LEAD THE CHANGE SERIES
Q & A with AERA 2025 Presenters:
Reimagining student success in higher education: Student voice, curriculum, and college preparation

Note from the Editor:

In preparation for AERA 2025, *Lead the Change* will feature the stellar presenters in the Educational Change SIG sessions. This year, our SIG is proud to present 10 sessions featuring different contexts, perspectives, and methodological approaches to educational change. It was a pleasure to learn more about the exciting work happening across the globe, and we look forward to learning more at the conference. This issue features presenters in the session, *Reimagining student success in higher education: Student voice, curriculum, and college preparation*. Enjoy, and we'll see you in Denver!

Best,
Liz Zumpe, Series Editor

Educational Change SIG Sessions at AERA 2025

Wednesday, April 23
10:50am-12:20 pm MDT: Symposium—*Sustaining Productive Teacher Collaborations: Infrastructures across International Contexts*

12:40-2:10pm MDT: Roundtable—*Critical Analysis of Policy and School Reform: Reimagining More Just Futures*

Thursday, April 24
8:00-9:30am MDT: Paper Session—*Redefining Leadership and Equity in Evolving Educational Spaces*

1:45-3:15pm MDT: Poster Session—*Scaling Educational Change: Strategies for Impact Across Levels*

Friday, April 25
11:40-1:10pm MDT: Roundtable—*Equity-Minded Leaders Transforming the Global Educational Landscape*

1:30-3:00pm MDT: Paper Session—*Organizing Systemic Change in Education: Leveraging Partnerships, networks and Teacher Collaboration*

Saturday, April 26
8:00-9:30am MDT: Symposium—*Resilient Pathways: Toward Political Theories of Action for Achieving Educational Equity*

11:40-1:10pm MDT: Roundtable—*Reimagining Student Success in Higher Education: Student Voice, Curriculum, and College Preparation*

Sunday, April 27
8:00-9:30am MDT: Symposium—*Teacher-Led Learning Circles: Professional Learning for Teachers' Use of Formative Assessment to Improve Students' Learning*

11:40-1:10pm MDT: Roundtable—*Teacher Education and Professional Learning for Sustainable Change*

Educational Change SIG adopts an interdisciplinary and international approach to understanding many aspects of educational change, including large-scale reform, school-initiated change, school improvement, and classroom-level change.

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ABOUT THE SERIES
Lead the Change series, featuring renowned educational change experts from around the globe, serves to highlight promising research and practice, to offer expert insight on small- and large-scale educational change, and to spark collaboration within our SIG.

Educational Change SIG Events at AERA 2025
All are welcome!

Friday, April 25 7:00-8:30pm MDT
Educational Change SIG Business Meeting: *From Research to Journal Articles and Books*

Saturday, April 26 8:50pm – 10:20pm MDT
Joint Reception: Leadership for School Improvement SIG, Educational Change SIG, Organizational Theory SIG, Systems Thinking in Education SIG

"It's not always about college": Teachers' sense-making around the shifting purpose of high school

Aaron Leo
Kristen Wilcox
University at Albany (SUNY)

The 2025 AERA theme is "Research, Remedy, and Repair: Towards Just Educational Renewal." This theme urges scholars to consider the role that research can play in remedying educational inequality, repairing harm to communities and institutions, and contributing to a more just future in education. How does your research respond to this call?

Our paper arises as part of two decades of state-funded and public-private partnership-supported research in New York state. The mission of our improvement hub—called NYKids—is to inform, inspire, and improve in the PK-12 school space. From its inception, our hub has focused on addressing issues of equity by identifying and studying schools that achieve better-than-predicted student outcomes (e.g., graduation rates), taking into consideration demographic factors including the percentages of youth served from various ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. We have also examined schools with typically performing outcomes and used the data collected from those schools to identify contrasts between typically-performing and higher-performing positive outlier schools. This approach helps us glean what might be more promising practices, processes, and policies in diverse school contexts. To fulfill our mission to improve, in addition to informing and inspiring through our research, we also provide research-based tools and offer direct support to help practicing professionals unpack and use research to inform continuous improvement of inequities of opportunity and outcomes.

