

No. 18-1855/18-1871

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE SIXTH CIRCUIT

GARY B; JESSIE K., a minor, by Yvette K., guardian ad litem; **CRISTOPHER R. and ISAIAS R.**, minors, by Escarle R., guardian ad litem; **ESMERALDA V.**, a minor, by Laura V., guardian ad litem; **PAUL M.; JAIME R.**, a minor, by Karen R., guardian ad litem,

Plaintiffs-Appellants,

v.

RICHARD D. SNYDER, Governor; **JOHN C. AUSTIN**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **MICHELLE FECTEAU**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **LUPE RAMOS-MONTIGNY**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **PAMELA PUGH**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **KATHLEEN N. STRAUS**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **CASANDRA E. ULBRICH**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **EILEEN WEISER**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **RICHARD ZEILE**, Member of the Mich. Bd. of Educ.; **BRIAN J. WHISTON**, Supt. of Public Instruction for the State of Mich.; **DAVID B. BEHEN**, Dir. of the Mich. Dep't of Tech.; **NATASHA BAKER**, State School Reform/Redesign Officer, in their official capacities,

Defendants-Appellees.

On Appeal from the United States District Court for the
Eastern District of Michigan, the Honorable Stephen J. Murphy, III, Presiding
Case No. 2:16-cv-13292

BRIEF OF *AMICI CURIAE*
EDUCATION EXPERTS AND ADVOCATES
IN SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS-APPELLANTS

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CORPORATE DISCLOSURE

Pursuant to Sixth Circuit Rule 26.1, *Amici Curiae* Education Experts and Advocates make the following disclosure:

1. Is said party a subsidiary or affiliate of a publicly owned corporation? If yes, list below the identity of the parent corporation or affiliate and the relationship between it and the named party:

No.

2. Is there a publicly owned corporation, not a party to the appeal, that has a financial interest in the outcome? If yes, list the identity of such corporation and the nature of the financial interest:

No.

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INTERESTS OF *AMICI CURIAE*

Amici are eighteen professional organizations that advocate for students, parents, and educators in the United States. Members of these organizations live and work in communities throughout the country and throughout the state of Michigan. They have developed expertise about the importance of literacy and education through their work experiences and through scientific, academic research. No party, party's counsel, or any other person besides *amici* and counsel for *amici* contributed money to fund this brief. Fed. R. App. P. 29(a)(4)(E).

Kappa Delta Pi, International Honor Society in Education (KDP), was founded in 1911 to foster excellence in education and promote fellowship among those dedicated to teaching. KDP has initiated more than 1.2 million members, including graduate students, teachers, and other education professionals in 34 countries and at more than 650 active institutional and professional chapters. With a mission of inspiring and supporting teachers to prepare all learners for future challenges, KDP encourages quality learning by giving educators the means to implement research-based strategies, to continue professional growth, to develop and exert leadership skills, and to become master teachers.

KDP actively supports literacy initiatives, goals, and programs throughout the United States through its signature service program, Literacy Alive! With a sustained commitment to equity, KDP draws on its rich legacy of high standards

and excellence in teaching to advance the goal of ensuring high-quality learning for all. Appendix A contains more detailed information on the other *amici* who have contributed to and joined this brief.

As educators and advocates, *amici* have dedicated their professional lives to ensuring that “education prepares individuals to be self-reliant and self-sufficient participants in society.” *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 U.S. 205, 221 (1972). Through their commitment to education, *amici* recognize the core American belief widely accepted since the Founding Era “that the success . . . of the Republic [lies] in education . . . [and] that the most effective way of obtaining the number and kind of schools and colleges needed was via some system tied to the polity.” Lawrence A. Cremin, *AMERICAN EDUCATION: THE NATIONAL EXPERIENCE 1783–1876*, at 124–25 (1980) (emphasis removed).

Amici have also seen firsthand both the great benefits that public education provides to students as well as the devastating consequences that students suffer when their education systems fail. Denial of access to literacy has cascading effects on students that can disadvantage them throughout their lives. “[T]hose who do not read proficiently by third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.” Donald J. Hernandez, *The Annie E. Casey*

Foundation, *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation* 4 (2012).¹

The negative consequences often follow students throughout their lives. The recent Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies has shown that persons with the lowest levels of literacy are disproportionately unemployed or out of the workforce entirely. Nat'l Ctr. for Educ. Stat., U.S. Dep't of Educ., Skills of U.S. Unemployed, Young, and Older Adults in Sharper Focus: Results from the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) 2012/2014, at 5–6, 11 (2016).² Those persons deprived access to literacy also are incarcerated in greater numbers. Members of the prison population are more than 50 percent more likely to have low literacy levels than the general population and more than twice as likely not to have graduated high school. Nat'l Ctr. for Educ. Stat., U.S. Dep't of Educ., Highlights from the U.S. PIAAC Survey of Incarcerated Adults: Their Skills, Work Experience, Education, and Training 5–6 (2016).³

¹ Available at <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-DoubleJeopardy-2012-Full.pdf>.

² Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016039rev.pdf>.

³ Available at <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016040.pdf>.

Fortunately, research in the field of education has advanced powerful tools to ensure that no child be deprived of access to literacy. These experts have identified clear metrics to measure the adequacy and efficacy of school environments to determine whether they are conducive to learning to read. Courts should adopt these tools to ensure that public school systems provide the minimal requirements necessary for children to have access to literacy.

Plaintiffs have presented plausible allegations that the State of Michigan has deprived Detroit public school students of these minimal requirements in violation of the Constitution. To ensure that Detroit public school students have the opportunity to succeed in their personal and professional lives, *amici* ask the court to reverse the district court's order granting the defendants' motion to dismiss.

ARGUMENT

I. THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO LITERACY IS MEASURABLE AND JUSTICIABLE.

In *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. 1 (1973), the Supreme Court pondered whether there was “some identifiable quantum of education” that “is a constitutionally protected prerequisite to the meaningful exercise of” other fundamental rights. *Id.* at 36. The Court expressed concern about whether a government defendant “fails to provide each child with an opportunity to acquire the basic minimal skills necessary for the enjoyment of the rights of speech and of full participation in the political process,” though the Court recognized that

the plaintiffs in that case had failed to make any showing on this charge. *Id.* at 37. When *Rodriguez* was decided in 1973, mechanisms to measure an “identifiable quantum of education” necessary to exercise other fundamental rights were not as well-developed as they are now. In the decades since 1973, education experts have developed numerous tools to measure this quantum, which plaintiffs have identified as the right of access to literacy.

Two separate kinds of measurements can aid in this determination. The first type of tool is process-based. Process-based tools examine the conditions of the learning environments of the schools. By using process-based tools, courts can examine the physical conditions of schools, the qualifications of the teachers, and the social and emotional environments of schools to determine whether defendants have provided students with certain prerequisites for attaining the level of literacy necessary to exercise fundamental rights.

The second type of tool is outcome-based. These outcome-based tools measure the reading level of certain texts and can be used to assess whether students have the ability to read texts at that level. Courts using outcome-based tools can determine whether schools have succeeded in teaching students the reading skills necessary for the meaningful exercise of their fundamental rights. Courts should conduct both process-based and outcome-based evaluations to

determine whether a school has denied students the fundamental right of access to literacy and to craft appropriate remedies.

A. Process-Based Tools Indicate the State Denied Plaintiffs Access to Literacy.

In the years since *Rodriguez*, education experts have developed important tools grounded in scientific research to measure whether school systems provide environments and resources necessary for effective teaching. Courts should use these process-based tools to determine whether defendants provide students with the environment necessary for students to learn to read. Process-based tools can also help courts and litigants craft effective remedies to cure the harm caused by a state's denial of the constitutional guarantee of access to literacy by mandating what concrete, minimum resources schools must have to achieve positive outcomes for students.

For the last hundred years, scholars studying education have examined the types of environments that promote or hinder effective learning. David Osher et al., *Advancing the Science and Practice of Social and Emotional Learning: Looking Back and Moving Forward*, 40 REV. RES. EDUC. 644, 647 (2016). Although this scholarship dates back to Progressive Era reformers Jane Addams and John Dewey, only in the past few decades have academics developed a thorough understanding of childhood development and learning through interdisciplinary study of various fields including neuroscience, developmental science, epigenetics,

and psychology. Pamela Cantor et al., *Malleability, Plasticity, and Individuality: How Children Learn and Develop in Context*, APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL SCI. at 1 (2018).⁴ In recent years, this research has coalesced to recognize the importance of different factors that foster effective learning.

