

# 2023 EdAllies Impact Report

Achievements for Minnesota Students



## Our Mission

EdAllies partners with schools, families, and communities to ensure that every young Minnesotan has access to a rigorous and engaging education. We advance policies that put underserved students first, remove barriers facing successful schools and programs, and foster an inclusive conversation about what's possible for students.

## Our Vision

We envision a Minnesota where every student succeeds in a rigorous and engaging education.

## Our Core Values

EQUITY • INVENTIVENESS • HUMILITY • HONESTY • COURAGE



To view all multimedia included in this report, please scan the QR code or visit [edalliesmn.org/2023-annual-report](https://edalliesmn.org/2023-annual-report)



## A Note from Our Chair



EdAllies' plate was full in 2023. Some education policies that were in the works for years finally came to the forefront—and EdAllies seemed to be in the midst of everything education-related. Universal breakfast and lunch, more effective discipline practices, literacy, ethnic studies, and more were all introduced, advanced, and passed at the Capitol, making critical progress for Minnesota students. This was a pivotal year for Minnesota, with the Governor, House, and Senate all controlled by the DFL for the first time in decades while schools continued to grapple with the pandemic's impacts.

EdAllies played a crucial role in shaping these debates by providing expertise and ensuring community involvement. Key funders recognized EdAllies' efforts, specifically supporting their work on literacy. The team spent over 3,000 hours advocating around literacy—from meetings to research and beyond—culminating in the passage of the READ Act, one of the state's largest literacy investments.

Additionally, EdAllies contributed to coalitions on universal meals, ethnic studies, and nonexclusionary discipline, scaling up outreach and engagement thanks to new grant funding. Progress like this doesn't happen overnight, and whether EdAllies led on an issue—like teacher licensure pathways—or was a key coalition member—like ethnic studies—what was important was that EdAllies was at the table ensuring that students are at the center of the work.

EdAllies' work did not go unnoticed in the education justice community. This year, the organization was nominated for not one but two [Eddie Awards](#) through the PIE Network: Best Collaboration on the READ Act with the National Parents Union, Great MN Schools, and Educators in Excellence and Best Defense for their work on the *Cruz-Guzman v. MN* work with the National Parents Union, Educators in Excellence, and National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS)

It was a big year internally, with leadership working to optimize effectiveness in areas from operations to outreach. The team added an [Operations Manager](#), a [Policy and Research Analyst](#), and a [Director of Communications and Advancement](#), growing EdAllies' audience, shoring up our research base, and ensuring the ship sails smoothly.

There were some big battles on issues like teacher licensure and the use of prone restraint in schools, where EdAllies' voice was critical in ensuring debates were balanced and student-centered despite some hard outcomes. I am proud of the wins, the progress, and the team's steadfast commitment to what's right and possible for students.

In partnership,  
**Karn Engelsgerd**  
EdAllies Board Chair

## Bringing Policy to the Community: EdAllies' Programmatic Growth

In 2023, EdAllies expanded community outreach programming and offerings to build power among students, families, activists, educators, and more—and to make sure their voices were centered in policymaking.

### Community Action Team: Eliminating Barriers for Prospective Teachers of Color

In 2023, EdAllies launched a Community Action Team composed of seven once-aspiring Black educators who seriously considered entering the K-12 teaching profession but ultimately decided on another career path. The group met regularly and shared their firsthand experiences about starting—and ultimately ending—their journeys to become educators in Minnesota. Their experiences and recommendations are summarized in [a report](#) that will inform our work in the coming years.

The group identified financial, educational, institutional, and interpersonal barriers that prevented them and other teachers of color from becoming teachers. Jocelyn McQuirter, a member of the Community Action Team, shared her story and insight along with Josh Crosson, EdAllies' Executive Director, during an [Achieve Twin Cities EdTalk](#) at the end of 2023.

