

2024 EdAllies Impact Report

From Classrooms and Community to the Capitol



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/2024-annual-report



A Note from Our Chair



After leading the charge on big education wins at the Capitol, in 2024 EdAllies focused on implementation, refinement, and raising the alarm on new and urgent issues. Whether it was in community with parents and advocates, breaking down funding formulas with legislators, or interviewing national experts on key policy debates, EdAllies was there, ensuring the voices of students and families were heard.

From a policy lens, EdAllies was front and center in literacy conversations, pushing for improvements to the READ Act, which received the largest share of the year's supplemental education budget. EdAllies joined partners, physicians, students, and parents to oppose the use of prone restraints in schools—a practice banned in 2023 but later reinstated. And the team helped elevate the issue of chronic absenteeism, leading to the creation of a 12-district Student Attendance Pilot and a new Legislative Study Group focused on attendance and truancy. Whether the focus was on keeping kids in school, safe, or reading, EdAllies was at the table.

EdAllies also deepened our community presence. After years of virtual events, we brought back our in-person Session Kickoff, with partners and lawmakers previewing the year's key issues. The team released a powerful report from our Community Action Team called *Eliminating Barriers for Teachers of Color in Minnesota*:

Lessons from Aspiring Teachers, and held a public event to share the findings. amplifiED, the EdAllies podcast, tackled timely topics like prone restraint, universal FAFSA, restorative practices, and access to advanced coursework—supplemented by Mondays with Margaret, a livestream series breaking down the week's legislative developments and ways to get involved.

One of the most meaningful efforts of the year was our Community Allies in the Schools partnership with Exploration High, which brought the EdAllies team directly into classrooms to help students build the confidence to advocate for themselves.

Throughout all of this, the team continued to grow. The staff welcomed Natalie Trevino as their Development Operations and Stewardship Manager, expanding the organization's reach and capacity. Diarra Brooks joined the board and quickly stepped into a leadership role as chair of our Community Impact Committee.

EdAllies is proving to be a powerful force for education justice in Minnesota. Through community programming, effective policy, and organizational leadership, EdAllies continues to make meaningful change for Minnesota kids.

Karn Engelskjerd

2024 EdAllies Board Chair

Cultivating Changemakers: EdAllies' Programmatic Growth

At EdAllies, we believe the people most impacted by education policy—students, families, and educators—should have a voice in shaping it. This year, we expanded our efforts to train, inform, and uplift the next generation of advocates, ensuring community voices are at the center of systems change.

Training the Next Generation of Advocates

Policymaking can be intimidating, especially for students who are still learning the process and finding their voice. This is where our Community Allies in the Schools program comes in, bringing our team directly into classrooms to break down these barriers and help students build the confidence to advocate for themselves. EdAllies collaborated with schools, youth organizations, and advocacy groups to deliver action-oriented civic engagement workshops.

We offered workshops tailored to the unique needs of specific groups, and also forged a more in-depth partnership with Exploration High School, where we delivered a semester-long, elective-style course in advocacy and civic engagement. Students chose an issue to explore in-depth and practiced their advocacy pitches, walking away with the tools to engage on issues that directly impact them, from PSEO to special education services, mental health support, and more.



**EdAllies bringing
Community Allies in
the Schools to Exploration
High School**



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amplifiED Podcast Expands

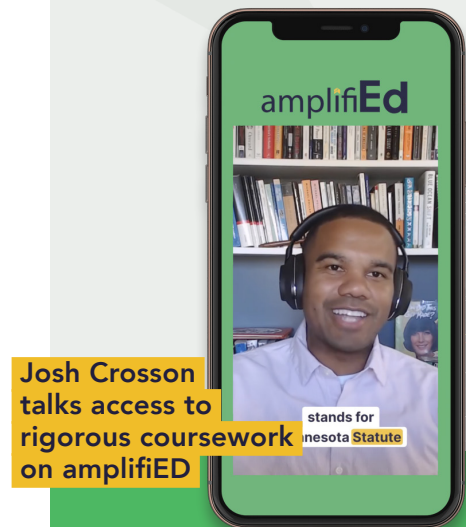
At EdAllies, we believe the most transformative education policy conversations start with the voices of those most impacted—students, educators, families, and advocates. Our podcast was created not simply to decode complex policies, but to amplify the stories, expertise, and lived experiences of community leaders who are shaping a better future for Minnesota’s students. In 2024, we launched the third season of our podcast, marking a milestone 20th episode and reaching over 1,700 total listeners.

Our podcast has become a platform for real, honest, and engaging conversations, grounded in authenticity and driven by those closest to the issues. We bring clarity to critical topics by inviting diverse voices to the table, helping the public better understand what’s at stake and how they can engage. Highlights from this season include:

- Chronic absenteeism with Jim Davnie from Minnesota Alliance with Youth
- Universal FAFSA with Thomas Anderson from Students United
- Barriers facing teachers of color with aspiring educators from our Community Action Team
- Access to rigorous coursework with Dr. Kristen Hengtgen from EdTrust
- And more!

To keep the conversation going between podcasts, and to bring more voice to the table, we also launched Mondays with Margaret—a live broadcast series on Facebook to discuss evolving issues in real time with our Programs and Outreach Manager, Margaret Sullivan, and local community partners. More than 1,200 viewers tuned in to learn how the advocacy community is elevating important issues impacting kids and families.

