

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



RE | VISION 2020

CHALLENGE SUCCESS



Transform the Student Experience

DEAR COMMUNITY

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
Executive Director



Lisa Busby
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.



Challenge Success school team with students, parents, educators, and their Challenge Success coach, Laura Easley.

- **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

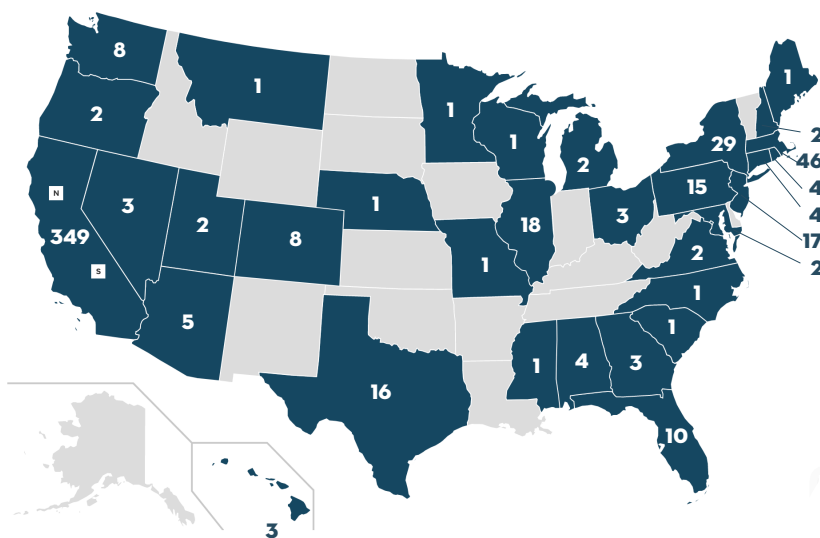


Student, Parent, and Faculty Surveys



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

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

“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 HIGHLIGHTS

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.

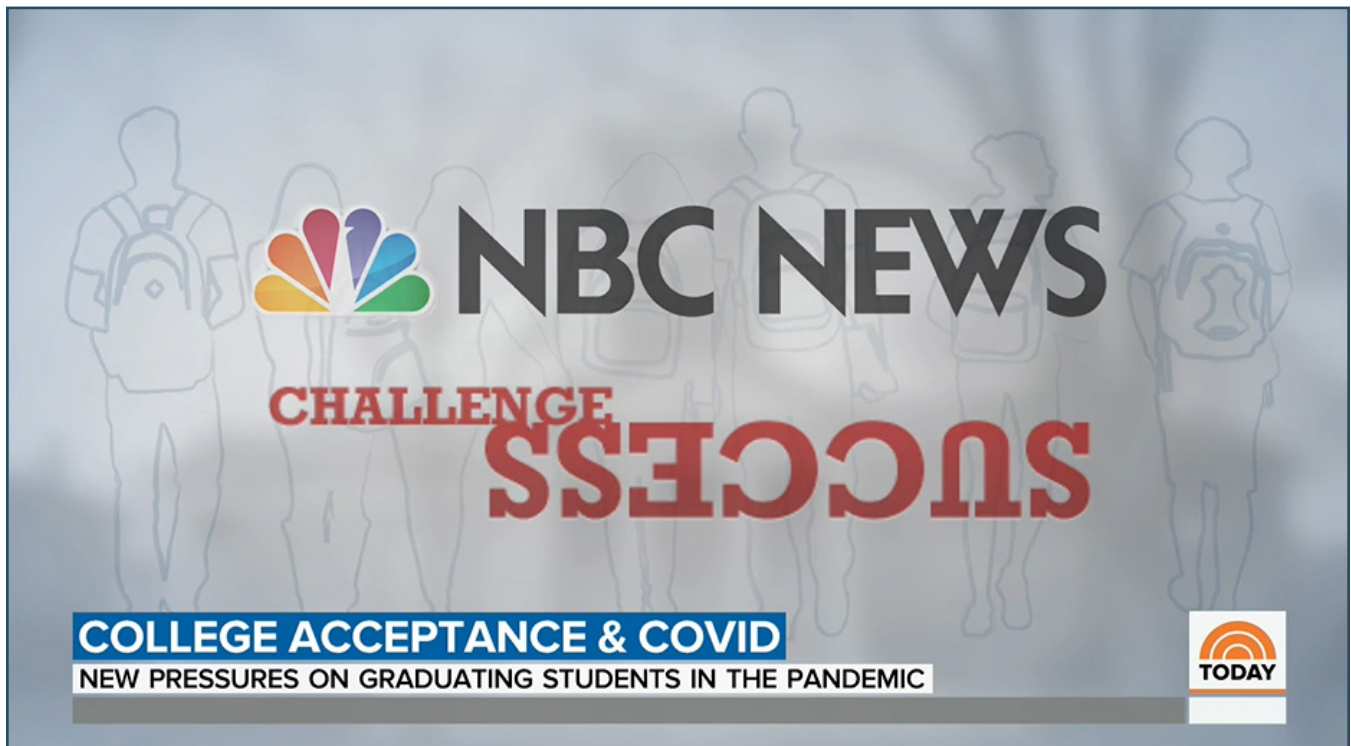
Two incredible student members of Kent Denver School's Challenge Success team, Vanessa (9th grade) and Emerson (11th grade), joined by school administrators and Challenge Success staff, presented to more than 100 educators about the Challenge Success strategies they adopted to improve student well-being 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 \(October 2019\)](#).