### Resurrecting the Research Rundown

EdAllies welcomed Madie Spartz, our new Policy and Research Analyst. In May, Madie relaunched our Research Rundown—a monthly overview of research we think is worth adding to the education equity conversation. Topics covered in 2023 included teacher diversity, literacy instruction in teacher preparation programs, recommendations to improve access to STEM for students of color, strategies for increasing school attendance, and more. You can search for recaps through our [online library](#). In 2023, our Research Rundown emails were read more than 5,500 times.

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Josh Crosson,  
Haben Ghebregish,  
and Jocelyn McQuirter  
present at EdTalks.



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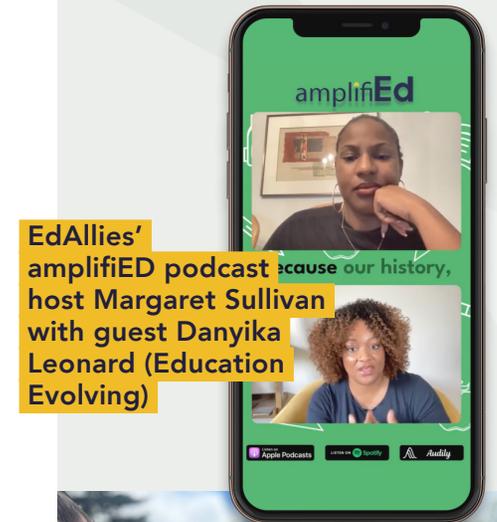
## Amplifying the Voices of Students and Advocates

As we innovate and experiment with channels and tools to bring impacted voices and student-centered perspectives to the forefront of policy debates, this year we dove into the podcasting world. Hosted by Margaret Sullivan and Josh Crosson, [amplifiED](#) digs into the issues of the day, the opportunities and challenges facing students, educators, and families, and how policy, advocacy, and collaboration can ensure better outcomes for us all. The podcast has helped expand well beyond the audience of those able to attend real-time events. Through over 700 listens, we were able to introduce Minnesota to education leaders, such as:

- [Rep. Heather Edelson on literacy and the READ Act](#)
- [Danyika Leonard of Education Evolving on the new ethnic studies standards](#)
- [Nekima Levy-Armstrong on the importance of culturally affirming schools](#)
- [Maren Hulden of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid's Disability Law Center on legislation limiting the use of dangerous holds on students.](#)
- And many more including youth organizers, a principal, and experts from our team.

## Helping Students and the Community Find and Use their Voice

Our Community Allies program provides advocacy training specific to education policy, giving community members the knowledge and tools they need to become effective advocates for the issues that matter to them. In 2023, we provided presentations, training, and mentorship in various settings: in class at Hopkins High School, before parent and student advocacy days at the Capitol, and with youth and educators gearing up to testify in defense of teacher diversity. We built a formal set of modules to replicate and build relationships with school and community leaders so EdAllies can reach even more students, families, and educators in 2024. We also launched "For the Love of Reading: A Book Club For Kids" to connect young learners with empowering stories and teach them to use their voice to create change. 🏡



EdAllies' amplifiedED podcast because our history, host Margaret Sullivan with guest Danyika Leonard (Education Evolving)



EdAllies' staff getting stories from community members



Students attending "For the Love of Reading" book club



## Elevating Policy & Practice to Improve Literacy

One of the pillars of EdAllies' 2023 policy priorities was advocating for investments and improved practices to change how Minnesota teaches reading and move the needle on our unacceptable and stagnant reading outcomes. It became a top priority for policymakers. Proposals from the Governor and legislators from both parties took their own approaches at aligning the preparation, training, resources, and supports that educators need to teach all children to read effectively.

EdAllies was at the table for every step of the ideating, vetting, and negotiating process, giving testimony, mobilizing the community, and weighing in from a student-centered perspective. The final version of the READ Act not only included \$75 million in investment for training, curriculum, and a research partnership in the science of reading, but also banned the use of ineffective literacy strategies and incentivized districts to adopt curriculum that works.