In this paper, we present our most recent study in which we returned to schools we had identified in previous studies since the 2004-05 school year to discover if any schools had continued to achieve above-predicted student outcomes or had improved their outcomes. From 11 studies about a total of 68 positive outlier schools (that achieved above-predicted student outcomes taking into account demographic variables) and 34 typically performing schools (that achieved predicted student outcomes taking into account demographic variables), we identified eight persistent positive outlier schools and three emergent outlier schools. A total of seven schools (four persistent positive outliers and three emergent outlier schools) participated in a qualitative multiple case study.

From this research, we were able to identify patterns among the schools that provide a partial roadmap for those seeking to build and sustain systems that support diverse youth success. Situating the results in a historical context, we found trends in the data that speak to remedying the harms of policies of the early 2000's and 2010's (e.g., No Child Left Behind) that established arguably too narrow conceptualizations of success (e.g., college readiness). For example, we found that educators in positive outlier schools acknowledged that standardized test scores were not always an accurate measure of a student's ability and created varied ways (such as through arts, leadership programs, sports, extracurriculars) for students to demonstrate and build upon their skills and interests. Participants also felt that it was their duty, as educators, to prepare students to be active members of their communities and the wider society rather than simply preparing them to take a test. In addition, we found that educators at positive

> *"Educators in positive outlier schools acknowledged that standardized test scores were not always an accurate measure of a student's ability."*

outlier schools strategically worked to repair the harms of the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent social injustices that disproportionately negatively impact the most vulnerable and marginalized youth. Importantly, we found that positive outlier educators developed curricular approaches that were relevant and responsive to students' interests and aptitudes while also seeking to meet the shifting demands of employers and postsecondary institutions.

What are some of the ideas you hope the field of Educational Change and the audience at AERA can learn from your work related to practice, policy, and scholarship?

NYKids' research offers a unique contribution to the field of Educational Change considering we are investigating schools which have sustained above-predicted outcomes for an extended time. As all schools are unique, our findings are not meant to be copied and pasted onto every location; instead, we view the lessons learned from positive outlier schools as a partial roadmap which can inspire and inform educators grappling with challenges in their own particular school-community contexts. Moreover, our qualitative approach provides a way to hear directly from educators as they describe, in their own words, their unique school and community ecologies, the obstacles they have encountered, and the particular policies, practices, and programs they have designed to overcome them. Our full dataset from the seven participating schools include: 70 interviews, 43 focus groups, 361 collected documents, and field notes taken during four school tours.

One aspect common to the positive outlier schools we studied was an effort to make curriculum relevant, engaging, and responsive – especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures. For instance, at Lafayette Jr.-Sr. High School,

"As all schools are unique, our findings are not meant to be copied and pasted onto every location."

educators have worked to ensure that the sizeable population of students from the Native American Onondaga Nation were provided culturally relevant activities and were represented in the school's activities, appearance, and values. This process took many forms such as flying the Onondaga flag outside the school, creating a section in the school library featuring Native American authors, and working with a Native American liaison and My Brothers' Keeper Coordinator to foster positive connections between the school and Onondaga community. At Fillmore, educators also developed culturally responsive approaches, but these looked different in a rural locale with a long history of agriculture. In this context, educators reinstated the Future Farmers of America program and provided hands-on opportunities for students to care for plants and animals on school grounds. To engage their students, Fillmore teachers worked together to create cross-disciplinary lessons and project-based learning opportunities.

