



50CAN

Moving the Needle

Expanding Educational Opportunity in 2025

Featuring:

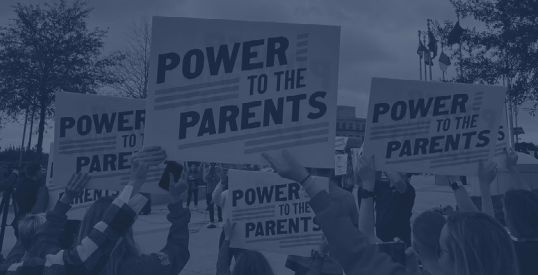
Jay Artis-Wright

Kevin Huffman

Justin Dent

Marguerite Roza

Governor Jeb Bush



Moving the Needle

Expanding Educational Opportunity in 2025

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Moving the Needle

Dear Friends,

The time to build the education system of the future is now. The stakes are high, the need is urgent and parents are demanding education systems that are as vibrant and dynamic as their children.

As the recently released 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results make clear, the vast majority of students in school during the past five years have not recovered the learning they lost in math and reading. At the same time, the students furthest behind in 2019 were the hardest hit. The lowest 25 percent of students on these tests posted the worst reading scores for the bottom-quartile of students in over 30 years. The sad truth is that the achievement gap between America's highest- and lowest-performing students is now the widest in the history of the NAEP.

50CAN has always believed that enduring change will emerge from the 50 states rather than Washington, D.C. The 2024 NAEP serves as yet another reminder of that, pointing the way out of this crisis if we look at which states are moving the needle for kids. Louisiana and Tennessee, two of a handful of states that have embraced the policy pillars you'll explore on the following pages, beat the odds by showing strong academic gains. In Louisiana, for example, these policies lifted the state from 50th to 16th in 4th grade reading scores in just five years. How did they do it? By being clear-eyed about the challenges they faced and laser-focused on proven policies that put kids first and get results.

While test scores are an important starting point, it is also crucial that we listen to parents. Our 50-state survey, The State of Educational Opportunity in America, found deep inequalities between high- and low-income families. The trend was found not only in school satisfaction and in parents feeling like they have a choice, but also in access to tutoring, career programs and afterschool activities, including a 28-point gap for sports participation and a 34-point gap for arts programs. Every child in this country deserves a full range of educational opportunities both inside and outside of the schoolhouse walls, and that will take a lot more locally-led advocacy to secure the policy changes needed to reach all kids.

Building the future of American education cannot be the domain of one single group, foundation or advocate. Instead, it will take all of us working in partnership to create an education system of the future that works for all kids. With that goal in mind, we're excited to share the perspectives of

five leading education thinkers who are partnering with us to shape the future:

- **Jay Artis-Wright**, Executive Director of the Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools, on being able to choose the education that's right for you.
- **Kevin Huffman**, CEO of Accelerate, on the benefit of providing tutoring and care for all.
- **Justin Dent**, Founder and Executive Director of Outschool.org, on students accessing a world of open and connected learning.
- **Marguerite Roza**, Research Professor at Georgetown University and Founder of the Edunomics Lab, on a family's right to know what's working—and how funds are being spent.
- **Governor Jeb Bush**, 43rd Governor of Florida and Founder of ExcelinEd, on the programs that give students a clear path to a career.

In this report, alongside the essays from these sector thought-leaders, we'll be sharing relevant State of Educational Opportunity survey data and presenting the 2025 campaign goals of our ten state campaigns.


We look forward to building with you in the year ahead.

Best,

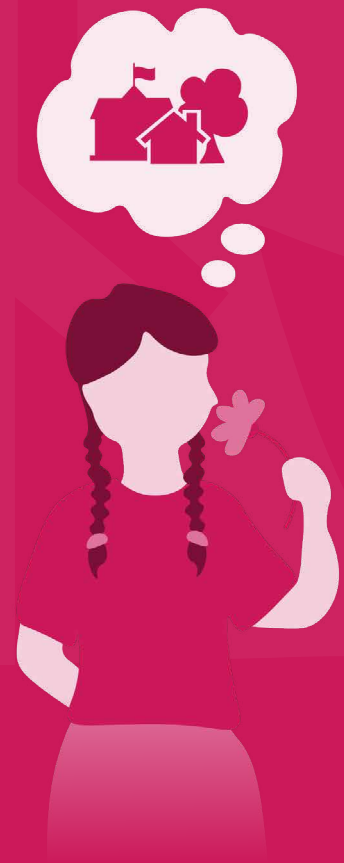



Marc Porter Magee
CEO & Founder, 50CAN




Derrell Bradford
President, 50CAN

The Education That's Right for You



The Education That's Right for You

When families have the right tools to meet their children's educational needs, the outcomes can be life-changing. I witnessed this firsthand with a young man named Kyle Robinson. I first met Kyle in the front office of my daughter's school when he was a kindergartener, and his enthusiasm for learning was undeniable and infectious. However, instead of nurturing his curiosity, the school labeled him a "problem child"—a well-documented experience for many Black boys in traditional schooling whose childlike boisterousness is misinterpreted as disruptiveness and, later in life, defiance.

Rather than seeing his energy as a strength, his teacher saw it as a challenge to her classroom management and instruction. Kyle, like so many others, was experiencing the challenges and the friction of a one-size-fits-all system that doesn't account for a wide range of students' needs and passions. Thankfully, Kyle's story didn't end there. Kyle's education was transformed overnight when he switched schools—he's now a top student and enrolled in an extracurricular engineering program that culminated in a visit to NASA HQ.

I often wonder: what if Kyle had been stuck in that first school, labeled and disregarded? What if his parents hadn't pushed for something better? This is the reality for too many children whose potential is limited by a system that doesn't offer enough options and that values a student's address over their aspirations. This is why the Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools, the organization I lead, fights for the freedom to choose. We believe that through the combination of self-determination and parent choice, the right education is unlocked. The power to demand better options is essential.

Kyle's journey is just one of millions that highlights the transformative power of choice in American education today. Unfortunately, this freedom to choose is not a reality for every family. For too many, navigating the educational landscape feels like being trapped in a system with limited options and endless closed doors. Which all raises an urgent question: how can we ensure that all children, regardless of their circumstances, have the opportunity to pursue a path like Kyle's?

We've encountered countless parents in similar situations—parents desperate for better opportunities for their children but who feel trapped by the limited options available in their

neighborhoods. We've also seen young boys like Kyle, who, burdened by the label of "problem child," lose faith in the education system and, ultimately, in themselves.

