EDUCATION AND OUR MISSION: THE UNSHAKABLE IMPERATIVE.

Promoting equity in schools is an invaluable social investment that gives children a deeper perspective and knowledge both about themselves and the world around them, and thereby empowers them to make wise decisions for their future.

Since March of 2020, education has undoubtedly been one of the most disrupted aspects of life as we knew it. Learning environments varied widely from school to school and week to week. While teachers and students gained their footing and re-adjusted to in-person learning in 2021, social conversations about systemic oppression and racism sparked criticism, protests, and additional challenges.

And yet, teachers and students persisted. Teachers dug in to ensure their students were learning—many times at the expense of their own personal wellbeing. The creativity and composure of teachers across the country led the way as they did everything they could to meet the needs of students in their classrooms.

At Kids In Need Foundation, our mission persisted, too. We believe every child in America deserves equal opportunity and access to a quality education. By providing those critical core supplies to the nation’s most vulnerable students, learning can continue—without placing the financial burden on teachers to furnish their classroom needs. With a continued focus on schools with a student enrollment of 70 percent or more students eligible for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), we supported more students than ever before. Our National Network of Resource Centers, which is comprised of over 40 mission-driven organizations across the country, and our partners worked alongside us on behalf of students and teachers.
In 2021, Kids In Need Foundation supported over 7.8 million students and 316,900 teachers through 13,807 under-resourced schools. More than $162 million was distributed in free supplies and classroom resources nationwide. We experienced significant growth from the previous year, including a 56 percent increase in students served, 54 percent increase in teachers served, and 100 percent growth in the value of product distributed. We’re pleased to have increased from an already impressive 94 percent program efficiency ratio in 2020 to a remarkable 98 percent in 2021.

This year we saw substantial growth in our ability to serve under-resourced teachers and students. Here’s a breakdown of how we achieved this through our different programs.
ADVERSARY TO EQUALITY: THE OPPORTUNITY GAP

The Opportunity Gap is defined as the set of circumstances that impact a student’s equitable chance to reach his or her full potential. These situational conditions into which a child is born include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, zip code, and socioeconomic status.

While this vernacular is still relatively new to the general public, it has been a long-standing, systemic issue in education (Ghirdharie 2015). To establish equity in education, the Opportunity Gap must be deconstructed. All students come to school from different backgrounds and have different needs. When teachers’ classrooms are stocked with essential school supplies, they can provide a conducive classroom experience for every student with the tools they need to be prepared, participate, and engage in learning. This also helps to build self-esteem and confidence, critical for students who are already painfully aware of the sizeable gap between the have’s and the have not’s. By addressing the Opportunity Gap, we work towards a more equal playing field and dismantling a generational cycle.

$23B
School districts that serve mostly students of color get $23 billion less in funding annually.**

45%
Nearly half of all Hispanic and Black students attend schools that have a very high percentage of participation in NSLP (75%+)*

ONLY 8.5%
of white students attend the same schools*

*According to National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2017
**According to EdBuild, 2019
The disparities in education were exacerbated and widened by the pandemic. By the end of the 2020-21 academic year, studies* showed that students were behind in both math and reading – with Black and Hispanic children in under-resourced communities impacted most. In particular, when it came to reading, unfinished learning for Black and Hispanic students averaged six and five months, while White students were three months behind. Students living in households with an annual income lower than $25,000 were six months behind in reading, while students in households of $75,000 or more were three months behind.

*According to McKinsey & Company, 2021
WHY SHOULD WE COLLECTIVELY CARE ABOUT THESE STATISTICS?

Investing in education for all students is imperative to the success of our collective future as a country. The quality of education for Black and Hispanic children is inequitable to those of White students. The State of America’s Children (Children’s Defense Fund 2020) report also revealed that 77 percent of Hispanic and more than 79 percent of Black fourth- and eighth-grade public school students were not proficient in reading or math in 2019 compared with less than 60 percent of White students.
Our socio-economic future is dependent upon the success of our children as it won’t be long until they are adults serving as our national and local leaders, workers, and parents.

The impact of education on our society affects every individual across the country: personally, socially, and economically. Teachers are the drivers of our collective future as their impact on students extends long past the time spent in the classroom – and outside school boundaries. Effective teachers, according to a Stanford study (Hanushek 2011), can directly impact the future salaries of their students. For example, a teacher in the 84th percentile with a class of 20 students will increase a student’s lifetime earnings by approximately $20,000, raising the class’s collective earnings to over $400,000.

The long-standing desired outcome of education is to be a critical equalizer, regardless of the circumstances in which a student is born. Long-standing systemic issues of racism and inequity in our society have had a domino effect on education. Kids In Need Foundation is committed to bringing together people who are passionate about equity in education to discuss and provide actionable inspiration to create positive change nationwide.

ASK THE EXPERTS: OUR TEACHERS

Each year, Kids In Need Foundation works with its National Network of Resource Centers to survey the teachers we serve in our country’s most under-resourced schools and communities. This year, more than 11,500 teachers gave us a lens into their classrooms. Elementary (K-5th grade) was most frequently selected as grades taught by respondents and nearly 50 percent of respondents indicated that at least one of their subjects taught was English/language arts or math.
Our teachers shared with us that the majority of their students—more than 63 percent—arrive on the first day of school without all the requested and necessary school supplies.