The research of these experts shows that the environments of the plaintiffs' schools detailed in the complaint match the paradigmatic descriptions of environments that hinder students' cognitive abilities to acquire and maintain knowledge. Experts have observed that "[w]hen the design and organization of schools do not foster conditions for learning, student-centered instruction, and cultural responsiveness, schools can actually harm students both immediately and over time." David Osher et al., *Drivers of Human Development: How Relationships and Context Shape Learning and Development*, APPLIED DEVELOPMENTAL SCI. at 7 (2018)⁵; see Ann S. Masten et al., *Developmental Cascades: Linking Academic Achievement and Externalizing and Internalizing Symptoms over 20 Years*, 41 Dev. Psych. 733 (2005).

These negative conditions include "perceptions of a lack of safety [that] can impact learning by heightening anxiety, triggering the stress response symptom,

⁴ Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398649>.

⁵ Available at <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1398650>.

and affecting working memory, attention, and concentration.” Cantor et al., *supra*, at 13; accord Alexander J. Shackman et al., *Anxiety Selectively Disrupts Visuospatial Working Memory*, 6 EMOTION 40 (2006). The most important conditions for learning involve environments where students feel physically safe and where teachers and students enjoy trustful, nurturing relationships. Osher et al., *Drivers of Human Development*, *supra*, at 7–8; e.g., Bridget K. Hamre & Robert C. Pianta, *Can Instructional and Emotional Support in the First-Grade Classroom Make a Difference for Children at Risk of School Failure?*, 76 CHILD DEV. 949 (2005). Where the environment is unsafe—either because of physical decrepitude or because of emotional conflict between students or between students and teachers—learning suffers.

The student plaintiffs have specified in minute details the many conditions that lead them to feel unsafe in their schools and that prevent them from learning to read at target levels. Their schools are infested with vermin, including mice, rats, bedbugs, and cockroaches. Compl. ¶ 120. They lack necessary temperature controls, resulting in extreme hot and cold temperatures that decrease the students’ ability to concentrate and in some instances have caused administrators to close the schools for days at a time. *Id.* ¶ 127. Some schools also have unrepaired bullet holes, *id.* ¶ 139, black mold, and falling ceilings, *id.* ¶ 134, that present physical

hazards that can distract students, make them feel unsafe, and impede their cognitive processes.

Beyond these dangerous conditions, other physical attributes of the plaintiffs' schools present barriers to learning. The plaintiffs have described extreme overcrowding, alleging that the schools do not have enough chairs and desks for all students to sit comfortably. *Id.* ¶¶ 135–37. The schools lack appropriate books and enough books for the students to learn to read adequately. What books they do have may be damaged or age-inappropriate, discouraging students from reading and taxing their abilities to maintain focus. *Id.* ¶¶ 113–118. These deficiencies present significant obstacles to the students' cognitive functions because they reinforce negative feelings in the students. Increased stress and anxiety from these deficiencies consequently impedes their abilities to focus, understand, and remember reading lessons and other lessons. As one expert has observed, “In context of negative perceptions, students find it harder to engage, become more easily frustrated, develop lower self-concepts and expectations, and lag academically.” Cantor et al., *supra*, at 14.

Beyond these physical conditions, social conditions like trust between teachers and students, a sense of safety, and positive relationships with peers are necessary for the learning process and “are particularly significant for students whose developmental pathways have been altered due to trauma and/or chronic

stress.” *Id.* at 13. The complaint shows that the state has failed to provide these required social conditions in significant ways. It notes that many of these students come from disadvantaged backgrounds who have experienced homelessness and violence. Complaint ¶ 139. Despite the special attention these challenges require, the defendants have not implemented programs to deal with the challenges, denying the students access to necessary counseling and other social services. *Id.* Indeed, the state often has failed to offer the bare minimum to the students in terms of trained educators, crafting exceptions to the teacher certification requirements applicable in the state’s other school districts. To fill chronic teaching vacancies, many of the schools identified in the complaint have had an inconstant set of rotating teachers who lack the proper certifications required elsewhere in the state, let alone the kind of specialized social and emotional training necessary to form the trusting relationships required to educate these students. Complaint at ¶¶ 145, 155.

Even the teachers who do have the proper training lack the institutional support necessary to help them nurture and educate students. Researchers have shown that teachers who experience significant stress and lack training to deal with that stress or to manage student feelings and behaviors can become obstacles to students learning to read effectively. Osher et al., *Drivers of Human Development*, *supra*, at 8–9; accord Kevin S. Sutherland & Donald P. Oswald, *The Relationship Between Teacher and Student Behavior in Classrooms for Students with Emotional*

and Behavioral Disorders: Transactional Processes 14 J. CHILD & FAM. STUD. 1 (2005). Yet in these schools, qualified teachers are overworked, and their stress is exacerbated by the deplorable conditions of the schools and the lack of an adequate, stable pool of qualified colleagues. Without this support, even qualified teachers struggle to establish the environments of trust necessary to educate their students.

