



annual report

BES identifies
and prepares
**excellent
leaders** to
**transform
education**
in their
communities.



BES started its Fellowship program 20 years ago to support school leaders with the preparation and professional development they needed to design, found, and lead an excellent public charter school.

When I stepped into the CEO role in 2018, I heard a common refrain from many leaders who had participated in our training: While BES was founded to help create equity and access for the students most in need of a quality education, there was a gap between our stated mission and our lived values. BES was part of a movement that promoted a singular approach to school design based on "best practices"—instead of engaging authentically with communities to envision a school that reflects its values and meets its unique needs.

After seeking feedback from our leaders, we made a necessary pivot over the past three years. We've revamped our training and practices to truly embed our commitment to equity in the way we operate internally, train leaders, and work with communities to serve students and families. Though this work is in no way complete, our approach today is much more community-centered, anti-racist, and supportive of leaders to leverage their lived experience and voices in the process of founding and leading schools.

I chose to do this work because we desperately need more excellent and equitable options for students that are liberating and culturally affirming. The leadership development that BES provides must also be affirming. We are committed to ensuring that it is.

We talk a lot about community in our work - the importance of engaging with and including the voices of the people who care most deeply about our kids and who are closest to what they need to succeed. Community is what I miss most being this far away from "home" (Bangalore, India, where I grew up and where my family still lives) and what I wish for most, every day, for my daughter, and for children across the country who are deserving of all the love and energy that parents, families, community members, and educators can provide.

The last two years have taken a personal and professional toll on our educators. I want to share gratitude for the BES community – our partners, our alumni, our board, and our team, who never fail to show up for the school leaders we work with – and for those leaders who pour endless love, energy, vision, and dedication into their schools each and every day.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aasimah Navlakhi'.

—Aasimah Navlakhi Chief Executive Officer



Our beliefs about what makes an excellent leader and an excellent school reflect our expanded measures of student success, and our commitment to practicing anti-racism in our work and supporting leaders to practice anti-racism in their schools.

An excellent school leader...

- Believes that all students can achieve at high levels and ensures equitable and robust supports for learners of all backgrounds, needs, and abilities.
- Ensures that all school systems, resources, and people align around a clear vision for an anti-racist learning environment.
- Builds, equips, and inspires a mission-driven team.
- Identifies and takes full advantage of coaching and support for themselves and intentionally develops a leadership bench.
- Holds themselves and their team accountable for the academic results and social-emotional health and development of all students.
- Builds authentic partnerships with the community, families, and students and actively seeks out and incorporates input and feedback into the school's design and operation.
- Advocates on behalf of the school in the community at large.



*Behind
every
excellent
school is
an
excellent
leader.*

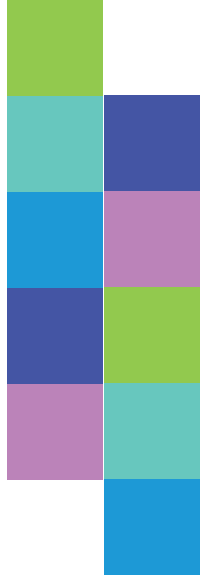


An excellent school...

- Prepares all students for self-determination and success in college, careers, and life.
 - Fosters an inclusive, joyful culture that nurtures students' whole selves and celebrates academic and personal achievement and growth.
 - Is organized around core values that affirm students' identities, support student leadership and agency, build character, and teach students the skills and mindsets needed to deconstruct systems of oppression.
 - Has an engaged, mission-driven board focused on academic and fiscal accountability.
- Employs a diverse teaching staff that is knowledgeable and engaging, develops and cultivates teacher skills and leadership, and supports teachers' personal well-being.
 - Uses rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum, and leverages assessment data to inform instruction, leading students to master critical habits, skills, and content.
 - Ensures that time and learning opportunities are intentionally and flexibly designed and organized to prioritize student experience and learning goals.