From 2019 to 2024, from kindergarten to sixth grade, Kyle navigated an array of options: attending an underperforming school, adapting to remote learning during the pandemic, enrolling in a culturally affirming charter school, and later transitioning to an affluent district school. Despite facing obstacles like learning loss and limited resources, he has thrived and his future is bright. His story is a testament to the unwavering determination of his parents and the power of having access to diverse educational options. These stories prove that when quality choices are available, students can overcome disparities and succeed. We must keep fighting for Kyle because his story is not over.

In 2024, Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools conducted a survey that confirmed families want the ability to choose schools that reflect their values, cater to their children's needs and value their families. What we've learned is that education should not be a one-size-fits-all experience. Our work with families across the country has inspired us to not only advocate for charter schools, but to support all options that help students thrive. We must never give up on the passion and resilience of families as they work to find the education that is right for them.

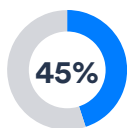


Jay Artis-Wright
Executive Director
The Freedom Coalition for Charter Schools

What Parents Told Us

The State of Educational Opportunity in America, a survey of 20,000 parents conducted in the summer of 2024, found significant differences in school satisfaction based on the type of school their children attend. Parochial schools were at the top with 70% of parents reporting they were very satisfied and traditional public schools were at the bottom with 39% of parents reporting they were very satisfied.

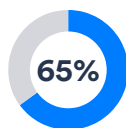
National Average



School Satisfaction

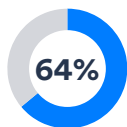
Percentage answering they are very satisfied with their child's school

National Average



Feel They Have a Choice

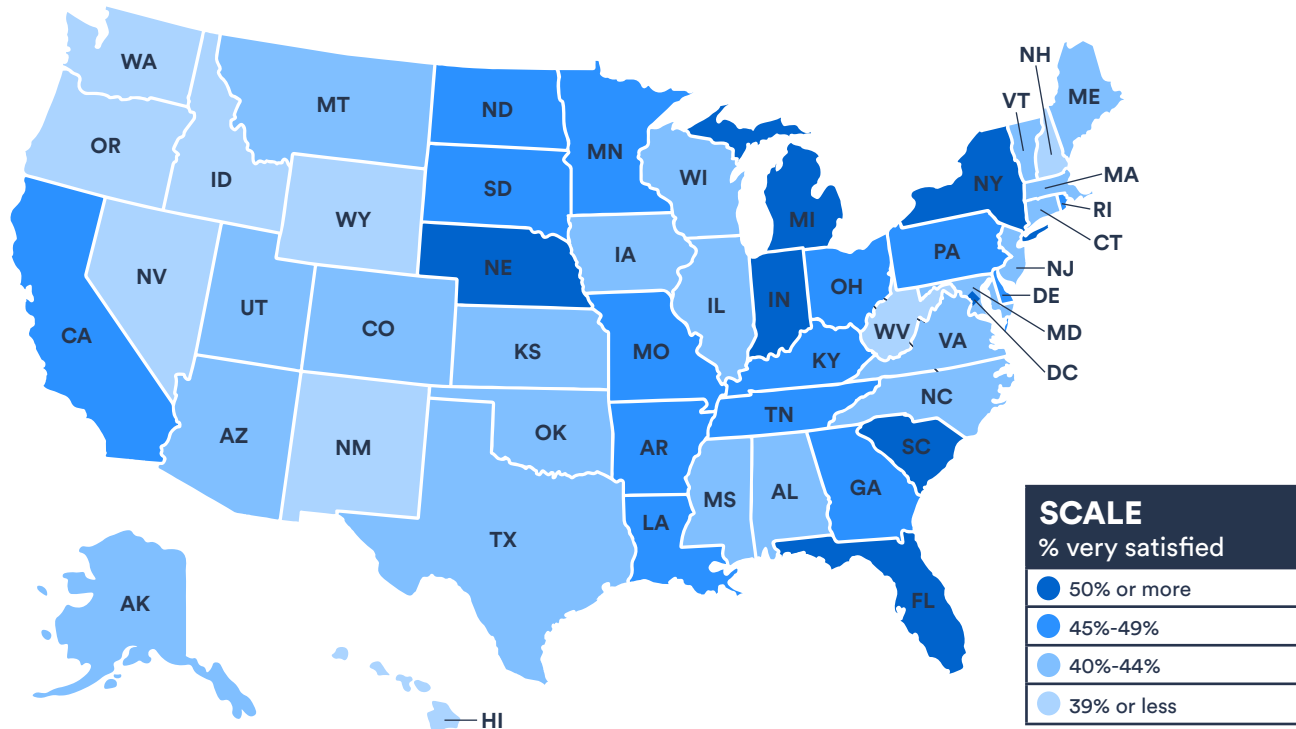
Percentage answering they feel like they have a choice in what school their child attends



Would Make the Same Choice

Percentage answering that they would send their child to the school they go to today

SCHOOL SATISFACTION BY STATE



2025 Goals



With growing concerns over vacancies in the teaching force, **CarolinaCAN** will work to remove barriers to entering the profession by recognizing experiences and trainings for licensure in place of the Praxis examination, which has been an unintended and expensive bottleneck for teaching candidates.



Connecticut's families lag behind the national average in feeling like they have a choice in which school their child attends, a challenge that has been exacerbated by an onerous, bureaucratic approval process for charter schools and limits on where charter schools can open. In 2025, **ConnCAN** is working to correct this, with legislation to solve both problems, while also ensuring that two previously approved, high-quality charters schools in Danbury and Middletown, and five new charters across the state, are funded. Additionally, ConnCAN will work with the New Teacher Track Council to expand new teacher pathways to the profession.



A 19-point gap exists between Delaware's low- and high-income families in feeling like they have a choice in where to send their child to school. Aligned with **DelawareKidsCAN**'s continued efforts to bring more quality school options to low-income families, the team will work to authorize and open a new charter school in Georgetown and a dual-language school in Sussex, a community that has a significant student population of multilingual learners and fewer current options for families.



Additionally, inequitable funding for Delaware students has been a decades-long issue that has prevented all of Delaware's students from accessing a full extent of educational opportunities. 2025 is the year **DelawareKidsCAN** will work to change this. Working in partnership with the Delaware Education Funding Commission, the team will craft a series of legislative recommendations that will be heard in committee.



At 48 percent, the Georgia average for school satisfaction is three percentage points higher than the national average of 45 percent. However, that also means more than half of parents in the state are not very satisfied with their child's school. As part of a long-term plan to correct this, **GeorgiaCAN** is committed to expanding options each year. In 2025, the team will work to initiate funding in the budget to provide the maximum number of seats possible alongside efforts to streamline the charter approval process and incentivize their approval by local districts.