We feel that these findings are of high value to the field of Educational Change as they provide examples of educators working to identify and address challenges in varied contexts. As our improvement hub has been supported by the state for over two decades, our research, and research-based tools have attracted the attention of the New York State Department of Education and have been highlighted by our advisory board member organizations including the New York State Council of School Superintendents, The New York State School Boards Association and several others that in turn influence policy in our state.

What excites you about the direction of the field of Educational Change, and how might we share and develop those ideas at AERA 2025?

We are excited to be part of efforts to bridge the research, policy, and practice gap and offer

our own approach as one of many exciting models for promoting educational improvement. We look forward to the opportunity to engage with scholars within the field of Educational Change at AERA 2025 to learn how we can improve what we do to support educators, policymakers, and educational scholars in making systemic improvements for the youth in our state and beyond. Our recent research project, as described above, has prompted us to reexamine several larger questions regarding the purpose of PK-12 schooling that we would like to discuss with others. In the persistent positive outlier schools, for instance, we found that educators increasingly over time framed student success as much more than simply fulfilling seat time requirements, meeting state standards, and passing exams. Instead, we found that educators in these schools purposefully encourage youth connection to each other and to the school and larger community and provide multiple pathways to do this.

In positive outlier schools, we also often heard educators comment on the need to prepare students for life after high school including developing mental resilience when faced with challenges. Such efforts involved not only teaching students curricular content but also fostering civic-mindedness, critical thinking, and cooperation. Educators often spoke of the importance of "soft skills" indicating a clear signal that they are viewing the purpose of schooling as going beyond college or workforce readiness. Of course, educators in our study described these efforts as works in progress, as they continue to grapple with changing expectations and needs of youth and families.

Looking back over 20 years of research, the trends we noted give rise to new questions to explore. For example, how do educators balance innovating and sustaining school traditions in the face of workforce shortages, changes in state graduation requirements, and broader changes in youth and family expectations of a PK-12 education?

At AERA 2025, we look forward to discussing changes at the level of state policy with other scholars. For example, in recent years New

York State policymakers have responded to calls for changes to accountability systems and have recognized the need to develop alternative pathways for students to graduate high school. To do so, new opportunities to work with educators in making equity-centered systemic changes to how youth are taught have been provided.

We are eager to learn from researchers who may have identified trends we have (and others we haven't) and discuss ways we might theorize around these trends. As our work is situated within a New York State policy context, we are interested to learn from researchers across the U.S. and world about the ways that educators are preparing youth for their lives after the high school.

Aaron Leo, Ph.D., is a cultural anthropologist whose research explores the educational aspirations of newcomer youth and the role that education plays in the social mobility of newcomer families. Since 2018, Aaron has worked with NYKids, an interdisciplinary research hub at the University at Albany (SUNY). In this role, he has worked on qualitative and mixed-methods research projects exploring topics such as college and career readiness, family engagement and COVID-19 impacts on the educator workforce.

Dr. Kristen Campbell Wilcox is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Policy and Leadership, University at Albany, SUNY and Research and Development Director of a state-wide school improvement hub called NYKids. Her research focuses on identifying and describing the characteristics of schools and districts that successfully close opportunity gaps among socioeconomically, linguistically, and culturally diverse learners in P-12 school settings. She has specialized expertise and knowledge on culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy.

Call for efficacy: Changes in prior learning assessment (PLA) measures in the Florida college system

Giang-Nguyen T. Nguyen[a]
Rashmi Sharma[b]
Carla Thompson[a]
[a]*University of West Florida*
[b]*Western Illinois University*

The 2025 AERA theme is "Research, Remedy, and Repair: Towards Just Educational Renewal." This theme urges scholars to consider the role that research can play in remedying educational inequality, repairing harm to communities and institutions, and contributing to a more just future in education. How does your research respond to this call?

The overall objective of this research aligns with the theme of AERA by addressing a much-needed change in the educational system to acknowledge student's prior experiences to support success in higher education. This research shares insights from a grant-funded project that examined prior learning assessment (PLA) at 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions. The present study focuses on the PLA measures and the implications for the students applying and pursuing degrees at the community college level. Community colleges play important roles in the education system and for underserved students.