build

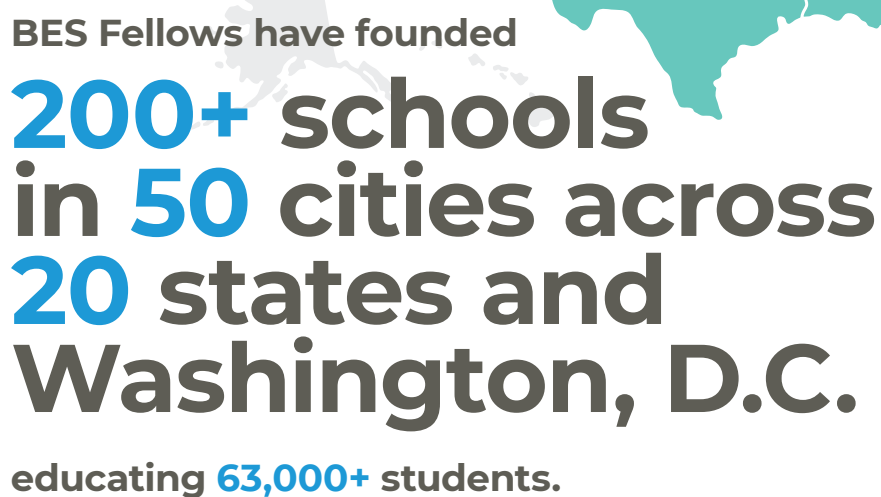


BES (Build. Excel. Sustain.) started its Fellowship 20 years ago to support school leaders to design, found, and lead an excellent public charter school.

Two decades later, we've expanded our support to serve even more communities in ways that are responsive to and reflective of local need.

In addition to opening fresh-start schools, Fellows can now replicate or expand an existing charter school with the support of BES, or found a high-quality, autonomous in-district school. In 2020, BES began a Community Co-Design Fellowship, in which the leader will open a new public charter school in partnership with a design team of community stakeholders. In 2021, BES launched a Character and Equity Fellowship in which the leader founds a school rooted in character and committed to equity and human flourishing.





We acknowledge the tremendous responsibility we have to raise up the voices of leaders of color in designing and developing anti-racist educational spaces that truly reflect and respond to community needs. We are committed to living up to this responsibility.

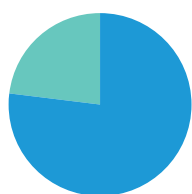
[bes.org/this-moment-in-time](https://www.bes.org/this-moment-in-time)

According to NACSA, only 34% of freestanding charter applications across 19 states and Washington, D.C., were approved in 2017-18.

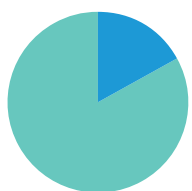
build

2021 BES Fellows have been hard at work designing public schools for families in Colorado, Georgia, Missouri, New Jersey, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. The proposed school models, crafted and honed through ongoing community listening and engagement, include a Montessori school, a dual language school, a school focused on creative arts, and a school designed for the Gullah Geechee community in Beaufort County, SC.

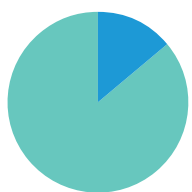
Our Students



82%
qualify for free or
reduced lunch



17%
English language
learners



14%
students with
special needs

*In public schools nationwide,
52% of students qualify for
free or reduced lunch, 10% are
English language learners,
and 14% have special needs.*

44% Black

42% Latinx/Hispanic

6% White

5% Other

2% Asian

*On average,
public schools
across the
country enroll
15% Black and
26% Latinx/
Hispanic
students.*

Leader *spotlights*



Sarah Harvey, 2021 BES Fellow, is working to found and lead Sankofa Montessori in her community of Atlanta, GA. The school will prepare students to be self-directed learners rooted in their culture and community. As a first-generation immigrant from Ghana, Sarah knows firsthand the power of an excellent education. ***Read more about her on our website.***



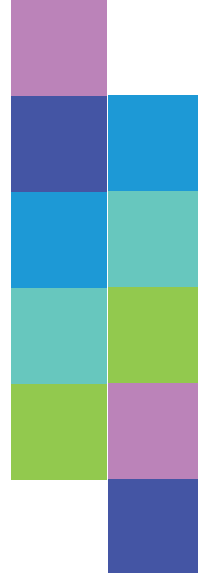
Alana Jenkins is the first-ever BES Fellow to propose a school in the state of South Carolina, where she has familial and ancestral roots. She will work alongside families and stakeholders to found and lead Heritage Academy, a community-centered school in Beaufort County, SC. ***Visit our website to read more about Alana.***