"Every child in Georgia deserves access to the best possible education, regardless of their zip code or family's financial situation. And yet, too many families still cannot access that opportunity due to government constraints. We are committed to expanding school choice in Georgia by incentivizing charter school growth, funding the Georgia Promise Scholarship and making it easier for families to utilize the Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Program. Every family deserves the opportunity to send their child to a school that they've chosen because it works for them."

– **Michael O'Sullivan, Executive Director, GeorgiaCAN**



Parents in Hawaii want new choices in their schools, as evidenced by the only 34 percent of families who are very satisfied with their child's current school. The major impediment to creating more options through the charter sector has been acquiring facility funds to open new buildings or improve existing ones. By investing in charter facilities and unused buildings now, through the creation of a revolving loan fund, **HawaiiKidsCAN** will be able to expand access to more seats over the coming years.

2025 Goals



According to the State of Educational Opportunity in America, Louisiana's families feel like they have less of a choice in schools than the national average, something the team worked to solve with the successful passage of last year's universal ESA. Now, **Louisiana Kids Matter** will work to implement and secure funding for participating students through a line-item appropriation in the state's budget. The team will also work to create the Louisiana Facilities Fund, which is anticipated to spur \$500 million in facility construction and renovation, creating 15,000 new charter seats.



New Mexico's education system continues to rank at the bottom of the country with urgent reforms needed to many systems, particularly after having five secretaries of education in as many years. **NewMexicoKidsCAN** will fight to preserve the charter authorizing role of the Public Education Commission, which is critical to continued expansion of the sector, while also giving the commission the flexibility to hire and manage their own staff. As a result, the team expects to see near unanimous approval of new quality charter applications through 2025.



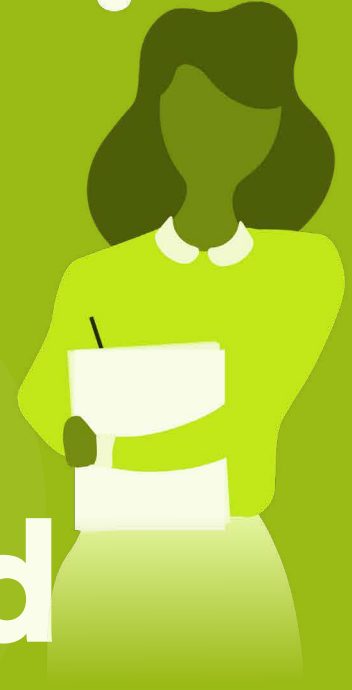
Less than half of Tennessee parents are very satisfied with their schools, according to the State of Educational Opportunity in America. Building on the success of a limited ESA that **TennesseeCAN** passed in 2019, the team will work on expanding the program into a full, universal ESA through legislation that will weight the opportunity for low-income students and require participating schools to assess their ESA students with a nationally-normed or state assessment.



Additionally, charter schools in the state have long been an alternative option for parents unsatisfied with their current school, but have had multiple challenges in affordably securing and renovating facilities for students. Rather than single funding bills to plug the gap, the **TennesseeCAN** team will fight for a sustainable, long-term solution this year, via budget proposal from the Governor alongside other means. The team will also investigate a new approval process for charter schools to open up more opportunities for quality schools.



Because 60% of Colorado kids can't do math or read on grade level and because the State of Educational Opportunity found that only 40% of families are very satisfied with their child's school, in 2025 **Transform Education Now** will prioritize approving three new high-quality charter schools across the state. Additionally, the team is concerned over the fact that only a third of low-income families are satisfied with their school and will bring a coalition together over transportation to lay the groundwork for a policy push in 2026.



Tutoring and Care for All

Tutoring and Care for All

What if I told you that there is an education intervention that has significant support from schools, is wildly popular among parents and improves student outcomes by several months of learning each year?

High-dosage tutoring is a bit of a unicorn in education policy—an area with a large body of research, a range of means of delivery, and broad bipartisan support. The pandemic recovery launched a renaissance for high-dosage tutoring, with new providers, new policy initiatives and a growing understanding that well-executed tutoring should be a part of the education landscape well beyond the current era.

A number of schools, districts and states have pursued tutoring as a key strategy, combining technical assistance, policy and funding to ensure it has its desired effect. In Louisiana, for instance, targeted tutoring initiatives funded through federal relief dollars were designed to address foundational literacy and numeracy. With data as a guide, these programs have demonstrated what’s possible when coherence and alignment drive action. The broad-based support for tutoring allowed the legislature to appropriate \$30 million this year for districts to ensure that the students farthest behind get personalized support to catch up. Arkansas passed regulations that set the right framework for ensuring tutoring happens as designed, with reporting requirements for districts, and best practices now codified for schools.

The District of Columbia Public Schools ensured that school leaders created the time in the school day to leverage outside tutoring providers to deliver personalized sessions. CityTutor DC, a nonprofit launched through local philanthropy, provided training and technical assistance and connected school leaders and outside tutoring providers. As federal relief money came to an end, the mayor put millions of dollars for tutoring in the budget, allowing school leaders - who enjoy a fair amount of budget autonomy—to continue to build high-dosage tutoring programs that serve the highest need students.

In all the states and districts where Accelerate works, we see the success of high-dosage tutoring rise or fall based on a commitment to collecting data and holding schools and tutoring providers accountable for delivering services as designed (after all, high-dosage tutoring de facto fails if students do not receive the high dosage). The places that are committed to tracking delivery, holding adults accountable, supporting leaders with technical assistance

and knowledge-building, and providing funding support through direct dollars or spending autonomy are the ones that ultimately will succeed in this work.

While high-dosage tutoring has enormous potential to help kids, there is a role for everyone in the K-12 education community. First, we must center discussions around outcomes. Pushing for data-driven conversations, supporting those doing the right things and ensuring coherence and alignment are crucial. Strong partnerships—perhaps the single most critical factor in programmatic success—must anchor our efforts. Collaboration works best when stakeholders share clear goals, align resources and maintain consistent communication.

Additionally, the promise of virtual and tech-enabled tutoring is compelling for many schools. By removing geographic constraints, technology can broaden access to specialized interventions and deliver quality support at a lower cost. But these solutions are only effective when paired with robust data collection and analysis. Across states, districts, and schools, automated and accessible data must inform action, empowering stakeholders to drive meaningful change.

As we push forward, let’s not lose sight of what’s at stake. The vision of “Tutoring and Care for All” challenges us to focus our energy on what works, support those making a difference, and ensure that every child has the tools to thrive. Together, we can move beyond recovery to build a brighter, more equitable future for all.

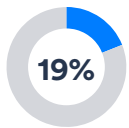


Kevin Huffman
Founding CEO
Accelerate

What Parents Told Us

The State of Educational Opportunity in America, a survey of 20,000 parents conducted in the summer of 2024, found that in the last year, wealthy families (28%) have enrolled their children in tutoring programs at nearly double the rate of low-income families (16%). Most parents want more opportunities for this kind of support: 77% of American families who don't have a tutor say they would like one for their child.

