As we all know, 2020 was an extremely challenging year in countless ways, but what stands out for Challenge Success is how quickly our constituents exhibited resilience, creativity, and a profound adeptness in pivoting toward offerings that best served the needs and well-being of our schools, families, and students during this time.

As leaders of Challenge Success, while we also experienced difficulties resulting from the pandemic, impacts of racism, issues of social justice and equity, political strife, and more, we never once felt alone in leadership during this year of crisis. In fact, watching our entire community come together and double-down to support student well-being and engagement, as well as the need for equitable learning environments that value connection and belonging, was immensely inspiring.

➔ You, OUR DONORS, never let us down. After several years of significant organizational growth, our finances were affected. Program registrations declined as communities locked down and schools focused on health and safety. But your giving did not decline, and during a year of uncertainty, it made a huge difference!

➔ You, OUR SCHOOLS, told us what you needed, shared opportunities and challenges, and opened your virtual doors for new and adapted workshops to support student and staff well-being and engagement with learning.

➔ You, OUR FAMILIES, asked for help in supporting your kids and signed up for our parent education workshops (and yet another zoom webinar) focused on practical strategies to promote connection, well-being, and engagement with learning.

➔ You, OUR STUDENTS, leaned in and shared your critical voices in an unprecedented time. You informed our work and next steps, and reminded us again just how much well-being is the requisite backbone for learning.

➔ You, OUR BOARD AND ADVISORY MEMBERS, were always available, lent your wise counsel as we navigated a difficult year, and facilitated our ability to secure temporary assistance through PPP loans and other budget supports.

➔ You, OUR STAFF, rose to the challenge of making our organization even more accessible to the schools, families, and students that relied upon us. Your care and expertise helped guide them through some of the unanticipated impacts of virtual and hybrid learning environments.

Together, we weathered the year with deep collaboration, mutual respect, and in partnership with a committed community built over the last 17 years. Our mission was time-tested and validated—as important as ever.

We are beyond grateful for your unwavering support in 2020, and we look forward to rebounding and flourishing in 2021!

Kathy Koo   Lisa Busby
Executive Director   Board of Directors Chair
OUR MISSION

Challenge Success partners with schools, families, and communities to embrace a broad definition of success and to implement research-based strategies that promote student well-being and engagement with learning.

We believe that all students should be valued for their own interests, unique talents, and individual definitions of success.

We find that extrinsic metrics such as grades, test scores, and selective college admissions have become the primary markers of success in too many communities.

We know that this narrow definition of success can interfere with healthy child development and effective education, leaving many kids feeling stressed, marginalized, or misunderstood.

We want all kids to do well in school and to master certain skills and concepts, but a largely singular focus on academic achievement has resulted in a lack of attention to other attributes of a successful life.

Our work helps to transform the student experience and foster learners who are balanced, engaged, and prepared for the wide variety of opportunities and challenges they will face as adults.
WORK WITH SCHOOLS

How Schools Engage With Challenge Success

- **Year-Long School Program**
- **Summer Leadership Seminars**
- **Faculty Workshops**
- **Student, Parent, and Faculty Surveys**
- **Parent Education Presentations**

Map of 550+ Participating Schools

“In my 30 years, I’ve never been at a school and at a time when parents have been so thirsty for our help. . . . Our Challenge Success work enables us to link what students are saying they wish their parents knew with educational opportunities for parents to hear it.” —Administrator
The power of being at the conference with other schools that are just as interested in engagement and student life is like nothing else. There’s no other conference out there!
—Administrator

Listen Up: Using Student Voice to Improve Well-being and Increase Engagement In Learning presenters Carrie Green, Kent Denver Middle School Director; Jennifer Villeneuve, Challenge Success Senior Research and Evaluation Associate; Vanessa, Kent student; Emerson, Kent student; Eric Handler, Kent Denver Upper School Director; Jon Kleiman, Challenge Success Senior School Program Director.

“I think just taking the first step toward awareness that we need to take a more balanced, holistic approach to educating students already has accomplished so much. Students, faculty and parents are so much more likely to step back and question old assumptions and start to think about solutions. The data-driven educational approach has been most useful to raise this awareness.” —Parent on Challenge Success Team

2020 NUMBERS WITH IMPACT

45,000 students surveyed at 36 schools

8,100 parents surveyed at 17 schools

150 faculty and staff surveyed at 6 schools

1,400 registrants for our annual fundraiser and parent education event

274 students, parents, and educators at our Fall School Conferences

91 education leaders from 43 schools at our Summer Leadership Seminars

101 parent education presentations

95 professional development workshops
Challenge Success and Partners Present Live at NAIS Annual Conference

In late February 2020, just shy of the nationwide pandemic pause, Challenge Success had the opportunity to share some of its core messages at the annual National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Conference. One presentation showcased a partner school’s Challenge Success journey through the lens of student voice and the other highlighted how schools can take a healthy approach to college admissions.