NEARLY 2 OUT OF 3 STUDENTS ARRIVE WITHOUT THE SUPPLIES THEY NEED

TEACHERS REPORTED THAT SUPPLIES POSITIVELY IMPACTED THEIR ABILITY TO

1. Create a more equitable learning environment.
2. Meet students' educational needs through daily activities.
3. Focus on other areas of need in the classroom—not what supplies they or their students were lacking.
4. Increase the variety and breadth of projects they could offer students.

“...The support is immeasurable. I have a class of 25 students most of whom show up without any school supplies, and also need supplies at home to do homework. I couldn't afford to personally provide the what they need, but the resource center has provided for my students.”
SUPPLIES LEAD TO IMPROVED STUDENT OUTCOMES

In under-resourced schools, students who are prepared for class perform better. Teachers report student improvements in the following categories:

- Preparedness: 87%
- Class Participation: 77%
- Confidence: 70%

By providing these supplies, students and families have equity with other families that can readily afford what students need. This builds the students' self-esteem and confidence in the classroom.
YEAR AFTER YEAR, CORE IS KING

Throughout the pandemic, learning has been executed in a number of ways both virtually and in person. Despite those varying environments, our teachers reiterate a consistent need for essential supplies in the classroom. The quintessential school supplies remain at the top of the list.

Each year, the same school supply tops the list as the most-needed item in the classroom: pencils. It doesn’t get more simple than that. Access to our most basic writing tool is critical in classrooms.

This year’s survey divided teacher feedback into two categories: Pre-K through 5th grade and 6th grade through 8th grade. For all grades, the most-needed items were pencils and paper.

“Backpacks with supplies instantly make the kids feel ready for school. Having extra crayons, markers, glue, scissors, pencils, and sharpeners makes it so I can send items home for homework they could otherwise not complete.”

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<th>Overall Ranking</th>
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<th>PK-5 Ranking</th>
<th>6-8 Ranking</th>
<th>9-12 Ranking</th>
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<td>Dry Erase Markers</td>
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<td>#12</td>
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Crayons are broken and used. Markers have dried up. Pencils are down to a stub and notebooks are full.

In our survey, 74 percent of teachers indicated that students run out of supplies by the start of the second semester, and their families are unable to replenish those supplies. Over 91 percent said when “halftime” arrives, they need new supplies for their classroom.

Kids In Need Foundation’s strategic approach to meeting the ‘halftime’ needs of teachers and students in under-resourced schools is through its HALFTIME initiative. At the end of 2021, Kids In Need Foundation collaborated with five partners to serve 490 teachers in seven markets across the country. Through those 490 teachers, more than 11,700 students received supplies for the second half of the school year. In each market, to energize and inspire students to finish the year strong, Kids In Need Foundation engaged current and former professional football players to visit classrooms and talk to students about the importance of education.
THE COST FOR TEACHERS

At the start of each new school year, countless headlines acknowledge the amount teachers spend of their own money on their classrooms. This year, we wanted to gather as much insight, specifically from the teachers served by Kids In Need Foundation and our National Network of Resource Centers, to see how we can lessen the burden.

In this year’s survey, 1 out of 3 teachers shared that they spend more than $500. In a national survey of 5,400 PreK-12 teachers across public, charter, and private schools, teachers reported that they spent an average of $750 out of their own pocket on classroom supplies. Not only are teachers in under-resourced schools spending personal funds on materials for their students, they’re also making less than teachers in schools with a low rate of students living in poverty.

According to an Economic Policy Institute study, teachers in schools in communities of high poverty are making 10 percent less, about a $5,600 gap, than teachers working in low-poverty schools. Additionally, 57.5 percent of teachers in under-resourced schools reported that they are moonlighting to earn extra money.

In an effort to really drill down to the details of what teachers are spending, we also asked how much they spent for the school year on supplies, to which we had 8,566 responses. From that question, the average amount was $420—below the national average of teachers. The takeaway: more supplies provided by Kids In Need Foundation and its partners equates to teachers spending less money out of their pockets.

The feedback from teachers shows a variable contrast in experience and expenses. With equity in education as our goal, the baseline average indicates there is still much more work to do to continue to ease the financial burden for teachers.
NOW IS THE TIME

The issues facing education have a direct impact on our future and the time to step up for our teachers and students is now.

Teachers and students, especially those in under-resourced communities, deserve to have access to the equitable learning environments achieved through providing school supplies and learning resources. Operational support will enable us to increase our outreach to teachers in under-served schools where students of color are disproportionately impacted by the Opportunity Gap that results from inequitable school funding.

Our goal is to serve 500,000 teachers and 10 million students in underserved schools by the end of 2025. By targeting the Opportunity Gap and the disparities in education, we will continue to focus on that objective as an organization.

Kids In Need Foundation is committed to reaching that goal. And with your partnership, a collective vision of equality in education can be realized. Persevering together to deconstruct the Opportunity Gap isn’t a student problem; it is an adult problem. Let’s come together and solve it.

“
I am able to freely give a student supplies when they need them instead of constantly worrying about whether the student or myself can afford them. It allows me to focus that time and energy on helping the student better understand the curriculum.

“
KIDS IN NEED FOUNDATION

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