"Florida community colleges offer different enrollment options for those who have recently graduated from high school, nontraditional students, veterans, and persons with work experience."

Community colleges offer an educational path to all students with a wider range of needs. Students could enter higher education for the first time through community colleges, specifically if they have limited options to join a university (Klein-Collins, 2010; Palmer & Nguyen, 2019). Community colleges have policies that enable adult learners who require remediation to get the skills they need for college-level courses (FLDOE, n.d.).

For many students, who aspire to earn a college degree, Florida community colleges offer different enrollment options for those who have recently graduated from high school, nontraditional students returning to the classroom, veterans, and persons with work experience. However, each institution in Florida may have different standards and procedures for evaluating past learning (PLA) (e.g. Travers, 2011). In that context, this study examines the PLA options available to students in the FCS. Further, this research project investigates what the FCS offers students for their PLA options. Students attending state colleges or CC often gained their prior expertise from various educational and professional backgrounds due to their current and previous employment. Bray and Beer (2020) estimated approximately 68% of students are employed while enrolled in college with 44% of them being 25 years or older. The combination of being employed while enrolled in college may present challenges for students attempting to achieve their academic goals and professional objectives; therefore, support in the form of applicable PLA practices is worth examining.

The researchers highlight the need to reevaluate PLA options offered within the FCS. PLA options are methods through which colleges evaluate prior knowledge and skills cultivated by students to provide them with college credit. As a result, adult students have various avenues to complete their degree through PLA opportunities (Klein-Collins, 2010). Prior learning occurs through various professional experiences such as training, volunteering, technology skillset, etc. PLA credits were

encouraged since non-traditional students could pursue a degree in a shorter duration and apply their existing skills toward their degree (e.g. Travers, 2011). Palmer and Nguyen (2019) suggested colleges offer PLA opportunities to students to provide them with opportunities to complete their programs faster by assessing students' prerequisite knowledge and placing them accordingly in their programs.

The current landscape illustrates that the PLA options are varied at each community college. Even though institutions in the FCS offer the same PLA options, they do not necessarily have the same criteria. The present research highlights the myriad issues students face in finding the information in a timely manner. Some of the institutions had a one-stop spot on their website for students to locate PLA information; however, most of the participants were unaware of these options and how these applied to pursuing a degree in an efficacious manner. Our study suggests that community colleges should target first-generation or non-traditional students who may not have strong guidance regarding these opportunities.

This study calls for educational change, potentially leading to a more equitable approach for students to graduate more timely and with less financial strain. Moreover, the discussion at AERA on PLA could help other participants evaluate how their institutional PLA measures meet students' needs. The current educational system needs to examine the existing systems and respond to calls for holistic change.

What are some of the ideas you hope the field of Educational Change and the audience at AERA can learn from your work related to practice, policy, and scholarship?

The researchers hope that AERA and the field of educational change could be the space to share research that directly impacts the students of the underserved community. The audience at AERA could learn about the current landscape of PLA in Florida. This one segment of research from Florida has far-reaching implications beyond the US. By shedding light on PLA, the researchers hope

"Our study suggests that community colleges should target first-generation or non-traditional students who may not have strong guidance regarding these opportunities."

that the participants from other states and internationally can advocate for transparency and support the community college students. Moreover, the audience at AERA could make the change by being the change they want to see in practice.

The researchers are advocating for uniform and sustainable policies at the state level guided by federal guidelines as a critical step in ensuring equitable access to PLA opportunities for community college students. The researchers are hoping that the participants will engage in scholarly discussion about the following implications of the research and provide their insights and actionable suggestions:

1. **Sustainability in Education Systems.** Researchers hope to see a shift in thinking about the sustainability of educational reforms related to educational practices and policies. We are advocating for creating a system for continuous improvement on PLA for community college students, where changes could be implemented and evaluated regularly to take into account the needs of different groups of students.