Promoting student voice is a hallmark of the work Challenge Success does with schools. Through “Listening In” events, Shadow Days, “I Wish” campaigns, and the Challenge Success-Stanford Survey of School Experiences, schools are supported in gathering information about how their students experience school practices and policies. Hearing directly from students can positively shift how schools address problems and make changes. Further, having students as equal members on Challenge Success teams increases student agency in powerful ways.

Two incredible student members of Kent Denver School’s Challenge Success team, Vanessa (9th grade) and Emerson (11th grade), joined by school administrators and Challenge Success staff, presented to more than 100 educators about the Challenge Success strategies they adopted to improve student well-being and increase engagement in learning. The team shared data from their Challenge Success student survey that showed progress in several key outcome areas such as increased student engagement, less time on homework and more sleep. They also shared about policy changes the school made as a result of this work and urged participants to consider ways to include more student voice in the school reform process. Since Vanessa and Emerson were the only students presenting at a conference of more than 5,000 participants, educators lined up after the session to ask them more questions. The students shared the ways that they benefited and grew from being members of the Challenge Success team, and they highlighted how Kent Denver actively integrated learning about the students’ school experiences in order to create more effective policies, practices, and messaging. Thank you Vanessa and Emerson!

In another NAIS conference presentation, Co-founder Denise Pope partnered with Gabrielle McColgan, Director of College Counseling at Castilleja School, to share their college admissions expertise in a session titled: A Healthy Approach to College Admissions: What Administrators, Educators, and Trustees Need to Know.

The presentation emphasized research findings that debunk myths about college selectivity and future student success. By offering evidence that selectivity is not related to student learning, future well-being, or job satisfaction, the presenters showed the limitations of college rankings and invited participants to consider the concept of the student/college “fit” and why this matters most of all. Educators left the session with specific strategies for creating school cultures that value healthy, student-centered approaches to the college search process. Participants were encouraged to examine their school’s messaging about college outcomes to ensure alignment with their goals for student wellness.

This “College Fit” talk is a core offering at Challenge Success. In 2020, School Program staff presented this workshop to 15 different school communities. See the White Paper (October 2019).
Shining a Light on Teens in the Pandemic—A Research Partnership with NBC News

In fall 2020, Challenge Success and NBC Universal launched a research project to learn how high school students were faring, given their high rates of stress, sleep deprivation, and mixed levels of engagement in learning prior to the pandemic. In a nationwide sample of 10,000+ students from 12 high schools, our findings highlighted how the pandemic exacerbated student stress and amplified the importance of prioritizing student well-being for more meaningful learning experiences.

NBC created several segments based on our report and showcased them across their network platforms, including NBC Nightly News, Today, digital media, and a special program that combined all of the segments for the *Kids Under Pressure* series, which aired in spring 2021.

**KEY FINDINGS**

- Students, especially females and students of color, continue to experience high levels of stress and pressure.
- Students’ engagement with learning, which is always a challenge, is especially low now.
- Students’ relationships with adults and peers are strong, yet appear strained in recent times.
In a quick pivot to continue working with our schools, Challenge Success responded to urgent calls for support from educators as they moved online in March 2020. All school program activities—coaching, the annual spring and fall conferences, and professional learning workshops—moved online seamlessly. In addition, the Challenge Success program team developed new virtual professional development and parent education offerings to reach a wider community of schools across the nation to help them address the critical need to promote connection and belonging, revise assessment practices, and continue to engage parents in supportive ways. Other ways the staff responded to the needs of schools during this time included:

- Leading 196 parent education and professional development workshops, a 57% increase over 2019
- Offering 6 public webinars on a variety of topics, from parenting during the pandemic to healthy college admissions and effective assessment practices. The webinars had a total of over 2400 registrations, comprised of students, families, and educators
- Developing and administering several new mini-surveys so that schools could get an immediate pulse on students, staff, and faculty well-being.
Planning in a Pandemic

Our team also worked more in depth with several schools in a new “Planning in a Pandemic” series that combined targeted data collection and analysis on a focused area of need. These short term engagements resulted in pilot projects at the schools, including shifting assessment practices, developing a new master schedule, and other initiatives to make school more inclusive based on student feedback.

