DonorsChoose reflects on A View from the Classroom

We opened DonorsChoose data to the public so that people could make discoveries about classroom needs and teacher innovation in public schools. We’re excited that Grantmakers for Education has done just that with "A View From the Classroom," and hope that the report enables education philanthropies to listen even more closely to teachers when formulating their grantmaking strategies.

We appreciate that GFE underscored the progressive distribution of giving through DonorsChoose--more precisely, that far more classroom project funding on our site goes to low-income schools than to upper-income schools. Indeed, in 2019, the lowest-income quartile of public schools received 302% more project funding through DonorsChoose than the highest-income quartile of public schools. [1]

We also appreciate that GFE pointed out a regressive input to the larger outcome of disproportionate giving to classrooms in low-income communities--specifically, that in the first 9 months of 2019, a project from an upper-income school had a 68% chance of being funded, versus a 64% chance for a project from a lower-income school. The last two months have actually seen equal funding rates for projects from low-income and upper-income schools, but the report makes clear that we need to carefully watch this metric to ensure that overall classroom project funding continues to go overwhelmingly to low-income communities.

Here are just two examples of how GFE members have already helped in this effort:

- Each of the last six years, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has matched donations from the public to any classroom project on DonorsChoose for one day during back-to-school season. More than 65% of the schools supported by their most recent match offer had majority low-income student populations.
- The Lumina Foundation used DonorsChoose to give classroom funding credits to teachers in low-income communities in NYC and Houston who helped their high school students complete the FAFSA form for financial aid.

[1] In 2019, the lowest income schools educating 25% of students received $60,613,090 of classroom project funding through DonorsChoose, as compared to $20,083,875 received by the highest income schools educating 25% of students.