2. **Bridging research to practice**. Research shows that students have limited access to PLA information so it is important to provide multiple avenues of information for easy access. Using evidence from the research to inform the practice, the researchers propose changes at the state and federal level policies that involve multiple stakeholder groups.

3. **State-Level Uniformity.** Advocate for state-level uniform policies that ensure consistency across institutions, making it easier for students to understand and access PLA opportunities. Such policies can standardize some processes like credit evaluation, eligibility criteria, and application procedures. State mandates can require institutions to make PLA information readily available through multiple channels, such as websites, orientation sessions, social media, and advising services.

4. **Federal Guidelines as a Framework**. Federal guidelines can establish minimum standards to ensure that PLA policies promote equity, inclusion, and access for all students, particularly those from underserved communities. The federal government can incentivize states to adopt uniform PLA policies by tying funding or grants to comply with these guidelines. Federal guidelines can encourage states to adopt reciprocity agreements, ensuring that PLA credits earned in one state are recognized in others, thereby supporting student mobility.

5. **Collaboration Across Stakeholders**. Encourage collaboration among educators, policymakers, and advocacy organizations to align state policies with federal guidelines. There is a need to consider local needs and provide professional development opportunities to ensure administrators and faculty are well-equipped to implement uniform PLA policies effectively.

What excites you about the direction of the field of Educational Change, and how might we share and develop those ideas at AERA 2025?

With AERA 2025's overarching theme of *Research, Remedy, and Repair: Toward Just Education Renewal,* the conference presents a vital opportunity to harness the collective power of research, community insights, and innovative practices to address systemic inequities and reimagine education for justice and equity. The Educational Change SIG can emphasize studies that critically analyze structural inequities, such as socioeconomic barriers, policy failures, and perpetuating educational disparities. Further, participatory action research (PAR) could be encouraged to involve educators, students, and communities in co-developing remedies for educational inequities. At the end of the conference, conference organizers and SIG officers could present actionable recommendations for policymakers, such as equitable funding models, inclusive curricula, and teacher pipeline initiatives that prioritize underrepresented groups. The conference could emphasize rebuilding trust in educational institutions through transparency, accountability, and sustained collaboration with marginalized communities.

Another exciting development that the conference could support relates to the role of technology in research about educational change. As we cautiously leverage AI tools, AERA could personalize the conference experience and promote greater access to collective solutions through immersive learning tools and data analytics. GenAI/GPTs could be explored to generate session outlines, discussion prompts, and facilitation guides for panels and workshops. This live demo will allow the participants to explore the challenges and possibilities posed by AI in educational change and higher education. The GenAI tools can assist in curating content for thematic strands, ensuring a balance of global, local, and interdisciplinary perspectives. However, this approach should be cautiously explored as GenAI tools tend to hallucinate.

AERA and the Educational Change SIG could explore new and innovative types of sessions that facilitate dialogue and generativity, such as:

1. **Community Engagement Forums**. Hosting sessions that bring in voices from beyond academia: students, parents, and community leaders to inform educational reform efforts.
2. **Networking Opportunities**. Facilitating connections among attendees through mentorship programs, idea incubators, or regional action groups.
3. **Interactive Design**. Include hackathons, design-thinking workshops, and solution-oriented sessions where attendees collaborate on practical remedies.

Lastly, AERA should continue to engage with local communities, organizations, and students at the conference location to highlight their unique needs and experiences. By fostering dialogue, sharing best practices, and emphasizing collaboration, AERA 2025 can catalyze innovative solutions and amplify the transformative potential of Educational Change initiatives.