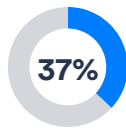
National Average



Tutoring Participation

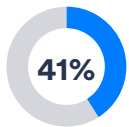
Percentage of children who have received academic tutoring in this past school year

National Average



Mental Health Satisfaction

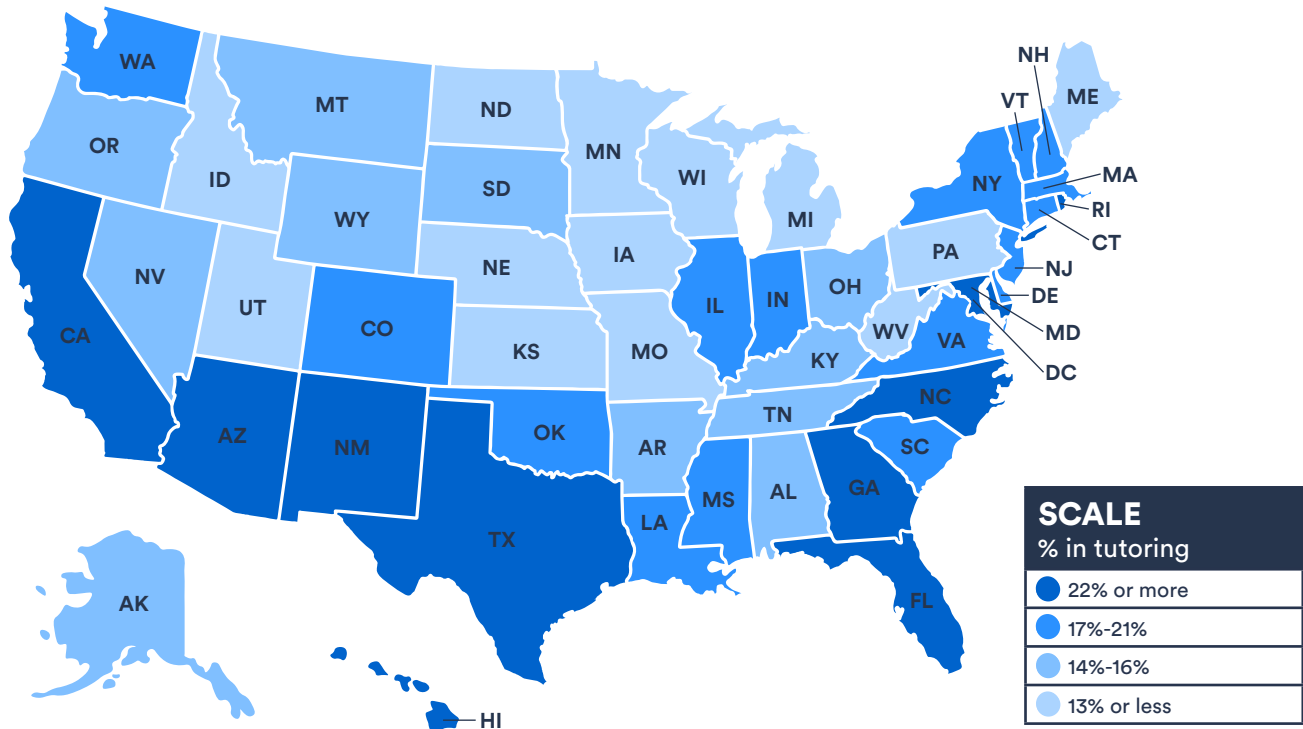
Percentage answering they are very satisfied with how the school supports their child's mental health needs



Summer Program Participation

Percentage of children who participated in a supervised summer program

PARTICIPATION IN TUTORING BY STATE



2025 Goals



As the **CarolinaCAN** team continues to work towards implementing Education Opportunity Scholarships and expanding them to allow funds to also go to tutoring and afterschool programs, the state will need to define a bar for what identifies a program as “high quality.” Working in partnership with the NCEA, CarolinaCAN will push for legislation that sets a rigorous bar for providers.



With only 35% of Connecticut children scoring at proficient or above in reading on the NAEP exam, literacy work continues to be a major priority. In 2025, the team will work to preserve the current level of funding, while working to strengthen the Statewide Literacy Advisory Council to play a more central role in implementation of new reading initiatives across districts. Additionally, **ConnCAN** will ensure that every student, up to grade five, has an Individual Reading Plan that will guarantee additional support for students that have not met third grade reading benchmarks along with multilingual learners, as well as changing a suggested list of assessments into a required list and strengthening the professional development of teachers.



Given the continued learning loss of Connecticut’s students, where NAEP proficiency rates still lag behind scores in the 1990s, **ConnCAN** will also be working to address this learning loss by partnering with Teach For America and New Haven Leadership to launch a new initiative around tutoring and summer learning. The coalition will create local policy recommendations and a strategy to generate resources to expand these programs to low-income students.



Students in Delaware continue to reel from school closures during the pandemic, with substantial learning loss—only 34% of Delaware students are proficient in reading and 33% are proficient in math. Building on **DelawareKidsCAN**’s prior years’ work on implementing the science of reading, the team will pursue learning loss recovery through two goals: the first, to triple the funding in the state budget available for literacy coaches and through the creation of a state-mandated, opt-out program for struggling K-3 students to receive high-dosage tutoring.



Only 32% of 4th graders are proficient in reading according to the most recent NAEP. Building on **GeorgiaCAN**’s prior work as the leading advocate for two major literacy bills, this year the team will prioritize ensuring schools have the coaching talent they need to deliver strong literacy instruction.



Additionally, **GeorgiaCAN** is working to add Georgia to the growing list of states prohibiting cell phone usage by students during the school day. Phones in schools not only disrupt everyday learning but also inhibit the development of social interaction between students. GeorgiaCAN believes it is of critical importance to help remove the distractions that cell phones bring to support students’ mental health.



According to the State of Educational Opportunity in America, Hawaii’s families are among the lowest in the nation in terms of the percentage of parents who feel their child is above grade level in reading, including middle- and high-income families. It’s likely this lack of reading progress is a major contributor to the state having one of the lowest levels in the country of parental school satisfaction. To rectify this, **HawaiiKidsCAN** will partner with the Department of Education and Board of Education to pass a new comprehensive literacy policy that ensures literacy instruction is grounded in evidence-based-practices and every child gets the support they need. We will also pass legislation so that Hawaii is no longer the last state in the nation without requirements for screening and supporting students with dyslexia.