Read about the rest of our **2021 Fellows** online.

bes.org/fellowship

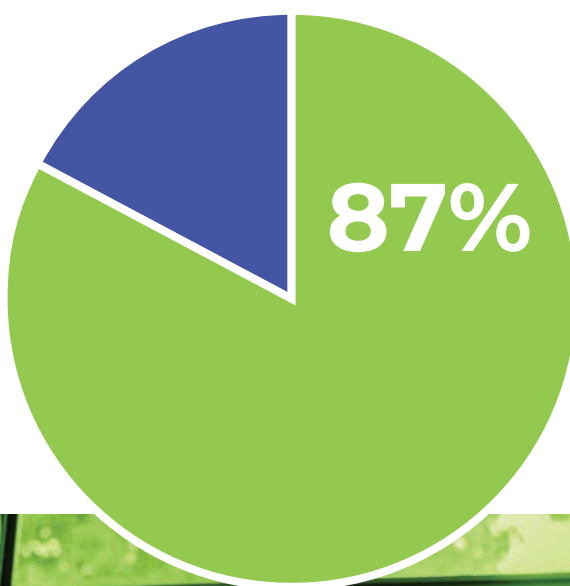


excel



BES' impact reaches beyond building new schools, providing leader support in a variety of public charter and district schools during each stage of a leader's journey.

BES is committed to intentionally diversifying our cohorts of leaders. We know that diverse leadership, where leaders share racial and cultural identities with their students and communities, matters.



of Fellows in our last two cohorts identify as leaders of color.

52% of leaders in our 2021 leadership development programs identify as people of color.





BES has trained
2,700+ leaders
in **35** states and
Washington, D.C.
across two decades of operation.

Despite the extraordinary challenges of the last two school years, many BES Fellow-founded schools across the U.S. received accolades at the national, state, and local levels – accolades that this year include how schools showed exceptional dedication to serving their communities during COVID-19, in addition to outstanding performance, leadership, and commitment to equity.

*ACE Prep (IN), founded by 2014 Fellow Anna Shults, was a recipient of the **Indiana Quality Counts Charter School Program Grant** and received unanimous reauthorization by the Indiana Charter School Board.*

*BES Fellows Arielle Peterson (2018), Graham Browne (2015), Kayleigh Colombero (2016), and Isaac Rivas-Savell (2018), along with BES leader Dr. Khalil Graham, were announced as members of the **Charter School Growth Fund's 2021 Seed Portfolio**.*

*South Bronx Classical Charter School I (NY), founded by 2004 Fellow Lester Long, was named a **2020 National Blue Ribbon School**.*

*Samantha Aponte, 2019 BES LENS leader, was named a **30 Under 30 Changemaker** by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.*

*Charter Schools Development Corporation awarded the first **Tom Nida Charter School Innovation and Academic Excellence Award** to BES Fellow-founded schools Ethos Classical (GA), Futuro Academy (NV), and Bloom Academy (TX).*

*Akeem Brown, 2020 Fellow and Founder of Essence Prep (TX), was named **San Antonio Business Journal's 40 Under 40 Man of the Year** for 2021.*

*Vega Collegiate (CO), founded by 2015 Fellow Kate Mullins, was named a **2020 Colorado Succeeds Prize Finalist** for its work "serving a high number of students eligible for free and reduced-priced lunch and a diverse immigrant community."*