Based on the schools' physical deficiencies and social and emotional unpreparedness, the students have plausibly alleged that the Detroit schools do not exhibit the conditions for learning necessary for them to attain literacy. These conditions create concrete barriers to the students' cognitive ability to process and retain the knowledge imparted to them in reading lessons. The fact that the students in Detroit schools severely lag behind their peers in their literacy scores is a direct and unmistakable consequence of the state's failure to provide the safe, nurturing environment that experts have identified as a necessary ingredient for learning. Those literacy scores also reinforce the evidentiary basis of the plaintiffs' allegations and are indicative of the kind of outcome-based tools that education researchers have developed over the last several decades.

B. Outcome-Based Tools Indicate the State Has Denied Students Access to Literacy.

Two years after *Rodriguez*, in 1975, J. Peter Kincaid promulgated the "Flesch-Kincaid" assessment for determining the grade-level of technical materials

for the U.S. Navy. J. Peter Kincaid et al., Derivation of New Readability Formulas (Automated Readability Index, Fog Count and Flesch Reading Ease Formula) for Navy Enlisted Personnel (1975).⁶ The Flesch-Kincaid test uses word length and sentence length as a proxy for semantic and syntactic complexity to grade the readability of a given text. Common Core Standards for English Arts & Literacy in Historical/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Appendix A, at 7 (2010) [hereinafter “Common Core Appendix A”].⁷ Since its development, legislative and regulatory bodies have used the Flesch-Kincaid method to ensure the readability of important documents so that the general public can understand them. *See, e.g.*, Fla. Stat. 627.4145 (prohibiting insurance policies from being written at a higher than a 12th grade Flesch-Kincaid reading level); S.C. Dep’t of Ins., Departmental Interpretation of Act No. 66 of 1999 (1999) (requiring that life insurance “clearly and conspicuously” include disclosures written at a “grade level score of no higher than seventh grade on the Flesch-Kincaid readability test”).⁸

⁶ Available at

<http://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1055&context=istlibrary>.

⁷ Available at http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf.

⁸ Available at <https://online.doi.sc.gov/eng/public/bulletins/bulletin996.aspx>

Numerous other tests also have been developed to assess readability. The Lexile Framework is perhaps the most sophisticated measure. Lexile uses word frequency and sentence length to measure the difficulty of a text. In addition to rating texts, the Lexile Framework can assign a measurement to student development through student performance on texts of varying difficulties. Common Core Appendix A at 7. The ATOS system administered through the Accelerated Reader program also matches students and texts to determine text difficulty and student comprehension. *Id.* Though the scoring systems may be imperfect standing alone, the Common Core recognizes that these quantitative measures play an important role alongside qualitative measurements and other considerations in assessing the efficacy of literacy education. *Id.* at 4.

Standardized testing provides another type of outcome-based tool for measuring literacy. The state of Michigan has several standardized tests that measure student achievement in English. Compl. ¶ 91. These tests determine whether an individual student is reading at the appropriate level of proficiency determined by the state. The complaint makes plain that even by the Michigan's own standards and measurements, the state has failed them. Students at their schools are overwhelmingly more likely than not to be unable to read at the appropriate level. *Id.* ¶¶ 91–92 & figs. 3, 5–7.

For purposes of determining whether government defendants deny students access to literacy, these quantitative measures provide concrete metrics for courts to apply. The meaningful exercise of other fundamental rights requires at least a ninth grade reading level because the most basic purveyors of information about politics and current events require at least that level of literacy. The most readable publication with nationwide distribution is *USA Today*, with a Lexile score corresponding to a ninth-grade reading level (1200L). Other publications have higher reading levels: both the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* have Lexile scores corresponding to a twelfth-grade reading level (1350L and 1380L, respectively). Willard R. Daggett, *Achieving Reading Proficiency for All 7* (2003).⁹ Without a ninth-grade reading level, the plaintiffs will be unable to process this information that is crucial to exercising their fundamental rights of free speech and political participation. Without this level of literacy, the “‘marketplace of ideas’ is an empty forum for those lacking basic communicative tools” and “the corollary right to receive information becomes little more than a hollow privilege when the recipient has not been taught to read.” *Rodriguez*, 411 U.S. at 36, 35 (footnote omitted).