“We were really able to connect a LOT and I have never felt closer to my team. We all are working under the same goals and enthusiasm for making positive change. My school and I felt the conference really allowed us to make time for that and felt empowered to tackle this year with lots of change, despite new challenges we are facing.” —Student
Students Speak Event

In our “Students Speak” professional development workshop, we enjoyed hearing directly from students from around the country about their experiences with remote learning. Educators and administrators listened in as students shared the ups and downs of virtual schooling and offered suggestions for the coming year.

➤ In what ways have you felt more/less engaged with learning during quarantine?

➤ What’s one thing you wish your teachers knew about your experience?

➤ Compared to how you felt pre-quarantine, in what ways have you felt more/less balanced or overloaded? In what ways have you felt more/less stress?

➤ What are you finding time to do or explore that you did not have time to do pre-quarantine?
As an organization focused on well-being, examining ways to advance the values of equity, inclusion, and diversity are a natural fit. In 2020, the entire Challenge Success organization—our Board of Directors, Staff, and members of our Advisory Council—examined DEI issues through professional development opportunities. We created and affirmed our organization’s definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion, and created a staff task force to further our learning and actions as we work to make changes to our programs and practices to align more closely with our DEI philosophy. We look forward to sharing more in 2021.

*(Our Challenge Success work) has spurred on a sense of teachers valuing what students have to share more than ever. Whether they are looking at it from an equitable lens to create space for students or an equitable lens of the bias they bring to the table, teachers are thinking about examining a lot of it.

*It’s happening through our conversations, including the Challenge Success ones.*

—School Leader

---

**Challenge Success Definition of Equity:**

Equity is creating and sustaining an environment that strives to identify and eliminate barriers such as cultural and institutional biases and discrimination so that everyone has the opportunity to thrive with equal likelihood.
## 2020 Revenue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>$950,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>$667,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPP Loan</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>$229,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$1,847,500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contributions reflect the combined amounts of Challenge Success 501(c)(3) and the Challenge Success Fund at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Revenue includes PPP Loan that was pending forgiveness as of December 31, 2020.

## 2020 Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Program</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>$1,325,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Admin</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>$573,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>$126,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$2,025,500</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contributions reflect the combined amounts of Challenge Success 501(c)(3) and the Challenge Success Fund at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Revenue includes PPP Loan that was pending forgiveness as of December 31, 2020.
This list only includes our major donors. Thank you to those that donors gave at every level.

2020 DONORS

We Are Grateful for Your Support!
LEADERSHIP

Co-Founders
Dr. Denise Pope
Dr. Madeline Levine
Jim Lobdell

2020 Board
Lisa Busby, Chair
Lorraine Brown
Andy Chen
Stacy Friesel
Bev Hartman
Andy Housiaux
Charlene Margot
Barbara Rosston
Rachel Skiffer
Jeff Symonds
Kelli Tomlinson
Leah Weiss
Sally Whipple

2020 Advisory Council
Sabrina Braham
Cathy Cotins*
Elizabeth Gerber
Ken Ginsburg
Calla Griffith
Annie Hall*
Pamela Kading Webb*
Rabbi Patricia Karlin-Neumann
Seth Leslie
Alex Lockett
Carole Pertofsky
Eva Price
Garry Rayant
Patricia Russell*
Rebecca Sacerdoti
Brad Sachs
Catherine Steiner-Adair*

2020 Staff
Kathy Koo,
Executive Director
Jen Coté,
School Program Director
Margaret Dunlap,
Senior School Program Director
Laura Easley,
School Program Manager
Kristen Edge,
Events & Outreach Coordinator
Sunny Evans,
Office Manager
Jon Kleiman,
Senior School Program Director
Tricia McEntee,
Director of Finance & Operations
Sarah Miles,
Director of Research & Programs
Kari Riedel,
Director of Marketing & Communications
Justin Rodriguez,
Research Assistant
Drew Schrader,
School Program Manager
Samantha Selby,
Research Associate
Eric Spaly,
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Samantha Spielman,
Development Manager
Chris Stapel,
Senior Research Associate
Douglas Tsoi,
Parent & Family Educator
Jennifer Villeneuve,
Senior Research & Evaluation Associate

*East Coast Advisory Council