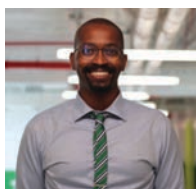
*Purpose Prep (TN) founder, 2011 Fellow Lagra Newman, was named a 2021 40 Under 40 honoree in the **Nashville Business Journal**, and 2019 Fellow Brittany Rumph was named a 2021 40 Under 40 honoree by the **Rochester Business Journal**.*

excel

As our schools continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, BES leaders remain committed to ensuring their students have the tools, resources, and support needed to excel. Our leaders know that students can't do their best in school when they face physical and emotional barriers to success, so they're working hard to provide access to the internet, technology, school supplies, meals, and emotional support — all in response to what the community has said that they need. As a result, many of our schools are seeing high levels of student attendance and engagement, despite ever-changing school closings, reopenings, and COVID-19 guidance. **While it's impossible to highlight all of the ways in which BES leaders and their teams are working to serve their communities, bright spots include:**

"Our growth in student enrollment and high staff and student retention during COVID is something our team is really proud of! We recently relocated from a 10,000 sq. ft. space to 16 acres. We now have the space to accommodate our growth at maximum capacity and provide students with ample outdoor play areas."

**Courtney Rodriguez Sales, 2017 Fellow and Founder
Bloom Academy, Houston, TX**



"We maintained over 90% attendance in hybrid instruction throughout the pandemic, and were able to successfully place our middle school graduates in high-performing high schools throughout the city and across the country."

Graham Browne, 2015 Fellow and Founder, Forte Prep in Queens, NY

Despite growing its student body by 25% during the first year of the pandemic, the **Futuro Academy (NV)** team, founded by 2015 Fellow Ignacio Prado, ensured every student could connect remotely by deploying devices and hotspots, and conducting parent training.

Coney Island Prep (NY), founded by 2007 Fellow Jacob Mnookin, provided take-home meals to families, and microgrants to families with emergency needs.

When his school was opening virtually in fall 2020, Dr. Chris Manning, 2018 Fellow and Founder of **Buffalo Creek Academy (NY)**, personally drove to each new student's home with desks and school supplies, and held conversations with families in their front yards.

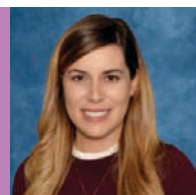
94%

of **Ethos Classical (GA)** families said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the school's response to COVID-19.

Founded by 2015 Fellow Emily Castillo León

"BES Follow On Support has been absolutely critical to our school's success. We were faced with unprecedented challenges over the last two years and I really could not have pushed through without the support of my coach. I feel honored to have a mentor who is accessible, relatable, and experienced."

Beatriz Gutierrez, 2016 Fellow and Founder, Soleil Academy, Lynwood, CA



Vista College Prep (AZ), founded by 2011 Fellow Julia Meyerson, created a virtual summer school program for Vista students and youth throughout their community who may not otherwise have had access.

98%

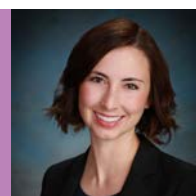
average daily attendance in 2020-21 virtual instruction

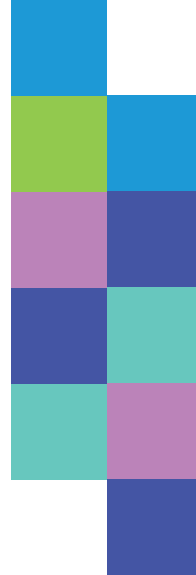
Soleil Academy (CA)

"There is no better organization to have prepared me to take on founding and leading a school."

Julia Meyerson, 2011 Fellow and Founder of Vista College Prep

Vista College Prep (VCP) opened in 2013 and has grown to three campuses across Phoenix, AZ: Hadley, Maryvale, and Sueño Park. In 2018, VCP-Hadley was named a 2018 National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education.





sustain

BES is committed to ensuring schools across the U.S. not only excel, but sustain their growth over time, and remain responsive to the needs of their communities.