After the READ Act was passed, EdAllies moved forward to educate the community about what they can now expect with literacy instruction. We released an [explainer blog](#), brought the House bill author Rep. Heather Edelson onto the [amplifiED podcast](#), and shared updates with partners on what to know and how to continue advocating. 🏠



▶▶▶ "I met [EdAllies] years ago and we said 'let's figure out how to build this coalition,' and we did! There was such a big group of us. The READ Act was a lot of different people doing some incredible work."

—Rep. Heather Edelson

### SPOTLIGHT

#### The Path Forward Literacy Coalition: Collaboration for Deeper Impact

In 2023, EdAllies leaned into the work of the Path Forward Literacy Coalition, hosted by the Hunt Institute. In collaboration with representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education, the University of Minnesota, the Professional Educator Licensing & Standards Board, the Minnesota Business Partnership, Decoding Dyslexia, the Minnesota Legislature, and the JAB Family Foundation, **we compiled coalition and community feedback, explored current research, and supported the coalition in drafting a comprehensive literacy report** that includes recommendations that range from big-picture visions to specific strategies and tactics.





## Building Clear Pathways to the Classroom

In 2017, EdAllies successfully advocated for an overhaul of Minnesota’s teacher licensure system, creating multiple pathways to increase teacher diversity and support developing educators. Over the past seven years, we led efforts to improve this system and ensure effective implementation, resulting in a significant increase in career and technical education teachers and a 50% rise in teacher diversity.

However, in 2023, legislative leaders and the governor sought to undo key elements of our licensure system. While we supported expanding pathways for heritage language and specialized field teachers, we strongly opposed efforts to close licensure pathways.

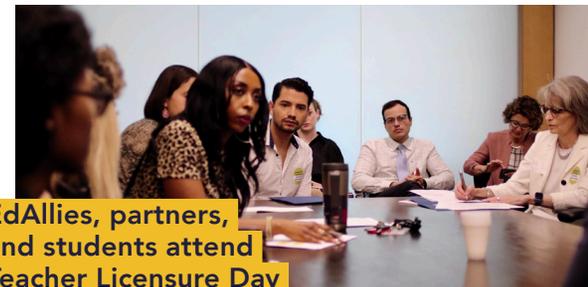
Despite severe teacher shortages and widespread concern, legislators repealed six of the nine pathways to earn a Tier 2 license. Thanks to our advocacy and community voices, a pathway to move from Tier 2 to Tier 3 based on classroom experience remains intact.

A highlight was our Teacher Licensure Lobby Day at the Minnesota Capitol, where over 60 students, teachers, and supporters shared impactful stories of teachers from non-traditional pathways. 🏡

### SPOTLIGHT

#### Ensuring Compliance: Federal Protections and Minnesota’s Licensure System

In 2023, the Federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) acted to ensure students with disabilities have access to highly qualified teachers. EdAllies analyzed how federal protections under IDEA interact with Minnesota’s tiered licensure system. We convened school and district leaders, disability advocates, and others to explore options that ensure clear pathways for needed educators. Our coalition presented concerns and solutions to MDE, OSEP, and legislators, informing action in 2024 to bring Minnesota into compliance with federal law without creating new barriers.



EdAllies, partners, and students attend Teacher Licensure Day at the Minnesota Capitol



PHOTOS: SUSAN MONTGOMERY



## Universal Breakfast & Lunch for Minnesota Students

One in six Minnesota children is food-insecure. Students cannot learn when they are hungry. To make positive change for students in 2023, EdAllies joined with partners in the Hunger Free Schools Coalition, helping bring key advocates to the Capitol, and educating the community in partnership with two local parents through our [EdFellows program](#). Our work and the work of the coalition resulted in Governor Walz signing universal meals into law on March 17, 2023. Early data from this investment showed that the need was much greater than anticipated, with [school lunch programs](#) serving 4.5 million more meals compared to fall 2022, a 15-percent increase that eclipsed early estimates. 🏠



**“It was the culmination of years and years of work to get to this point. To be able to tell families that relief is coming, that money is going to go back into their pockets throughout the state, is a really exciting thing.”**