2025 Goals



With abysmal literacy outcomes for the state’s most disadvantaged learners and troubling performance for many other learners, **JerseyCAN** is at the forefront of a reading revolution within the state, creating a coalition to shepherd the effort and culminating with the successful passage of a package of literacy laws that changed everything from teacher development to screeners for kids and high-quality instructional materials. This year, JerseyCAN will play an implementation and oversight role to ensure that the intent behind the policy shifts match the reality, by maintaining our strong literacy coalition and through our continued work on the NJDOE Literacy Working Group.



– **Paula White, Executive Director, JerseyCAN**

“JerseyCAN is trying to start a reading revolution in New Jersey and over the past several years, we and our coalition partners have worked to fundamentally reimagine how our children learn to read. We’ve gotten educators the curriculum and training they need to build fluent readers and provided parents with critical information about their kids’ reading ability and progress. Care for all means ensuring that all of our students are provided not just with tutors and summer camps, but also with the highest-quality materials and instruction based on pedagogical science.”



While New Jersey’s literacy standards required substantive change, high-quality math standards have been in place in New Jersey for years. However, math standards in some domains require further fine-tuning and math achievement is a serious concern (only 36% of sixth graders are proficient in mathematics, according to the most recent NAEP assessment.) **JerseyCAN** will advocate for the most meaningful revisions to build a new, broad-based math and data science effort that will clearly expose the link between mathematics standards and access to the state’s strongest and most in-demand jobs.



The most recent NAEP scores indicate that less than one in five students in the Land of Enchantment are proficient readers. Specific students are now able to be identified as struggling readers as a result of prior years’ wins from the team. The work now turns to how to support these students once they have been identified. This year, **NewMexicoKidsCAN** will work to craft legislation to implement mandatory Individual Reading Plans for struggling readers in K-2 grade in order to provide families with the interventions and supports they need. For students in grades 3-8, the team will bring forward legislation that will require high-impact tutoring interventions for struggling students.



With concerning findings of only 35 percent of Coloradans reporting they are very satisfied with how schools are supporting their children’s mental health, and a ranking near the bottom of the country for the percent of parents attending meetings at school, **Transform Education Now** will lead a coalition to understand how mental health plays out in schools and classrooms and its relationship to the school-to-prison pipeline.

A World of Open and Connected Learning



A World of Open and Connected Learning

Across the United States, families are sending a clear message: they want more than what traditional education alone can offer. They're asking for opportunities that fuel curiosity, spark creativity and open doors to new possibilities. Whether urban or rural, high- or low-income, families overwhelmingly want their children to have access to learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

Yet these opportunities remain deeply unequal. According to the 50CAN survey, while 57% of high-income families either participate in or express unmet demand for afterschool programs, only 38% of low-income families do the same. This disparity isn't just about financial resources; it reflects gaps in access, awareness and advising. Even when affordable programs exist, too many families struggle to find them or understand how to enroll, leaving critical opportunities untapped.

This isn't about a lack of interest—it's about missed potential. Consider a high schooler in rural West Virginia who dreams of learning computer programming but doesn't have access to local courses or sufficient internet to take them online. Or imagine a middle schooler in Detroit with a passion for art but whose family can't afford the cost of lessons and supplies. These students don't need more time in school; they need a system that connects them to opportunities that nurture their unique talents and aspirations.

Fortunately, we are beginning to see what's possible when families are given the tools to create these connections. Ohio's Afterschool Child Enrichment (ACE) program, for example, provides families with \$500 annually to spend on enrichment activities such as tutoring, music lessons and STEM programs. By giving parents the ability to choose, programs like ACE empower families to tailor resources to their children's needs, ensuring those needs don't go unmet.

The potential of this approach goes far beyond enrichment. Programs like Arizona's Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) allow families to access public funds for everything from specialized education services to extracurricular activities. These policies recognize a fundamental truth: when families are trusted with decision-making, they make choices that directly benefit their children.

But funding alone isn't enough. Families need support navigating an increasingly complex landscape of opportunities. RESCHOOL has shown how critical this can be by offering one-on-one guidance to help families identify and

access the programs that best match their children's goals. These navigation supports turn a maze of disconnected options into a pathway to success, especially for families who might otherwise be left behind.

The 50CAN survey underscores that families don't just want their children to do better in school—they want their children to thrive in life. Parents want creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving to be central to their children's education. These qualities aren't confined to the classroom; they're cultivated in the kinds of out-of-school experiences that help students explore, build, and grow on their own terms.

For policymakers, the path forward is clear. Expanding programs like ACE in Ohio and Arizona's expansive ESA program, supporting navigation services and ensuring equitable access to these opportunities are essential. Families have made their priorities known. They're looking for systems that put their children at the center, trust their judgment and deliver resources in ways that are adaptable, accessible and impactful.

A world of open and connected learning isn't just an abstract idea—it's the future families are already building. Now, it's up to policymakers, funders, entrepreneurs and educators to meet them there. By investing in this vision, we can create an education ecosystem that meets families where they are and ensures every child has the chance to explore their potential, discover their passions and achieve their dreams.

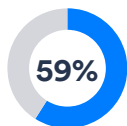


Justin Dent
Founding Executive Director
Outschool.org

What Parents Told Us

The State of Educational Opportunity in America, a survey of 20,000 parents conducted in the summer of 2024, found deep differences in afterschool program participation based on family income. High-income families participated in afterschool sports and arts programs at significantly higher rates than low-income families (67% vs. 41% for arts; 77% vs 42% for sports.)

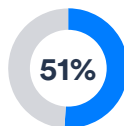
National Average



Organized Sports Participation

Percentage of children who have participated in organized sports in the past 12 months