7 out of 10

LENS participants have moved into heightened leadership roles after completing the program

88%

of Fellows who founded schools in the last 10 years are still leading their schools

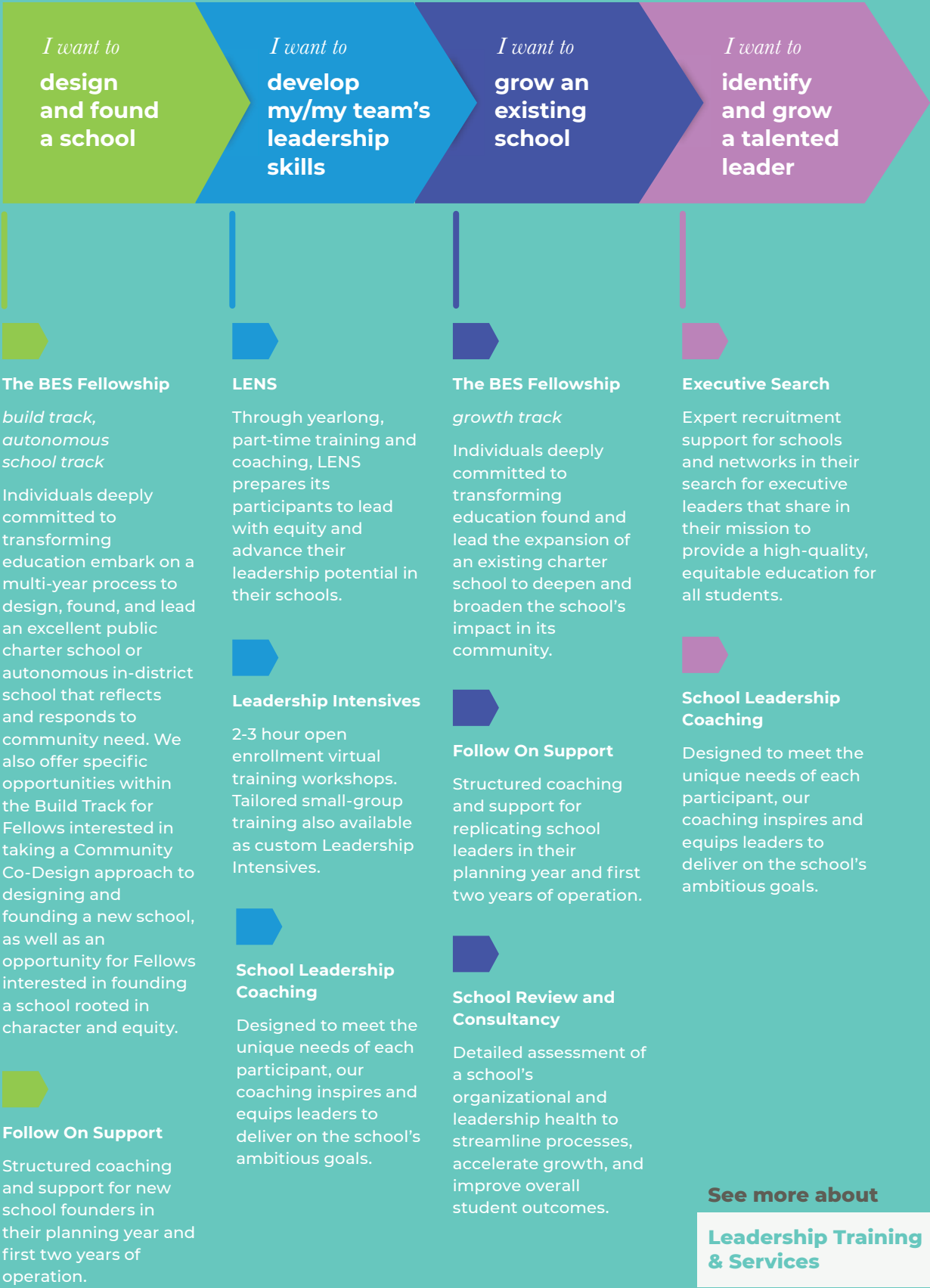
25%

of Fellows have expanded or replicated their original school

BES is committed to expanding its impact of supporting more school leaders in more communities across the country. One of the ways we are doing so is by leveraging our BES Fellowship and LENS program alumni community. This will help BES provide a network of support and resources for like-minded leaders.



BES Programs & Services



See more about

Leadership Training & Services

online.

bes.org/leadership

spotlights

Yutaka Tamura

2002 Fellow and Founder of Excel Academy in Boston, MA

"BES has recognized that in order for a school to excel and sustain its excellence for generations of students, the leader must be highly prepared and continually developed. The BES Fellowship gives access to a team of qualified coaches and a network of like-minded colleagues, and pulls back the curtain on the practices of high-performing schools around the country. And, the program is doing all this with high fidelity on a national scale."

