

NEWS

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Education Pioneers Selects New Cohort of Senior Leaders to Support Education Sector's COVID-19 Response

National nonprofit names 24 senior leaders to provide essential capacity for school systems as they address pandemic-related challenges

Boston, MA – Education Pioneers (EP), a national nonprofit that builds the leadership and management capacity of the K-12 public education sector, today announced 24 senior leaders chosen for their new program focused on COVID-19 response in the education sector.

The [EP COVID Response Fellowship](https://www.educationpioneers.org/covid-response-fellowship) (<https://www.educationpioneers.org/covid-response-fellowship>) provides school districts, charter school networks, state education agencies, and other organizations with chief of staff-type support for senior education administrative leaders managing COVID plans and priorities. COVID Response Fellows will work at 23 organizations who together serve more than 7 million students across 13 states and the District of Columbia.

As the 2020-2021 academic year continues, school systems nationwide continue to face unprecedented challenges in serving students and families due to the coronavirus pandemic. Recent analysis from the NWEA shows that [student achievement in math has dropped 5 to 10 percentage](#)

[points \(https://www.nwea.org/research/publication/learning-during-covid-19-initial-findings-on-students-reading-and-math-achievement-and-growth/\)](https://www.nwea.org/research/publication/learning-during-covid-19-initial-findings-on-students-reading-and-math-achievement-and-growth/), with even larger declines for students of color. With half of students missing year-over-year testing, researchers fear that results may be even worse. Nationwide, [more than 3 million vulnerable children \(https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2020-10-21/as-many-as-3-million-children-have-gone-without-education-since-march-estimate\)](https://www.usnews.com/news/education-news/articles/2020-10-21/as-many-as-3-million-children-have-gone-without-education-since-march-estimate) are estimated to be displaced from school.

“The evidence is clearer every day that COVID-19 is exacerbating existing inequities in education. Responding to a crisis as vast and traumatic as the coronavirus requires adaptive, inclusive, and equity-oriented leadership,” said Melissa Wu, CEO of Education Pioneers. “Education Pioneers is proud to increase this type of leadership capacity at school systems during the COVID crisis. Our 24 COVID Response Fellows will help the K-12 sector address urgent challenges now and lay the foundations for a better, more equitable future.”

Most host organizations received COVID Response Fellowship capacity at no cost to themselves. Education Pioneers raised more than \$3.7 million in philanthropic support to recruit and pay COVID Response Fellows directly as they serve 12-month work placements and participate in cohort-based leadership development. In addition to work placements, COVID Response Fellows will participate in a national cohort, which provides leadership development and knowledge-sharing opportunities among a group of peers doing similar work.

“COVID-19 is an unprecedented disruption to our community district, and we urgently needed additional capacity to tackle new challenges while also addressing existing inequities,” said Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, Superintendent of Oakland Unified School District in Oakland, CA. “Education Pioneers recruited a diverse group of talented leaders who can help us and other school systems meet this moment. We are grateful to Education Pioneers and their philanthropic supporters for their help to rebuild K-12 more equitably.”

Education Pioneers has more than 15 years of experience recruiting and developing talent for the education sector, with more than 4,500 Alumni across the nation. Chosen from a competitive pool of 280 applicants, the 24 new COVID Response Fellows were selected for their management and execution skills, their orientation towards equity and inclusion, and their desire to help the K-12 sector respond to the ongoing pandemic. Fifty percent of COVID Response Fellows self-identify as leaders of color; Fellows have an average of 12 years of professional experience.

The 24 senior leaders who will complete the COVID Response Fellowship are:

- Tirza Buelto, Providence Public Schools
- Elizabeth Dill, Hartford Public Schools
- Caitlin Gallagher, New Paradigm for Education

- Martrice Gandy, ReGeneration Schools
- Julie Gopalan, Rocketship Public Schools
- Johntel Greene, New York City Department of Education
- Karmin-Tia Greer, The SEED Foundation
- Amanda Harless, Freedom Preparatory Academy Charter Schools
- Nile Harris, Clarksdale Collegiate Public Charter School
- Christopher Hill, Shelby County Schools
- Carissa Godwin Holsted, Shelby County Schools
- Damon Hoyle, Texas Education Agency
- Gaines Johnson, Inglewood Unified School District
- Jean Liu, Oakland Unified School District
- Vin Menon, VISTA College Prep
- Danielle Moehrke, Chicago Public Schools
- Charlotte Nugent, Office of the State Superintendent of Education
- Caitlin Paul, Los Angeles Unified School District
- Jessica Post, Yakima School District
- Abbie Ridenour, Marin Promise Partnership
- Aeriell Robinson, The Surge Institute
- Frances Spencer, KIPP Metro Atlanta
- Etna Tiburcio, Excel Academy Charter Schools
- Kenneth Walk, Boston Public Schools

"Our Education Pioneers COVID Response Fellow will help ensure that our COVID plans center health, safety, and equity for our students," said Roblin Webb, Founder and CEO of Freedom Preparatory Academy Charter Schools in Memphis, TN, a charter network serving 2,350 students in grades PreK-12. "Without Education Pioneers, we would not have access to this dedicated capacity to address COVID-19 challenges."