**—Matt Shaver, Policy Director at EdAllies, speaking to KSTP on the impact of passing universal meals on students and families.**





## Making Funding More Equitable & Impactful

In a budget year with more than \$17 billion in surplus up for grabs, EdAllies focused on ensuring that Minnesota invested in the safety, health, and well-being of all students—pushing for critical new investments and fixes to long-standing equity issues. In addition to supporting investment in long-underfunded areas like special education and English Learner services, EdAllies also called on policymakers to improve flaws in the state compensatory revenue system—the primary tool Minnesota uses to equitably resource schools serving students in poverty. We pushed for improvements in how students in poverty are counted, moving away from outdated systems, and advocating for improved guardrails to ensure funds get to the kids who need it most. Going forward, more money will follow students in need, and we will continue to champion deeper systemic change. 🏡



**Matt Shaver, EdAllies' Policy Director, testifies before the MN House Education Policy Committee in support of HF1547, which helped improve the way Minnesota allocates compensatory revenue.**





## Getting Students Ready for College & Career

In Minnesota, there are unacceptable disparities in who graduates ready for college and career—but there are many steps policymakers can take to address inequalities in education outcomes. In 2023, the Minnesota legislature passed the North Star Promise scholarship program, which was a strong step in the right direction for improving access to college. In response to this new opportunity and recognizing Minnesota’s struggles in getting students to fill out the FAFSA, EdAllies joined with LeadMN and Students United to advocate for [universal FAFSA legislation](#). While the legislation was not included in the eventual 2023 omnibus bills, our coalition continued laying the groundwork through advocacy, earned media, and marketing for re-introducing universal FAFSA legislation in 2024.

Additionally, EdAllies [led several advocacy campaigns](#) through the 2023 legislative session with the intent of improving student access to college and career. These initiatives included:

- Incentivizing districts to automatically enroll students into rigorous courses, building off success in other states
- Improving how we use data to measure student progress and provide timely interventions, including the adoption of a 9th-grade on-track indicator
- Investing in high-dosage tutoring as federal COVID relief funds sunset

While landmark literacy legislation passed in 2023, many of these other priorities fell by the wayside. However, our work in coalition building, advocacy, research, and communications laid strong foundations for progress in 2024 and beyond. 🏠



**Read about the progress of college and career readiness legislation in 2023 in a blog post by Madie Spartz, EdAllies’ Policy & Research Analyst.**



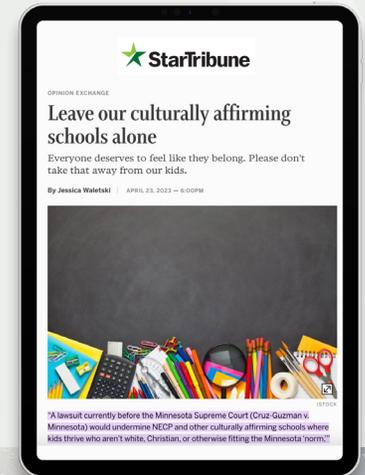


## Advocating for Culturally Relevant Schools

In 2023, the *Cruz-Guzman v. Minnesota* lawsuit was once again before the [Minnesota Supreme Court](#), exploring whether the existence of racial imbalance in public schools violates the state's Education Clause. However, many schools throughout the state are designed to ensure students of color are learning in environments that are equitable and culturally responsive. The lawsuit threatens schools with these targeted missions. Schools such as Txuj Ci Hmong Language and Culture and Friendship Academy for the Arts—which aims to educate Black students through an artistic lens—could be undermined without a nuanced approach to understanding what students and families need to feel welcome and supported in school.

EdAllies worked with a coalition of local organizations focused on education and community engagement to craft and submit an [amicus brief](#) urging the court to center the needs of historically underserved families and consider the role of culturally relevant schools. We joined with community leaders to host a press conference at Friendship Academy in Minneapolis to outline the importance of supporting families of color in seeking school options that affirm and support their students' identities.