Yutaka took part in the 2002 BES Fellowship, founding Excel Academy in East Boston, MA. Today, Excel Academy Charter Schools operates four public charter school campuses in Chelsea and East Boston, serving over 1,300 students across grades 5-12. In 2021, Excel Academy High School ranked in the top 3% of public high schools nationwide by the U.S. News & World Report. In 2022, the network will open its first campus in Rhode Island, serving fifth grade students.

Yutaka currently serves as executive director at nXu, an organization that works with youth to equip them to explore, articulate, and pursue their purpose.

Josh Pinto Taylor, Ed.D.

2020 Community Co-Design Fellow and Founder of The Anchor School, a proposed public charter school in Atlanta, GA

With the generous support of redefinED atlanta, Josh is co-designing his school alongside a team of local stakeholders.

"The two-year Community Co-Design Fellowship has given us the gift of more time to build a co-design team; to authentically engage the community; to include parents, students, and educators in our planning process; and to design a school that's responsive to what we are hearing through the stories of young people and their families. There are not a lot of organizations that are invested in giving people the time and resources required to deeply engage with the community, to study effective school models, and to construct a comprehensive vision for school. The BES Fellowship gives us those resources."

Angela Mu

2020 LENS Leader and Assistant Principal, Forte Prep in New York, NY

"It's exciting that I have been able to use many things I learned in LENS in my new position as assistant principal, including how to effectively coach and support adults; lead my team to plan for inclusion, diversity, and equity; and use data to drive goals and priorities, which is a big focus at Forte Prep. I completed LENS knowing that being a school leader is not an easy job — especially after the pandemic began — but it is a really important job that makes a big impact."

Hayden Lyons

2020 BES Fellow and Founder of Springfield Realization Academy in Springfield, MA

Hayden Lyons is a 2020 BES Autonomous Track Fellow and Founder of Springfield Realization Academy, an autonomous, in-district school serving grades 6-8 in Springfield, MA. Springfield Realization Academy is a technology-based school that opened in fall 2021, where 21st century skills and competencies are woven into all parts of instruction. Through its dual language program, students are instructed in both Spanish and English in order to support them to become bilingual, biliterate, and bicultural.

Jeff Kuhne

2021 LENS Leader and Principal, Columbus Collegiate Academy in Columbus, OH

"I can't imagine navigating my first year as a principal without LENS. The trainings have supported me as I grow into my new position, allowing me to practice my leadership presence when coaching the adults in my building and planning for challenging meetings. The relationships I've made with the leaders in my cohort and my LENS coach have been a lifeline for me this year."

Columbus Collegiate Academy is part of the United Schools Network founded by 2006 BES Fellow Andrew Boy.



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Yutaka Tamura, Ken Miller, Angela Mu and Josh Pinto Taylor, Ed.D.

Ken Miller

2020 Fellow and Founder, Intellectus Preparatory in Mount Vernon, NY

When Ken Miller attended college, a Black female majoring in math was rare. She became a teacher and made it her mission to help children who look like her fall in love with math. This passion has inspired her to create Intellectus Prep, a school dedicated to STEAM education and teaching financial literacy with a trauma-informed focus on student mental health. She hopes that graduating mentally healthy students with business acumen can help create a new generation of entrepreneurs to drive economic development in Mount Vernon. Intellectus Prep will open in fall 2022, serving grades 6-12.

Mitch Flax

2017 Fellow and Founder, Valence College Preparatory in New York, NY

"The BES Fellowship raised my bar and sharpened my lens in preparation to open and lead our school. One of the most valuable experiences was being able to see leaders, teachers, and strong systems in schools across the U.S. work in concert to produce student learning and joy."

Many elements of Valence came from seeing strong schools up close, one of which was small reading groups with direct instruction and tons of practice and feedback for each child. Our Queens community voiced that reading skills were critical to their families, so reading intervention for our fifth grade scholars was also key because they entered on an average of a second grade reading level. Our students who are reading below grade level read in a small group every day, and practically every adult in the building serves as a literacy teacher. I'm particularly proud of our seventh grade scholars who entered Valence with shaky or missing foundational reading skills, and now can tear into a grade-level text and discuss it at a high level with their peers and teachers."