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



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.

CHALLENGE SUCCESS GOES REMOTE

“We loved that you engaged our parents and allowed them to be interactive. Thanks for helping all of us find ways to help our families at such an unprecedented time.”—Principal

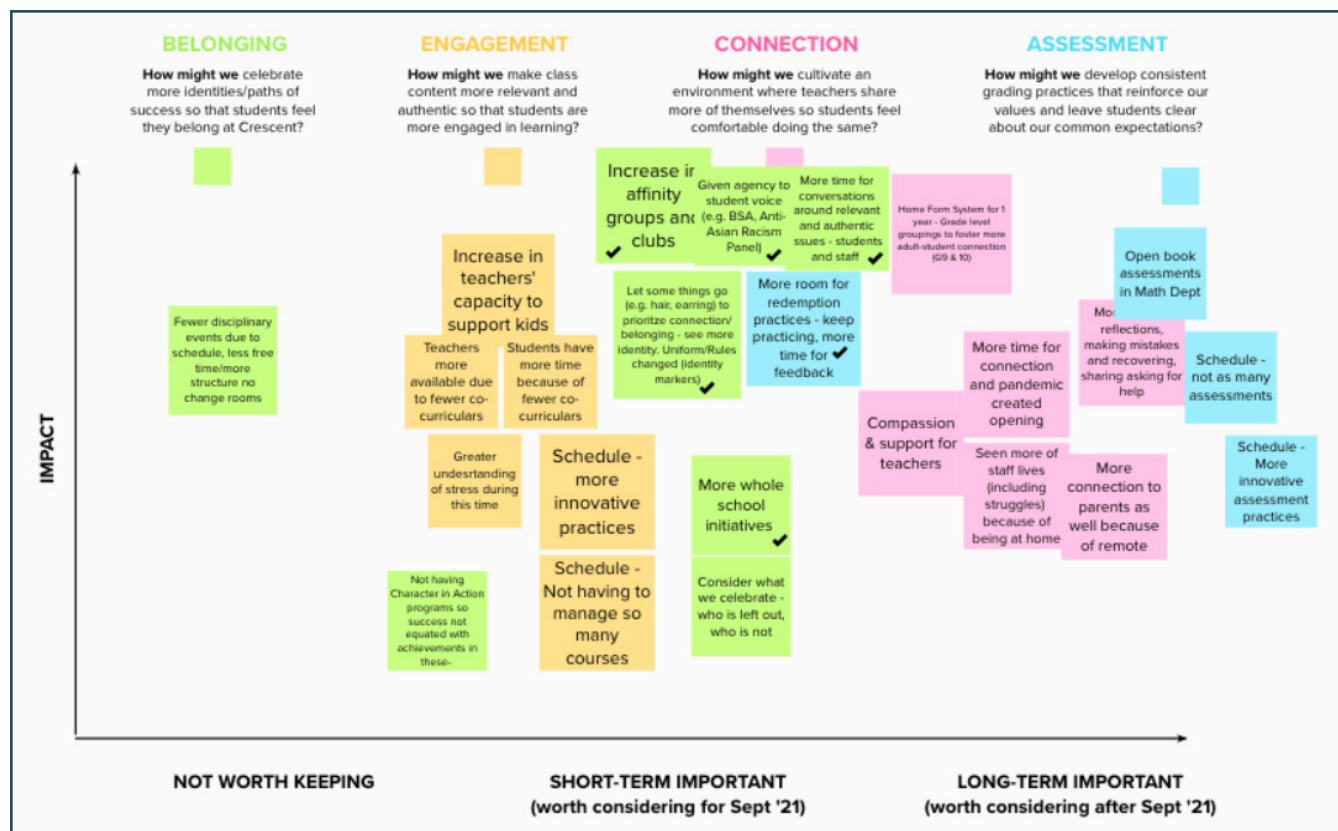
“I walked away with several ideas that I can implement in my classroom immediately. I now have a list of 14 new ways that I can connect better with students remotely. Thank you! This was great.”—High School Teacher



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.