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Dr. Giang-Nguyen Nguyen is a mathematics education faculty member in the School of Education at the University of West Florida (UWF). Prior to joining UWF, she taught developmental and introductory mathematics courses at Tallahassee Community College in Florida. At UWF, she teaches courses in mathematics education, educational technology, and research methods. Her research focuses on factors that influence student motivation for learning mathematics and how to support pre-service teacher development of mathematical knowledge for teaching.

Dr. Rashmi Sharma is Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at Western Illinois University in the School of Education (SoE). She has eight years of teaching experience in higher education, including six years at the University of West Florida (UWF) and two years at Western Illinois University (WIU). She currently teaches qualitative research methods, with a research focus on the impact of Generative AI on qualitative methodologies, particularly its role in data collection, analysis, and knowledge production. Her work explores the challenges and opportunities that Generative AI presents for ethical qualitative research and scholarship.

Youth and institutional change: The impact of student protests on curricula transformation in higher education

Tafadzwa Tivaringe
Spencer Foundation

The 2025 AERA theme is "Research, Remedy, and Repair: Towards Just Educational Renewal." This theme urges scholars to consider the role that research can play in remedying educational inequality, repairing harm to communities and institutions, and contributing to a more just future in education. How does your research respond to this call?

My research advances this year's AERA theme in three main ways. First, as the conference call notes, both remedy and repair necessitate a proper diagnosis of harm. In my view, this means researchers play an incredibly important role in informing the process of diagnosing harms that continue to take place in our education systems and society more broadly. Existing research on educational transformation has not sufficiently taken up young people's vision for institutional change (Strong, 2018; Tivaringe & Kirshner, 2021; Willis, 2021) I seek to sharpen our collective diagnoses of institutional harm by drawing on the voices and experiences of college students in South Africa and the United States organizing for curricula transformation. By centering the voices of college students seeking institutional change in South Africa and the United States – especially those from historically marginalized groups – this research narrows the gap between how researchers and policy makers conceptualize the harm and the lived realities of those experiencing harm. Second, as the theme correctly recognizes, it is not enough to diagnose harm; remedy and repair must follow

to ensure more just and inclusive educational institutions. My research leverages computational and quantitative methods to evaluate the extent to which higher education institutions in South Africa and the United States are responsive (or not) to young people's demands for transformation. This stock taking exercise provides robust empirical evidence that can help guide repair efforts by identifying gaps where repair is urgent, optimizing existing remedies, and envisioning more effective forms of repair. Third, well-intentioned attempts to remedy may conceal other harm and/or lead to other forms of injustice. For this reason, it is not enough to merely end with repair. As education researchers, our avowed commitment to a more just future in education compels us to use research, as I have done here, to ensure that we hold our policy makers, administrators, educators, and ourselves accountable to that ideal. Even more, such accountability-focused research rightly ensures that institutions are responsive to the input of those disproportionately experiencing harm.

"I seek to sharpen our collective diagnoses of institutional harm by drawing on the voices and experiences of college students in South Africa and the United States."

What are some of the ideas you hope the field of Educational Change and the audience at AERA can learn from your work related to practice, policy, and scholarship?

A key insight from this work is that practical efforts to facilitate institutional change that are rooted in research stand a better chance of delivering on the promise of transformation. For example, my work finds that while there was a statistically significant increase in course offerings that aligned with students' demands for more social justice curricula, sentiment analysis of the syllabi of those classes in both country's colleges demonstrated that a significant proportion adopted neutral framings on the subject. Furthermore, while colleges in both countries adopted courses that had titles

and/or course descriptions that referenced social justice, most of the goals of those courses did not involve pedagogical outcomes that explicitly involve addressing injustice. This was despite explicit student demands for curricula transformation that includes ethical commitments to social justice during the #FeesMustFall and #BlackLiveMatter protests (Nyamnjoh, 2016; Taylor, 2016; Tivaringe & Kirshner, 2024). These findings show that there is a gap between students' input and institutional responses that, if not fully understood, undermines our collective capacity to deepen equity within higher education institutions.