In December, the Court ruled that racial imbalance does not violate the state constitution on its own; what does matter is whether student demographics impact the quality of education the students receive. The case is currently pending trial. 🏠



EdAllies leads press conference at Friendship Academy





## Advancing More Effective Discipline Practices

While Minnesota has made some progress in previous years to address unacceptable disparities in discipline outcomes, this year was a breakthrough. Building on the success of a pre-K dismissal ban in 2020, EdAllies worked closely with the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition (SNS) to ensure that students in K-3 would not be subject to unfair exclusionary discipline. Ultimately, legislators extended that same protection through 3rd grade, requiring schools to prioritize non-exclusionary discipline options like mental health services, literacy supports, and family engagement. Our coalition was also successful in prohibiting schools from withholding recess as a form of punishment and outlawing police from being able to use dangerous holds that restrict breathing on students.

Pushback after the fact made local and national headlines. We mobilized to bring student voices to a sudden and intense debate about the use of prone restraint and other deadly holds on students. We again partnered with SNS to organize a community press conference at the Minnesota Capitol urging Governor Walz and policymakers to uphold the recently passed law and not hold a special session, that would overturn the law. The pressure from community members and educators worked, and the discussion on the law was moved to 2024. 🏡



**Josh Crosson, EdAllies' Executive Director and Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition Board Director, details why Minnesota was in danger of going backwards on preK-3 suspensions and expulsions in an EdAllies blog post.**



**EdAllies speaking out against the use of dangerous holds on students**



**Foundations & Corporations**

3M  
 Ciresi Walburn Foundation (CWF)  
 Frey Foundation  
 General Mills  
 GHR Foundation  
 Great MN Schools  
 Hubbard Broadcasting  
 Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies  
 Minneapolis Foundation (Relmagine Education Grant)  
 Mortenson Family Foundation  
 Otto Bremmer  
 Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation  
 Sauer Family Foundation  
 The Graves Foundation  
 Valley Natural Foods  
 WEM Foundation

**Families and Individuals**

**\$10,000+**

Daniels Family Fund  
 Douglass  
 Brandenburg Family  
 Foundation  
 JAB Family  
 Foundation  
 Piper Family Fund II  
 of the Minneapolis  
 Foundation

**\$5,000–\$9,999**

Julie & Doug  
 Baker Jr Foundation  
 Gullickson  
 Family Fund of  
 the Minneapolis  
 Foundation  
 Remele Family Fund  
 of the Minneapolis  
 Foundation  
 Soran Foundation  
 Ben & Mary Whitney

**\$1,000–\$4,999**

Albright Foundation  
 Arend Family Impact  
 Fund  
 Chad Borseth  
 Paul Gunderson  
 Dave & Barb  
 Henderson  
 Jenifer Loon  
 Richard McFarland  
 Lynnell Mickelsen  
 & John Bellaimey  
 Richard & Karen  
 Sellers

**\$500–\$999**

Andrea Banducci  
 The Jay & Page  
 Cowles Giving Fund  
 Virginia Davis  
 Anne Mahle  
 Daniel Sellers

**Up to \$500**

Zachary Abrams  
 Susan Brown  
 Dennis Carlson/  
 Carlson Consulting  
 Company  
 Cheryl Coombs  
 Joshua Crosson  
 Karn M. Engelsgjerd  
 Lars Esdal  
 Maren Hulden  
 Bernadeia Johnson  
 Krista Kaput  
 Holly Kragthorpe  
 Deirdre Kramer  
 Lauren Clyne  
 Medley  
 H. Berit Midelfort  
 in memory of Iris H.  
 Cornelius  
 Andrew Minck  
 Josh Reimnitz  
 Maeve Riley  
 Andrea Roethke  
 Meredith Samuelson  
 Gabriel Sandholm  
 Madison Olson  
 Spartz  
 Oron Stenesh  
 Jill & Rich  
 Stever-Zeitlin  
 Anna Sutton  
 Janet Weber  
 TaShonda  
 Williamson  
 James Zacchini

