

FOREWORD

Thanks to dedicated teachers and principals around the country, the best-educated kids in the United States are the best-educated kids in the world. But only a fraction of our kids are getting the best education.

Today, only one-third of students graduate from high school ready for college and careers. The other two-thirds, most of them low-income and minority students, are tracked into courses that won't ever get them ready for college or prepare them for a job that pays enough to support a family – no matter how well the students learn or the teachers teach.

For generations, Americans have worked to ensure that their children's lives will be better than their own, and a good education has long been considered the key to success. But America's public education system was designed a half century ago to meet the needs of another age. Until we change the system to meet the needs of the 21st century, we will keep limiting – even ruining – the lives of millions of Americans every year.

With your philanthropy, you have an enormous opportunity to help.

You bring assets for change that are in short supply in public systems: independence, risk-taking, and working capital. And because almost 90 percent of American students get their education in public schools, education grantmaking in this area can cause ripples that lead to substantial impact.

I work for Bill and Melinda Gates because of their passion for advancing equity worldwide. Overseas, they believe their foundation can do the most by investing in health – especially in the poorest countries. Here in America, they believe we can do the most to promote equity through education, specifically by helping the millions of students that high schools are not preparing for higher education.

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation seeks to improve high schools, but that's not the only place where donors can have a real impact on the lives of children – and it's not the only place where creativity and leadership are needed. Opportunities exist across the spectrum – from helping children begin school ready to learn to helping ensure that students can attend college. Better high schools alone will not close the achievement gaps in our schools.

There is enormous need in public education – and enormous capacity to do good. I hope this guide gives you insights that get you started or deepen your engagement. You don't need to have the resources of a Buffett or Gates to make a difference. Given wisely and deliberately, private gifts of any size can change schools, systems, and the lives of students for the best.



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