-2011 school year

Restores hot and healthy meals prepared on site in subset of schools.

JANUARY 2013

Philadelphia City Council passes non-binding resolution supporting moratorium on school closings

Symbolic gesture calling attention to the need for SDP to halt unchecked neighborhood school closings.

MARCH 2013

SRC reduces number of neighborhood schools slated for closing from 64 to 24

Lessens destabilizing effect of closing neighborhood schools on families and communities.

MARCH 2013

SRC approves moratorium on charter expansion in Philadelphia for the 2013-2014 school year

Slows charter expansion, keeping scarce public resources in public neighborhood schools.

Policy Win

What it Means

PHILADELPHIA CPER DISTRICT LEVEL CONT.

MAY 2013

SRC adopts new renewal requirements for charter schools

Mandates that to be granted renewal, charter schools must revise their admissions process, eliminating all barriers to enrollment.

JUNE 2013

SDP approves implementation of a restorative practices pilot program in 10 neighborhood schools

Pilots alternatives to punitive discipline approaches; supports programs that build school community and improve school climate.

JULY 2013

SDP restores \$7.6 million in funding for music and sports programs in the 2013-2014 school year

Reinstates learning and enrichment opportunities critical to a well-rounded education.

JANUARY 2014

SDP confirms it will not close any public schools in 2014

Derails the movement towards mass school closings.

For more information about CPER's grantmaking strategies and impacts, the following reports can be downloaded at www.neophilanthropy.org:

Greater Power, Lasting Impact: Effective Grantmaker Strategies from the Communities for Public Education Reform Fund

Addresses the value of community organizing for education reform and strategies pursued to support growth in individual civic capacity, community social capital, and policy change.

Strengthening Collaborations to Build Social Movements: Ten Lessons from the Communities for Public Education Reform Fund

Explores effective grantmaker strategies to nurture collaboration between field advocates and allies in order to advance social justice movements.

Building Capacity to Sustain Social Movements: Ten Lessons from the Communities for Public Education Reform Fund

Explores effective grantmaker strategies to build organizational capacity and networks to sustain social justice work.

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About NEO Philanthropy

NEO Philanthropy is a leader in developing innovative philanthropic strategies and partnerships that marshal the collective resources of people passionate about driving positive social change. Launched in 1983 as Public Interest Projects, a 501(c)(3) public charity, NEO brings together diverse organizations driving cutting-edge social change work, resulting in a movement for equality, fairness, and a stronger participatory democracy.



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