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Funder Group Announces Nearly \$1 Million in Grants in All 5 Boroughs to Improve Education in NYC Public Schools

11 grants will fund organizations and coalitions that make schools better for all students, including those with disabilities and those not fluent in English.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York (August 4, 2014) – The Donors’ Education Collaborative, a group of 13 local and national funders dedicated to improving New York City public schools, announced \$995,000 in new grants to organizations pushing for reforms to reduce inequality and increase opportunity for all students. These grants, to 11 nonprofit groups in all five boroughs, support an ambitious agenda that:

- Advocates for policies to ensure better funded, less crowded, and more diverse schools
- Builds strong partnerships between communities and schools
- Urges reform of school discipline and policing policies to keep more students in school and on-track to graduate
- Drives innovation and better instruction by promoting expanded and improved learning time, effective literacy instruction, and better use of the Common Core Standards

“This is a good time to push for meaningful reforms, and these organizations have the potential to make lasting changes,” says Shawn Morehead, co-chair of the Donors’ Education Collaborative and program officer at The New York Community Trust.

“Working with the collaborative, the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation can help tackle inequality and improve the quality of instruction for all students by examining the issues and supporting strategies that move the entire education system in a positive direction,” says Nicole Leach, DEC member and education program officer at Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation.

Below is a list of the grantees supported by the Donors’ Education Collaborative, which is about to celebrate its 20th anniversary. Please contact us for grant amounts.

More Space, Funding, and Diversity

Alliance for Quality Education to advocate for increased state funding, particularly in schools with high-needs students. “Equitable and adequate school funding is a pre-condition to improving the City’s public schools,” says Billy Easton, the group’s executive director.

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and **New York Appleseed** to advocate for policies that will create more dual language programs and promote school diversity. David Tipson, director of New York Appleseed, argued that “The City’s communities are changing rapidly, and our public schools are changing with them. It is critical that the City Department of Education ensures our schools serve and include all children.” Khin Mai Aung, director of the Educational Equity Program at the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund adds, “English language learners are a significant percentage of City students, and serving them better holds great potential for advancing school integration.”

Make the Road New York to lead a campaign to reform citywide school construction, as well as space planning policies to reduce school overcrowding in Queens. The group’s co-executive director Javier Valdés says, “We need to address how space in schools is used so that all children have adequate facilities to learn, create, and play.”

Connecting Families and Schools

Brooklyn Movement Center for a campaign to strengthen parent and community leadership in central Brooklyn and to advocate for more resources for area schools.

New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee to organize residents of District 9 in the Bronx to press for more effective school improvement strategies. “We can’t just sit by and watch our children fail,” says Michelle Reyes, a parent leader with the group. “We have to do something, and we have to do it now.”

New York City Coalition for Educational Justice to work with the City Department of Education to develop a comprehensive plan to better engage parents and train them to be leaders. Natasha Capers, a parent leader with the group, says, “Through this collaboration, the Department of Education is putting its commitment into action through parent conferences, leadership trainings, and engagement programs.”

Reform of School Discipline and Policing

Dignity in Schools Campaign - New York to advocate for reforms to the New York City School Discipline Code to eliminate excessive suspensions in schools, reduce racial disparities, and create more supportive classrooms. “We are making progress in reducing suspensions, but there is still much to be done to ensure that students are not suspended for minor misbehavior and that schools receive the training they need,” says Shoshi Chowdhury, the coordinator of the campaign.

New York Civil Liberties Union to change school safety and disciplinary practices in City schools by reducing use of suspensions, arrests, and summonses.

Improved Instruction Citywide

Advocates for Children of New York to lead the ARISE (Action for Reform in Special Education) Coalition’s campaign to promote policies that will improve literacy instruction for students with

disabilities. Kim Sweet, executive director of the group, says, “Difficulty learning to read is a major obstacle for students with disabilities. With new Common Core State Standards, literacy skills become even more important. A campaign to improve literacy instruction for these and other students is long overdue.”

The New School, Center for New York City Affairs to monitor how Common Core standards are put into practice in middle schools and help policymakers, parents, advocates, and others improve their roll out.

TASC (The After-School Corporation) to create and lead a new policy work group called Excellence in Expanded Education (E3). The group, which includes the Coalition for Educational Justice, Generation Schools Network, and the National Center on Time & Learning, will build support and consensus among policymakers and other stakeholders on the implementation of expanded learning time. Lucy N. Friedman, president of TASC, explains, “With the new emphasis on Common Core, college- and career-readiness, and community schools, New York schools and their communities have a great opportunity to re-think and expand the time and ways students learn.”

The Donors’ Education Collaborative (DEC) is a fund in The New York Community Trust

DEC was established in 1995 by local and national foundations to improve New York City’s public school system. Its members pool funds to advance equity, opportunity, and excellence for *all* students—including those who face the greatest challenges to success. DEC’s members believe that effective system-wide reform must be grounded in research, and carried out in partnership with parents, students, educators, and members of the community. Current members include the Catherine and Joseph Aresty Foundation, The Atlantic Philanthropies, The Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation, the Booth Ferris Foundation, the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation, The Ford Foundation, the Fordham Street Foundation, the Charles Evans Hughes Memorial Foundation, The New York Community Trust, The NoVo Foundation, the Schott Foundation for Public Education, and the Trinity Wall Street Grants Program.

The New York Community Trust

Since 1924, The New York Community Trust has been the home of charitable New Yorkers who share a passion for the City and the suburbs—and who are committed to improving them. With its donors, The Trust supports an array of effective nonprofits that help make the City and suburbs vital and secure places to live and work, while building permanent resources for the future. The New York Community Trust ended 2013 with assets of \$2.4 billion in more than 2,000 charitable funds, and made grants totaling \$141 million. (www.nycommunitytrust.org)

Throughout the year, DEC will hold events that explore the problems being addressed by its grantees in more depth.

For more information about the Collaborative, its grantees, or its events, please visit its website at <http://bit.ly/1kslnka> or contact Shawn Morehead at The New York Community Trust.

Grantee contact information

Advocates for Children of New York, Kim Sweet, Executive Director, (212) 822-9514, ksweet@advocatesforchildren.org

Alliance for Quality Education, Billy Easton, Executive Director, (518) 461-9171, beaston@aqeny.org

Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, Khin Mai Aung, Director, Educational Equity Program, (212) 966-5932, ext. 219, kaung@aaldef.org

Brooklyn Movement Center, Mark Winston Griffith, Executive Director, (917) 837-1587, MWGriffith@BrooklynMovementCenter.org

Center for New York City Affairs at The New School, Clara Hemphill, Interim Director, (212) 229-5400, ext. 1521, hempilc@newschool.edu

Dignity in Schools Campaign – New York, Shoshi Chowdhury, Coordinator, (347) 832-8391, shoshi@nesri.org

Make the Road New York, Daniel Coates, Lead Organizer, (347) 489-7085, Daniel.Coates@maketheroadny.org, or Javier Valdés, Co-Executive Director, javier.valdes@maketheroadny.org

New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee, Emma Hulse, Organizer, (718) 716-8000 ext. 140, e.hulse@newsettlement.org

New York Appleseed, David Tipson, Director, (212) 848-5468, dtipson@appleseednetwork.org

New York City Coalition for Educational Justice, Natasha Capers, Parent Leader, (347) 610-2754, ncapersslt@gmail.com

New York Civil Liberties Union, Donna Lieberman, Executive Director, (212) 607-3332, dlieberman@nyclu.org

TASC, Susan Brenna, Chief Communications Officer, (646) 943-8712, sbrenna@expandedschools.org

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