My research underscores a growing call by many educational change scholars on the importance of centering the experiences of those most affected in the policy process (Furlong & Cartmel, 2006; Henry et al., 2013). Too often, policies and programs designed to support people marginalized in the policy making process fail to take their input seriously. This can lead to a false sense of redress and repair. Even more, it can erroneously shift attribution of bad outcomes to individuals, rather than a proper interrogation of the inadequacies of said policies in achieving desired outcomes.

Lastly, there is often a discomfort with the use of quantitative and computational methods in educational change. I must admit that this skepticism is not without cause: those tools have historically been used to stall and/or attack efforts to advance social justice in education (DiGarcia et al., 2018; Dixon-Román, 2017). However, by leveraging a combination of text-mining machine learning algorithms and longitudinal structural equation models to examine the impact of student protests in South Africa and the United States, I join a growing group of critical scholars (e.g., de Freitas & Dixon-Román, 2016; Lukito & Pruden, 2023) who believe and indeed demonstrate that sustainable and effective research on educational change ought to include such tools in its repertoire. Additionally, given the global nature of inequities, it is imperative that reparative efforts learn across contexts. Yet, as we have argued in our work (Kirshner et al., 2021;

Tivaringe & Kirshner, 2021) insights in the

> *"I join a growing group of critical scholars who demonstrate that sustainable and effective research on educational change ought to include quantitative and computational methods—such as machine learning and longitudinal structural equation models."*

field of education are disproportionately drawn from the global North. As such, insights that could be critical in learning how to deepen social justice are marginalized. My conference paper offers one instantiation of a comparative approach that, while neither perfect nor exhaustive, ensures that change efforts are informed by both local and global insights.

What excites you about the direction of the field of Educational Change, and how might we share and develop those ideas at AERA 2025?

I appreciate the optimistic frame of the question, especially as the conference call recognizes that we are in a moment that is characterized by attacks on democratic ideals and a rise in "challenges that place education at the center of complex social problems and proposed solutions and interventions." The truth is these challenges can feel overwhelming or even insurmountable! Yet, I believe that this an occasion that simultaneously presents an opportunity to double down on the values that we care about, including but not limited to, democracy,

justice, fairness, inclusivity, and equality. So, I am excited about the opportunity to connect with change makers in the field at the conference and explore ways of remaining resolute in our values and sharing such efforts with the broader public. In my view, such actions will provide a useful normative injunction that allows our imagination to hold onto the ideals of educational change in the face of adversity.

Substantively, I see three interrelated developments in the field of educational change that hold promise to advance large scale transformation. First, is a growing body of work that focuses on systems change (Fullan, 2016; Sterling, 2014). Second, is the increasing use of quantitative and computational methods in service of social justice (de Freitas & Dixon-Román, 2016; Lukito & Pruden, 2023). Third, is the rising awareness of the primacy of learning across contexts (Pradhan et al., 2024; Strong, 2018). Taken together, these developments open possibilities to scale educational change across spatial and temporal boundaries that have long limited our collective ability to improve education for all. As we gather in Colorado – my alma mater state – I urge educational change makers to foster the possibility of large-scale systems change by holding dialogue across contexts, methods, and perspectives. Even more, I hope such dialogue leads to new forms of collaboration and partnerships that are simultaneously transnational, multi-disciplinary, and multi-method. I believe that such dialogue, collaboration, and partnership better positions us to produce relevant and rigorous research that can truly lead to just educational transformation.

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Tafadzwa Tivaringe is a Program Officer at the Spencer Foundation where he serves as an internal grant reviewer across all the Foundation' grant programs. Drawing on comparative evidence from South Africa and the United States, Tafadzwa's research examines how micro and macro transformational efforts in the education system shed light on effective ways of leveraging education (broadly defined as pedagogies, practices, and policies) to engender a more just and equitable society. Additionally, he is interested in developing better methodological approaches for evaluating the impact of transformational efforts in education.