CHALLENGE SUCCESS GOES REMOTE



“We are creating a culture now where we constantly ask ourselves important questions:

Is this good for our students?

Is this reasonable for our students?

Will these changes allow our students to enjoy their educational experience?”

—School Leader

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

GROWTH IN REMOTE OPPORTUNITIES

*Parenting Lessons
from the Pandemic
with Denise Pope and
Madeline Levine*

837 registrants

*A Healthier Approach
to College Admissions
with Denise Pope*

759 registrants

*Strengthen
Your Performance
Assessment Practice*

57 registrants

*A Healthier Approach
to College Admissions
with Jen Coté*

400 registrants

*Navigating Remote
Learning for Parents*

274 registrants

*Students Speak:
Listening In to
Move Forward*

63 registrants

*Guidance on Grading/
Crediting Policies
During COVID-19*

540 registrants



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?

CHALLENGE SUCCESS CULTURE & DEI

“(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



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.

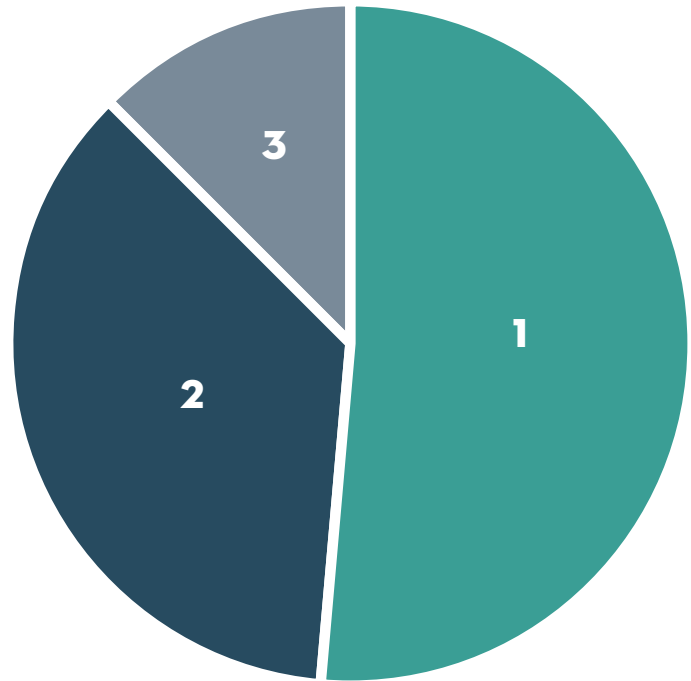
Challenge Success Definition of Equity:

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.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

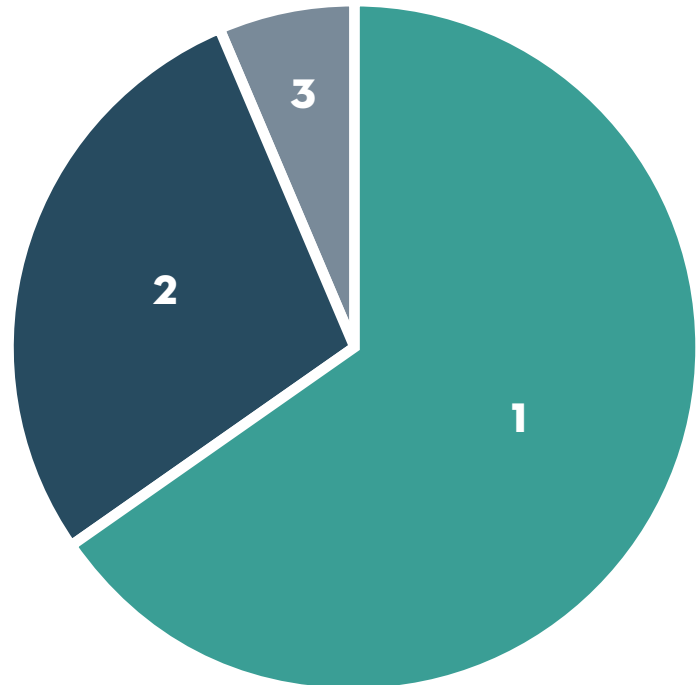
2020 Revenue

1	Contributions	51.4%	\$950,500
2	Programs	36.1%	\$667,500
3	PPP Loan	12.4%	\$229,500
TOTAL			\$1,847,500



2020 Expenses

1	Direct Program	65.4%	\$1,325,200
2	General & Admin	28.3%	\$573,500
3	Development	6.3%	\$126,800
TOTAL			\$2,025,500



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.

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We Are Grateful for Your Support!

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