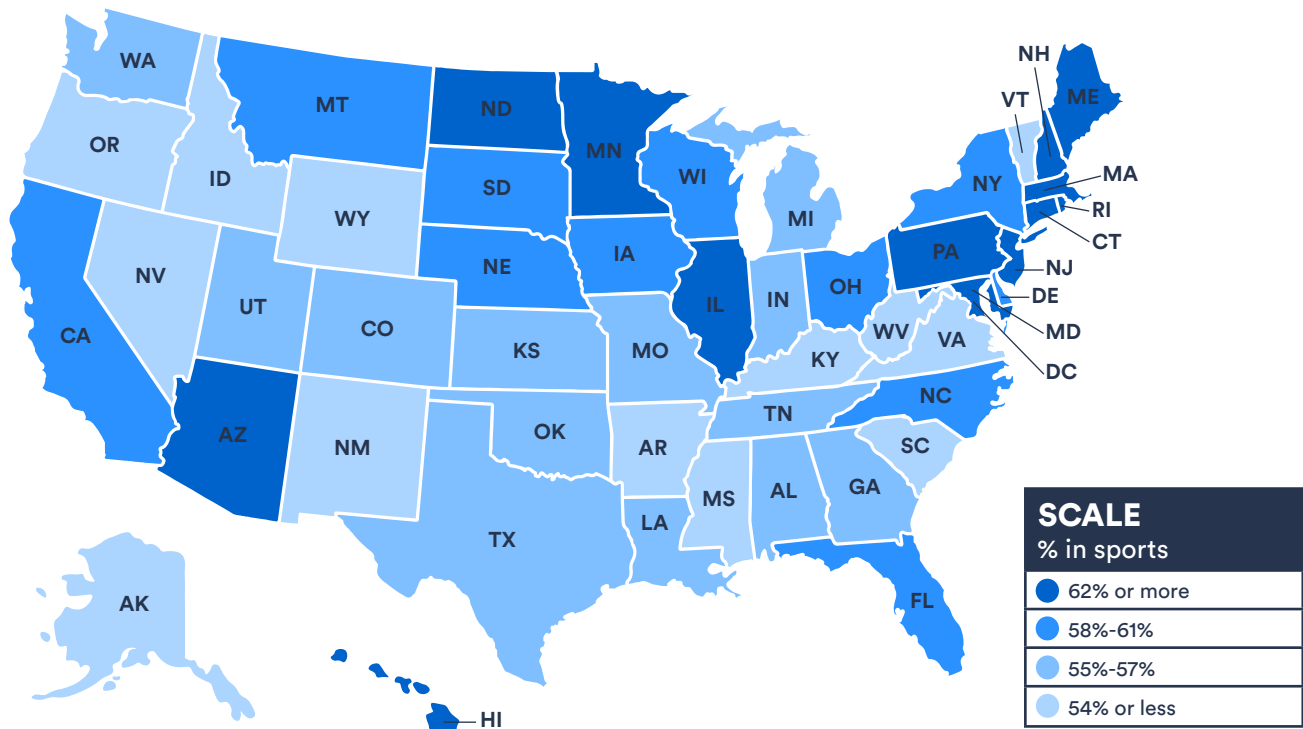
National Average



Art, Dance or Music Participation

Percentage of children who have participated in art, dance, music or other lessons in the past 12 months

ORGANIZED SPORTS PARTICIPATION BY STATE



2025 Goals



North Carolina ranks well below the national average for parents who feel like they have a choice in where their child attends school, according to The State of Educational Opportunity in America survey. To expand options and customizability for families with struggling students, **CarolinaCAN** will fight to open up partial ESAs for public school students, so that they can receive supplemental services like tutoring and afterschool, while public schools will be able to receive partial per-pupil funding for students who take a la carte courses from the school.



The CLEP exam is a College Board testing product that is a little-known and underutilized tool in New Jersey to help high-school students acquire college credit outside of a K-12 setting that can be applied to meet state college or university graduation requirements in the Garden State. The cost of the test, however, is an obstacle for many low-income students. To expand opportunity, **JerseyCAN** will work to establish new regulations at the State Board that will underwrite the cost of the CLEP exam for all students, providing yet another accelerated pathway to college and career.



Low-income families in Colorado expressed a strong desire in the State of Educational Opportunity for increased tutoring, afterschool and summer programming. Building on the success of Denver's MySpark initiative, **Transform Education Now** will work to expand the program beyond the Mile-High City, providing direct payments to low-income families to access these opportunities.



“We know that learning happens far beyond the classroom walls yet plenty of families often do not have the household income needed to take advantage of and participate in high-quality programming outside of school. Denver’s My Spark program puts dollars into the hands of families in order to open up a world of educational possibilities for kids. Allowing families and students to find and choose their own programming allows children the opportunity to explore and find their passion, ultimately creating happier, healthier communities.”

– **Nicholas Hernandez, Executive Director, TEN**

A Family's Right to Know What's Working



A Family's Right to Know What's Working

In the recent 50CAN survey, more than half of parents guessed that taxpayers spent less than \$5,000 annually on their child's education.

They're wrong.

Even in the lowest-spending states of Utah, Idaho, and Arizona, schools spend about double that. Nationally, taxpayers are sending over \$15,000 to publicly funded schools for each child.

Why does it matter?

For one, if a parent estimates schools have much less money than they do, they'll likely have lower expectations for what their kids should get in return.

It's the principle of "You get what you pay for." We expect more when we buy an expensive vacuum than we do from a cheap alternative. A high-cost restaurant ought to be delivering a better dining experience than a \$5 meal.

But if parents aren't sure what is spent, how can they know what to expect?

Take a parent in New Jersey. Public dollars amount to an average of \$25,000 for each student's education per year. Total investment for each child from kindergarten through high school amounts to over \$300,000. For a family of three kids, taxpayers will spend near \$1 million on their schooling.

That's a massive investment. And it should be.

Spent well and you'll likely see kids gaining the academic skills they need to succeed in life, alongside access to athletics, extracurriculars, mentors, vocational skills, and much more.

Spent poorly and it's a lot of money down the drain. And kids pay the price.

Either way, families ought to know both how much is invested on behalf of their children and what the outcomes are. (Where available, Edunomics Lab has assembled these figures for every school in the country.) Families ought to know if students are falling behind in math and hear what's being done about it.

Where are decisions made on how to spend those funds? While the funding from federal, state, and local sources

is generated for each child, those dollars typically then get delivered to a local school system. The leaders in that school system then make plans on what to do with the cash each year. They decide who to hire, how much to pay each employee, how many hours of schooling kids will get, what to teach, when to deliver tutoring, whether to have a chess team or a dance club or a security system, and so much more.

Each of these choices involves trade-offs, whether intentional or not. When parents hear that there is no money for something, that likely means that leaders prioritized something else. Can't afford field trips or tutoring or better security? That's because the system chose to spend more on smaller classes or substitute teachers or laptops.

Sometimes employees vie for their share, maybe larger pay raises or workforce protections. Sometimes pressure comes from inside the system, say from academic directors who prefer one curriculum over another, or an athletic director who wants to protect a specific sport from cuts.

Families especially should have visibility into those tradeoffs and reliable data on the outcomes.

After all, it's money meant to benefit their children.



Marguerite Roza

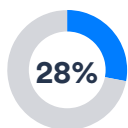
Director

Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University

What Parents Told Us

The State of Educational Opportunity in America, a survey of 20,000 parents conducted in the summer of 2024, found most Americans are unaware of how budget decisions are made at their school, with only 20% of families being very familiar.