**What Partners Are Saying About EdAllies**

▶▶▶ **“EdAllies zealously advocates for education equity at the Capitol, which isn’t easy and can be very messy, but they don’t back down and stay centered on doing the right thing for children.”**

—Response from Annual Partner Survey

▶▶▶ **“I have been incredibly impressed with EdAllies and how you all show up in the work. Your group plays an important role in education in Minnesota. Thank you for all of your tireless effort, professionalism, and bold leadership.”**

—Response from Annual Partner Survey



## Staff

**JOSH CROSSON**  
Executive Director

**ANDREA ROETHKE**  
Managing Director of  
Strategy & Operations

**MATTHEW HAGER**  
Director of Communications  
& Advancement

**YUSRA HASSAN**  
Capitol Pathways Intern

**MEREDITH SAMUELSON**  
Operations Manager

**MATT SHAVER**  
Policy Director

**MADIE SPARTZ**  
Research Director

**MARGARET SULLIVAN**  
Programs & Outreach  
Manager

## Board

**KARN ENGELSGJERD**  
Chair

**JANE MCDONALD-BLACK**  
Treasurer

**LEW REMELE**  
Governance Chair

**SIMONE HARDEMAN  
JONES**  
Community Impact Chair

**GINYA DAVIS**

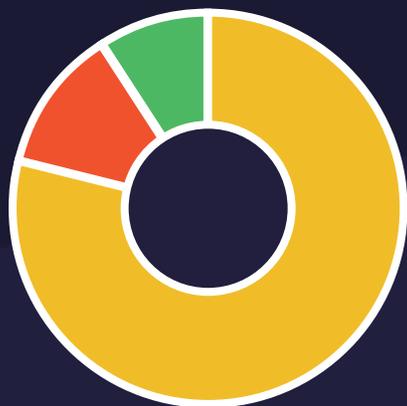
**FLOR TREVIÑO FREY**

**JOSHUA FUCHS**

**ANN JOHNSON**

**JENIFER LOON**

**TASHONDA WILLIAMSON**



## FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> Program	<b>79%</b>
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Administration	<b>12%</b>
<span style="color: green;">■</span> Fundraising	<b>9%</b>

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>\$1,932,507</b>
<b>Current assets</b>	<b>\$1,818,587</b>
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,582,151
Pledges receivable	\$0
Prepaid expenses	\$34,735
Right-of-use asset (Lease)	\$56,631
<b>Property and equipment, net</b>	<b>\$57,289</b>
<b>Contributions receivable</b>	<b>\$201,701</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$1,932,507</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>	<b>\$157,371</b>
Current liabilities — total	\$185,666
Accounts payable	\$900
Fiscal sponsees	\$94,684
Deferred lease liability	\$90,082
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>\$1,746,841</b>
Without donor restrictions	\$1,075,857
With donor restrictions	\$425,411
Board designated operating reserve	\$245,573

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

<b>SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,176,192</b>
Contributions	\$1,057,787
Program revenue	\$76,306
Interest income	\$37,919
Other	\$4,180
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$1,019,509</b>
<b>Program</b>	<b>\$804,147</b>
<b>Supporting services</b>	<b>\$215,362</b>
Administration	\$119,523
Fundraising	\$95,839
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	
Change in net assets	\$156,683
Beginning of year	\$1,590,158
End of year	\$1,746,841

## STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

<b>SALARIES AND BENEFITS</b>	<b>\$690,515</b>
Salaries	\$554,348
Employee benefits	\$92,446
Payroll taxes	\$43,721
<b>EXPENSES BEFORE DEPRECIATION</b>	<b>\$328,994</b>
Fees for services	\$171,575
Office expenses	\$13,287
Information technology	\$32,493
Advocacy and promotion	\$5,836
Occupancy	\$48,458
Travel	\$15,866
Conferences and meetings	\$4,619
Insurance	\$9,741
Other	\$3,231
Depreciation	\$23,888



To learn more, get involved, or make a contribution  
to support our work, please visit [edalliesmn.org](https://edalliesmn.org)