Beyond measuring the ability to absorb important information related to free speech and voting, these tools also provide a way to measure actual voting

⁹ Available at <http://leadered.com/pdf/Reading%20White%20Paper.pdf>.

instruments. For example, the 2018 general election ballot for Detroit voters includes a proposed constitutional amendment for a nonpartisan redistricting commission that was written at an 18.0 reading level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid grade level test. Mich. Voter Information Ctr., View Ballots,¹⁰ (last visited Nov. 26 2018).¹¹ This high level of difficulty—which makes understanding the ballot difficult for even well-educated voters—makes comprehension near impossible for voters reading below the ninth-grade level.

The complaint alleges in detail that many of the plaintiffs in this case are not learning to read at the appropriate level. Compl. ¶¶ 6, 89, 97, 108. This problem begins early in the plaintiffs’ school years and becomes exacerbated as time goes on such that the plaintiffs reasonably cannot be expected to learn to read at the ninth-grade level under current circumstances. If the lawsuit proceeds, the district court will have adequate tools to assess whether these claims prove true by assessing the state’s success or failure in training the students to read at the minimum level necessary for the meaningful exercise of fundamental rights.

¹⁰ Available at <https://webapps.sos.state.mi.us/MVIC/PublicBallot.aspx>.

¹¹ Unless otherwise cited, Flesch-Kincaid reading levels in this brief were calculated by entering the plain text into Microsoft Word and using the software’s Flesch-Kincaid calculator.

* * *

Education scholars have developed two separate, yet concrete tools by which courts can measure whether state defendants have denied students access to literacy. The complaint plausibly alleges that the defendants in this case have denied the plaintiffs access to literacy based on both process-based and outcome-based tests. These tests also provide important mechanisms that the court should use to craft remedies to this constitutional violation.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, *amici* ask this court reverse the district court's judgment granting the defendants' motion to dismiss this case.

DATED: November 26, 2018

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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

1. This brief complies with the type-volume limitations of Fed. R. App. P. 29(a)(5) because, according to the word-count feature of Microsoft Word, this brief contains 3,247 words, excluding the parts of the brief exempted by Fed. R. App. P. 32(f).

2. This brief complies with the typeface requirements of Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(5) and the type style requirements Fed. R. App. P. 32(a)(6) because this brief has been prepared in a proportionally spaced typeface using Microsoft Office Word in Times New Roman 14 point font.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on November 26, 2018, I caused to be electronically filed the foregoing with the Clerk of the Court for the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit using the appellate CM/ECF system. To the best of my knowledge, all parties to this appeal are represented by counsel who are registered CM/ECF users and will be served electronically by the appellate CM/ECF system.

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APPENDIX A

Amici Curiae Education Experts and Advocates

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) is dedicated to the improvement and expansion of the teaching and learning of all languages at all levels of instruction. An individual membership organization of more than 12,500 language educators and administrators from elementary through graduate education, as well as government and industry, ACTFL provides vision, leadership, and support for quality teaching and learning of languages. Since its founding in 1967, ACTFL has become synonymous with innovation, quality, and reliability in meeting the changing needs of language educators and their students. From the development of Proficiency Guidelines, to its leadership role in the creation of national standards, ACTFL focuses on issues that are critical to the growth of both the profession and the individual teacher.

Association for Middle Level Education

The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) is the leading international organization advancing the education of all students ages 10 to 15, helping them succeed as learners and make positive contributions to their communities and to the world. AMLE is committed to helping middle school educators reach every student, grow professionally, and create great schools. With

more than 55,000 members around the globe, AMLE offers information, resources, and professional development to middle grades educators working to develop more effective schools that focus on the success of every student aged 10–15.

Association of Teacher Educators

The Association of Teacher Educators was founded in 1920 and is an individual membership organization devoted solely to the improvement of teacher education both for school-based and post-secondary teacher educators. The Association of Teacher Educators is dedicated to the ideals of open access to education for all children and youth regardless of socioeconomic status, race, color, or religion. Literacy is the hallmark of an educated citizen.

Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates

The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates is a not-for-profit organization for parents of children with disabilities, their attorneys, and advocates. COPAA believes that effective educational programs for children with disabilities can be only be developed and implemented with collaboration between parents and educators as equal parties. COPAA's primary goal is to secure appropriate educational services for children with disabilities in accordance with national policy. COPAA does not directly represent students but provides resources, training, and information to students, parents, advocates, and attorneys to assist

them in obtaining the free appropriate public education (FAPE) to which students with disabilities are entitled under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Creative Change Educational Solutions

Creative Change Educational Solutions is a nonprofit consulting firm that provides curriculum development for schools with a focus on sustainability and social justice. We help educators transform their curriculum for engaged students, impassioned teachers, equitable schools, and stronger communities.