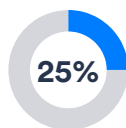
National Average



Reviewed School Performance

Percentage who reviewed information about the school's performance compared to other schools

National Average



Attended Parent Meetings

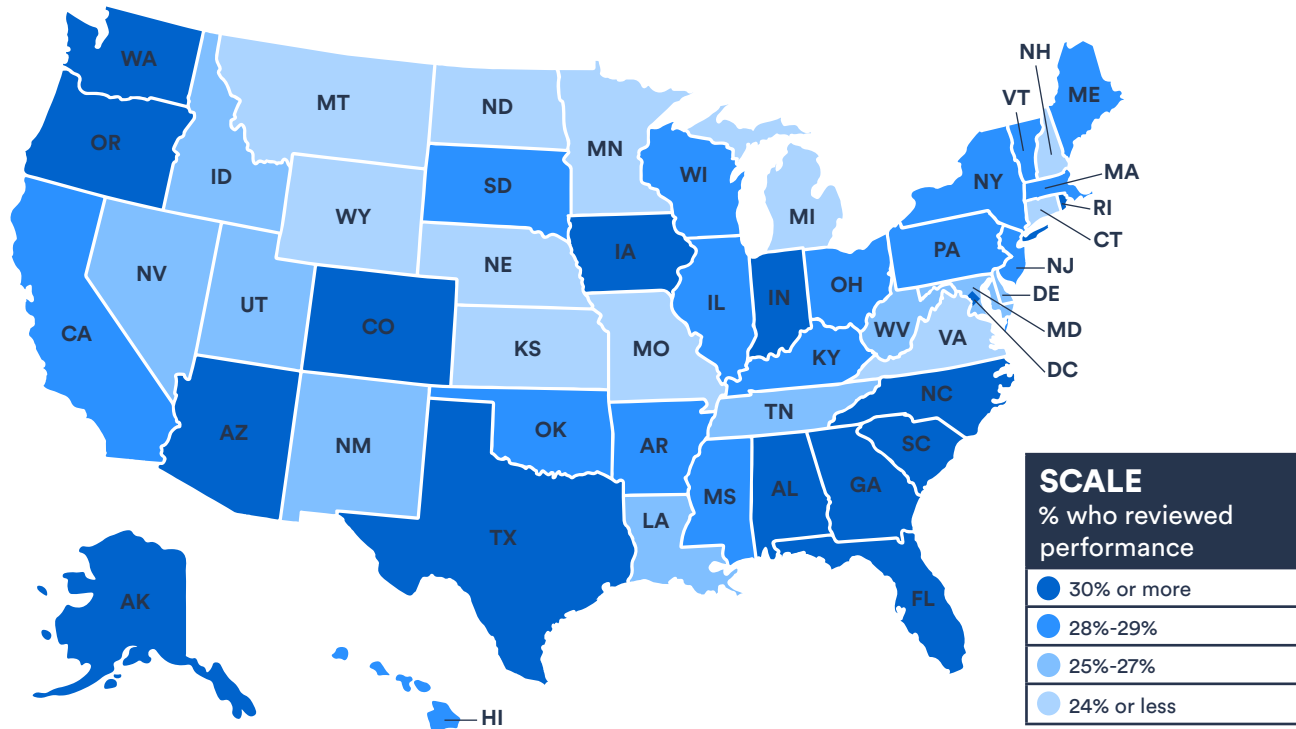
Percentage who attended meetings held by parent organizations at their child's school, such as PTA or PTO



School Budget Familiarity

Percentage who say they are very familiar with how budget decisions are made at their child's school

REVIEWED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE BY STATE



2025 Goals



17 schools in Delaware currently have single-digit proficiency rates for their students and parents are demanding more information about school quality and turnaround efforts. **DelawareKidsCAN** will advocate for legislation to require public-facing improvement plans.



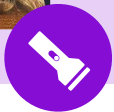
JerseyCAN is also working this year to pass legislation that will make passing scores on both the CLEP and AP exam guarantee college credit for test-takers, providing students with an option to reduce college tuition costs for material they've already mastered. With only a third of Jersey families expressing they are extremely confident in their child's college preparation in the State of Educational Opportunity in America survey, this legislation aims to create additional pathways of opportunity.



Together with with state and local partners, **TennesseeCAN** will create a framework for data daylight and help determine the information most needed about student outcomes and school funding to expand and protect strong academic programs.



“At TennesseeCAN, we believe what every teacher already knows: children learn in different ways. To ensure all students achieve we need strong schools, but the fact is, as a state we don't know nearly enough about what investments are and aren't working well to boost student success. This demands more daylight on data around school funding and student outcomes.”



– **Chelsea Crawford, Executive Director, TennesseeCAN**

A Clear Path to a Career



A Clear Path to a Career

The jobs we were trained for decades ago belong to a different era. Today's workforce is evolving faster than ever, and tomorrow's opportunities will demand even greater adaptability and innovation.

At ExcelinEd, we are focused on how specific components of strong student pathways—work-based learning, credentials of value, college acceleration and career and technical education (CTE)—can work together to ensure the next generation is equipped with the knowledge, skills and experiences necessary to thrive in college and their future careers.

Thankfully, the future is bright.

When combined, these four policies help states and schools bridge the gap between education and employment, empowering students to navigate their futures. These initiatives help students develop practical skills and prepare them to meet the demands of the 21st-century workforce.

CTE programs are vital in ensuring students graduate high school ready to succeed. These programs provide hands-on learning experiences tailored to align with industry standards, making students more competitive in the job market.

Internships, part of a broader work-based learning strategy, play an important role offering students real-world experience where they can apply classroom learning in professional settings. Beyond technical skills, internships help students develop soft skills such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving.

Workforce development initiatives strengthen the connection between schools and industry. By fostering partnerships with local businesses, these programs create aligned talent pipelines that benefit both students and employers.

Finally, programs such as dual enrollment enable students to earn college credit in high school, helping them transition to higher education more smoothly while reducing the time and cost needed to earn a degree.

States like Florida, Indiana and Texas have emerged as leaders providing pathways for students to prepare for their futures. They provide an example for other states to follow. Indiana and Florida have focused on enhancing pathways tied to credentials of value—industry-recognized qualifications that improve students' employability and earning potential. By strengthening these programs, both

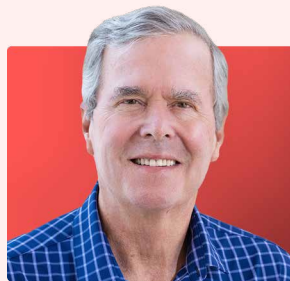
states aim to create clear, accessible routes to stable, high-demand, high-wage jobs for students from all backgrounds.

Indiana in particular has led the way redesigning the high school experience, including the adoption and integration of Career Scholarship Accounts, which provide \$5,000 in financial support that students can use for transportation, tools and other costs associated with internships, apprenticeships and other work-based learning experiences.