Lagra Newman

2011 Fellow and Founder, Purpose Preparatory Academy in Nashville, TN

Lagra and Purpose Prep were featured on Soledad O'Brien's "Disrupt and Dismantle" series, which aired on BET in early 2021. The episode highlighted the school's work to eradicate the school-to-prison pipeline. This work includes monthly Identity Days where students can celebrate their cultures, backgrounds, and what makes each of them unique.

Monique Chavez

2021 LENS Leader and Dean of Academics - ELA at University Prep in Denver, CO

"LENS has helped me create strong systems and protocols with my teachers to grow in their skills. LENS has also provided empowerment in my role as a leader in my school building and I am just so grateful for that!"

Rebecca Francis

2018 Fellow and Founder, Elevate Collegiate in Houston, TX

"The BES Fellowship was unlike anything I have ever experienced. The access to the expertise of founders and the leaders in my cohort, and the opportunity to study high-quality schools across the U.S., made it a truly invaluable experience. Throughout this incredible journey of founding a school, I've tried to celebrate each win, from securing a facility in a challenging market to going on a waitlist for Pre-K during a particularly difficult enrollment season."

The Elevate team prides itself on creating a welcoming space for students focused on joy and gratitude, especially important when opening during a global pandemic. Each day starts with a morning meeting, during which students are encouraged to express themselves and staff can connect with students outside of the classroom. The impact on families has been something to celebrate; in a recent survey, 100% of families indicated that they plan to re-enroll their students for the 2022-23 school year.

our team

The BES team is a diverse group of nearly 30 collaborative, talented individuals who are deeply motivated by our mission of supporting leaders to transform education in their communities. This year, we announced several external hires and internal promotions in order to grow our team, ensuring our training and coaching is high-quality, sustainable, and led by coaches with a diversity of perspectives and experience.

BES Leadership Team



Aasimah Navlakhi
Chief Executive Officer



Gina Musumeci
Chief Program Officer



Jasmine Fryer
Chief Strategy Officer



Nicole Shaffer-Thomas
Chief of Staff

our board

The BES Board of Directors welcomes the renewed attention to issues of racial justice in American education and commits to advancing anti-racist work as individuals, as a board, and through BES as an organization.

Board Members

Martin West, Board Chair
Harvard Graduate School of
Education

Ed Chang, Board Vice President
redefinED atlanta

Elise Balboni
Finance Professional

Jonathan Chaparro
Braven

Hrag Hamalian
Bright Star Schools

Shenita Johnson
Illinois State Charter School Commission

Ebony Lee
Charter School Growth Fund

Charles Mitchell
All About People

62%

of our board identify as
people of color

community advisory council

Following the release of BES's three-year strategic plan, we launched the BES Community Advisory Council to bring more community voices into our work and support us in meeting our ambitious goals. To ensure our work and priorities in regions across the country remain truly reflective of the needs in these communities, we invited parents, business leaders, civic leaders, educators, philanthropists, activists, and others committed to education equity to join our Community Advisory Council. The BES Community Advisory Council currently has three regional chapters (Atlanta, the Bay Area, and Charlotte) and one national chapter.

Read more about the Community Advisory Council on our website.

bes.org/our-team

gratitude

Many thanks to the generous supporters and anonymous donors who make our work in communities across the US possible.

Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Cedar Street Foundation
City Fund
D.W. Gore Family Foundation
Excellent Schools New Mexico
Fort Worth Education Partnership
Kern Family Foundation
Maslow Development Inc.
Mr. Arthur Rock and Mrs. Toni Rembe Rock
Mr. Jim Mnookin and Mrs. Wendy Mnookin
New Schools for Alabama
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Sid W. Richardson Foundation
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The Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation
The Nashville Incubator
The Opportunity Trust
Walton Family Foundation

We are also grateful to the BES board members for their generous donations to BES.



Support our work.

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