Educational Leaders Without Borders

Educational Leaders Without Borders is a group that believes that educators must become emboldened to step out of the school/state nexus. Educational Leaders Without Borders stands against misogyny, xenophobia, nativism, and in support of the goal of greater democracy and equality to provide a fuller range of opportunities for all.

International Council of Professors for Educational Leadership

The International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership was founded in 1947 and is an international body advocating for professional preparation programs in educational leadership. We train the school leaders of tomorrow.

International Literacy Association

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and

membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers, and experts across 75 countries. With 60 years of experience in the field, ILA believes in the transformative power of literacy to create more successful societies, healthy communities, and prosperous economies. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather, and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices, and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students, and inform policymakers. The International Literacy Association publishes several peer-reviewed journals, including *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, and *Reading Research Quarterly*.

Learning Disabilities Association of America

The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) is a consumer-led and consumer-driven organization whose membership includes individuals with learning disabilities, their families, and educators and researchers. Its vision and mission are to have learning disabilities universally understood and effectively addressed, create opportunities for success for all individuals affected by learning disabilities, and reduce the incidence of learning disabilities in future generations.

National Association for Multicultural Education

The mission of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) since the organization began in 1990 is to advance and advocate for

equity and social justice through multicultural education. NAME's membership encompasses the spectrum of professional educators, literacy specialists (including early childhood), classroom and higher education faculty, administrators, psychologists, social workers, counselors, curriculum specialists, librarians, scholars, and researchers. NAME encourages people affiliated with teacher education, literacy, ethnic studies, ESL and bilingual education, social science, anthropology, liberal and fine arts programs, and other departments, colleges, and schools with an emphasis on multiculturalism to become members. In NAME's 27 years, it has worked together with its members and partners to create, improve, and distribute exceptional curricula and other resources to help move toward 100% literacy, educational equity, and social justice. NAME believes literacy is a cornerstone to educational equity.

National Association for Professional Development Schools

The National Association for Professional Development Schools is a unique, educational non-profit organization dedicated to the creation and sustainability of genuine collaborative partnerships between P-12 and higher education to improve education. We place extensive value on shared voice and participation of both P-12 and higher education, which is evident in the organization structure and our advocacy for school/university/community partnerships.

National Association of Secondary School Principals

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) is the leading organization of and voice for principals and other school leaders across the United States. NASSP seeks to transform education through school leadership, recognizing that the fulfillment of each student's potential relies on great leaders in every school committed to the success of each student. Reflecting its long-standing commitment to student leadership development, NASSP administers the National Honor Society, National Junior Honor Society, National Elementary Honor Society, and National Student Council.

National Collaborative for Digital Equity

The National Collaborative for Digital Equity is an organization that supports sustained efforts to eliminate the digital divide as a barrier to economic and educational opportunity.

National Council for the Social Studies

Founded in 1921, National Council for the Social Studies is the largest professional association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. NCSS engages and supports educators in strengthening and advocating social studies. With members in all the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 69 foreign countries, NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history, civics, geography, economics, political science,

sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education. The NCSS membership represents K-12 classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, social studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute the social studies.

National Council of Teachers of English

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) amplifies the voice of educators through personal connection, collaboration, and a shared mission to improve the teaching and learning of English and language arts at all levels. Through the expertise of its more than 25,000 pre-K-college members, NCTE has served at the forefront of every major improvement in the teaching and learning of English and the language arts since 1911.

School Social Work Association of America

The School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA) is the national professional organization for school social workers in school districts across the country. Its members work to enhance the social and emotional growth and academic outcomes of all students and to provide a positive climate for learning. The organization supports school social workers in creating linkages among schools, families, and communities to address barriers to student success. SSWAA members serve the mental health needs of students and families through early identification, prevention, intervention, counseling and support.

Teaching for Change

Founded in 1989, Teaching for Change provides teachers and parents with the tools to create schools where all students, learn to read, write, and change the world. This mission is accomplished through parent organizing, professional development, and publications. Our work is both local and national. We have place-based work primarily and consistently in the D.C. metro area and at times in Mississippi. Our programs advancing positive school climate and racial equity focus on the two groups of people who have the most impact on students -- teachers and parents.