Two years ago, Texas passed a groundbreaking policy that rewards community colleges for helping students earn degrees and credentials that hold real value in the workforce. This outcomes-based funding approach creates incentives that align financial support with meaningful student achievements, ensuring that public investment directly translates into better opportunities for students.

When states prioritize CTE, workforce development, internships and dual enrollment opportunities, we not only prepare students to thrive but also strengthen our economy and society.

If we want our kids and grandkids to be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, our work starts today. And if I've learned one thing over the past quarter-century reimagining our education system, it's that success is never final, and reform is never finished.

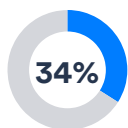


Governor Jeb Bush

What Parents Told Us

The State of Educational Opportunity in America, a survey of 20,000 parents conducted in the summer of 2024, found that only a third of American families of K-12 students are extremely confident their children will be prepared for college or career. Urban communities report higher rates of confidence (37%) than rural communities (28%).

National Average

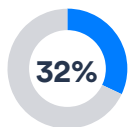


Confidence in Workforce Preparation
Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be well equipped to succeed in the workforce

National Average

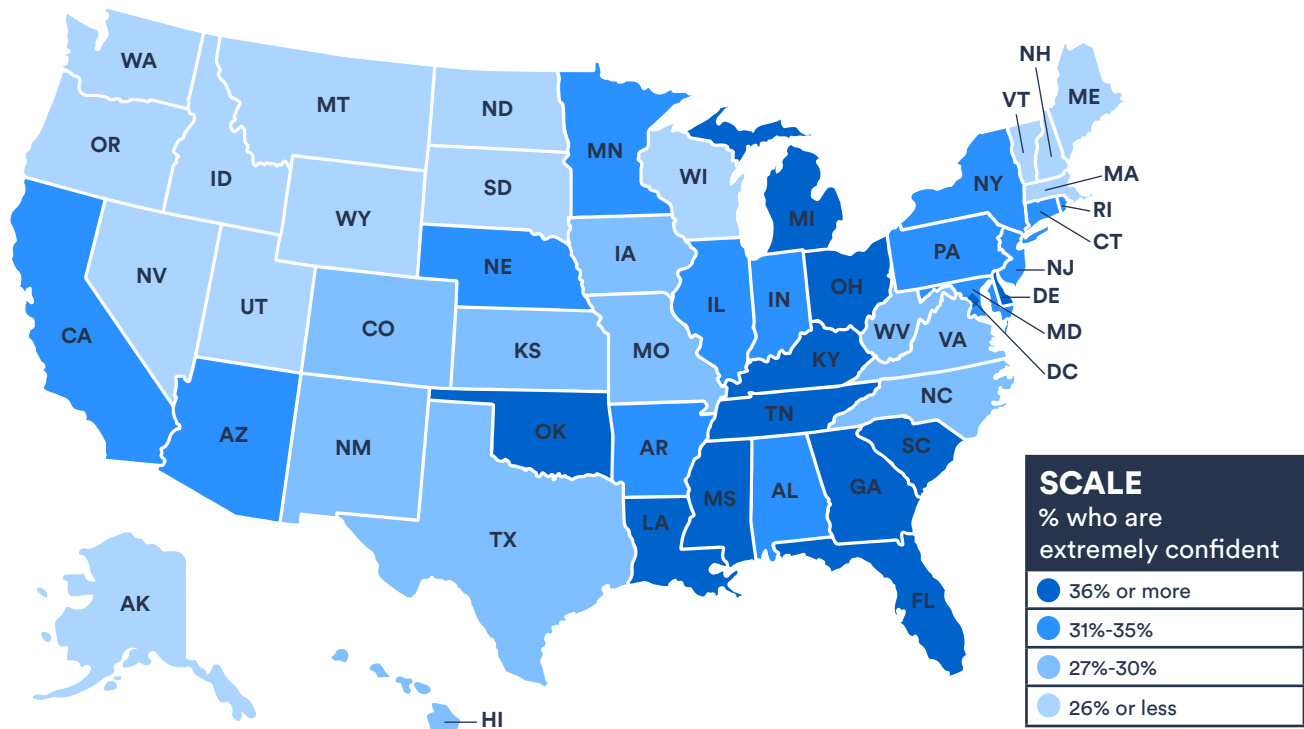


Volunteer or Service Preparation
Percentage of students who participated in a volunteer or community service organization in the past 12 months



Confidence in College Preparation
Percentage who are extremely confident their child will be well prepared for college

CONFIDENCE IN COLLEGE PREPARATION BY STATE



2025 Goals



Less than half of Georgia’s parents feel extremely confident that their children will be prepared for college and the workforce, which **GeorgiaCAN** made progress in addressing last year through five separate bills signed by the Governor into law. Given that CTE programming in the state is still in an early stage, the next steps in strengthening workforce development will be in ensuring that policymakers and parents have clear and actionable information about these programs’ quality.



With state math scores on the 2024 NAEP continuing to fall, in 2025, **GeorgiaCAN** will work to implement an automatic math placement policy in middle and high schools across the state. The policy will give every student a fair chance at advanced math and means more kids can access challenging classes, opening up better opportunities for their future and helping Georgia build a stronger workforce.



At 25 percent, Hawaii is also among the lowest states in the nation in the percentage of parents who are extremely confident that their children will be prepared for the workforce. **HawaiiKidsCAN** is leading efforts to make Hawaii among the list of states that have enacted legislation to codify cross-agency data governance for K-12 and workforce data, meaning that we have a clear picture of which educational experiences lead to real economic stability for young adults after they graduate. And because policymakers and community leaders will need active data on the long-term outcomes of career programs, we will build a cradle-to-career data system that tracks progress over time and allows for program evaluation.



Additionally, only 27 percent of Hawaii’s families are extremely confident their child will be prepared to enter college. With a low and dropping FAFSA completion rate, spurred by issues at the federal level, as well as low adoption rates for other programs, including free community college, there are major information gaps that exist that are limiting the opportunities for secondary education among Hawaii’s children. **HawaiiKidsCAN** aims to implement policy changes at the Board of Education that will tie FAFSA completion to financial literacy course completion which will be a necessary credit in order to graduate from high school.



After a highly successful 2024, where system-wide changes to the accountability system were made to ensure transparency to families, **Louisiana Kids Matter** is working to ensure that when students graduate from high school or CTE programs that they are able to secure a high-wage, high-demand job and that this becomes a factor in how schools are rated on their performance.



“In Louisiana, the public has been insistent that we need far more opportunities for our kids to learn critical career skills to secure a high-wage, high-demand job upon graduation. It’s critical that we’re able to provide students with a broad range of learning experiences that can broaden their interests and open doors later in life.”

– **Kelli Bottger, Executive Director, Louisiana Kids Matter**