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**Listen and subscribe
to amplifiED**



**Margaret Sullivan
and Matt Shaver give
legislative updates on
Mondays with Margaret**



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Bringing Community to the Table

Families and students are often left out of critical discussions on policies and programs that directly affect them. This year, EdAllies expanded our efforts to educate, engage, and elevate parent and student voices. On the front end, this meant getting out into the community to build our network. Margaret Sullivan, our Programs and Outreach Manager, braved sun, wind, and rain to meet with community members at a local Juneteenth festival, Movies in the Park, Rondo Days, various resource fairs, and more. Our team was out discussing education policies, building connections, and hearing stories at more than a dozen community-facing events in 2024.

We also helped bring diverse voices to in-depth policy conversations. Last fall, the University of Minnesota led research to understand the roll-out and impact of universal meals on families. We leveraged our networks to bring interested and eligible parents to a University-led focus group, where participants engaged in a lively and informative discussion on the implementation of Minnesota's new universal meals program.



Margaret Sullivan tables at Urban League Twin Cities Family Day



Josh Crosson takes part in an education panel for the Leadership Twin Cities program

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Creating and Promoting High-Quality Research

Research and analysis are key pillars of EdAllies' work, helping ground the conversation about what is working and where gaps remain. By diving into the data and exploring best practices throughout the state and country, we're able to inform our advocacy and inspire creativity to move beyond our status quo on a range of issues from student discipline to equitable funding to literacy to teacher recruitment and more. Our monthly Research Rundown was a reliable and accessible tool for centered research in local education policy conversations, breaking down complex issues on a range of topics. 📊



SPOTLIGHT

Profiling Promising Local Practices

To shine a light on best practices in reading instruction, EdAllies partnered with the Hunt Literacy Coalition to profile two schools doing exemplary work that are starting to see positive data trends, ahead of the curve, as Minnesota implements the READ Act. Monroe Elementary in the Anoka-Hennepin Public School District and Wildwood Elementary in the Mahtomedi School District offer insights into what it can look like in practice to shift to evidence-based literacy.



Read the Literacy Best Practice in Action Profiles



Ensuring Literacy for All

In 2023, EdAllies was at the table for every step of the ideating, vetting, and negotiating process for the READ Act and in 2024, we were back in the room with legislators, policy experts, and members of the community to ensure ample funding and the needed policy tweaks for effective implementation. Thanks to continued attention from educators and advocates alike, the READ Act updates received the largest share of this year's supplemental education budget at \$37 million—targeted investments that would retrain Minnesota's educators on effective literacy teaching.

Additionally, EdAllies joined with passionate and renowned literacy experts to release a new report on literacy: *A Call to Action on Literacy in Minnesota: Recommendations By Minnesota's Path Forward Literacy Team*. The report identifies the strengths and challenges of Minnesota's current system, breaks down the impacts of legislation such as the READ Act, and outlines a strategic roadmap for literacy policy in the coming years. 🏠

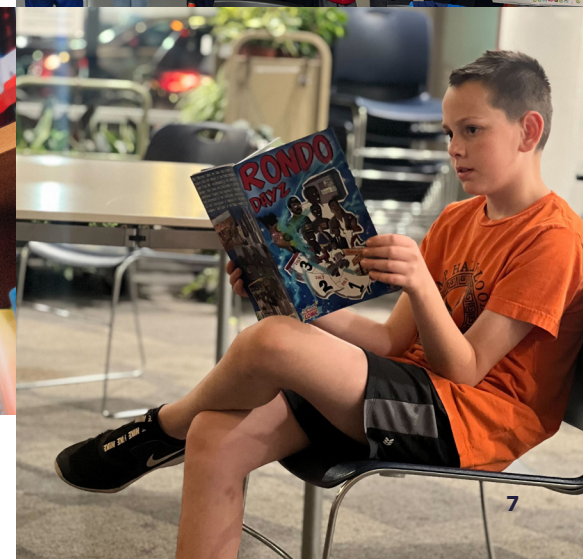


SPOTLIGHT

For the Love of Reading: A Book Club for Kids

Each month during the school year, EdAllies hosts our For the Love of Reading book club for kids in grades 2nd-5th. In 2024, the book club featured authors such as Kao Kalia Yang, Nekima Levy Armstrong, and Mercedes Yarbrough, bringing parents and young readers in the East Metro together for learning and fellowship. Gatherings include a read-along session with the featured author, food, and fun activities to get kids enthusiastic about reading.

Nekima Levy Armstrong at For the Love of Reading book club





Uniting to Tackle Chronic Absenteeism

One in four Minnesota students are considered chronically absent, meaning they missed more than 10% of the school year. This translates to 3.1 million combined days of school and 15.9 million hours of instructional time missed. The problem escalated during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting a range of issues at home, in daily life, and in school. EdAllies sounded the alarm on the absenteeism crisis and brought partners, funders, and policymakers to the table to develop long-lasting, effective, and urgent solutions.

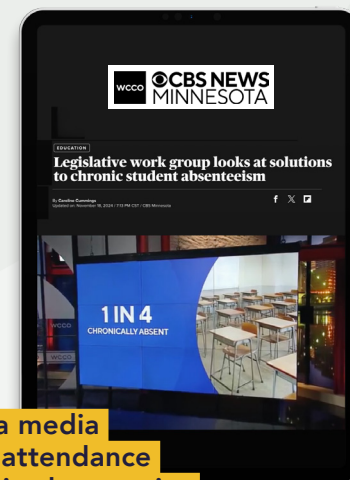
In 2024, this work led to several key first steps, including the establishment of a new Student Attendance and Truancy Legislative Study Group. We advocated for legislators to create the study group to build a shared problem statement and identify best practices to help address the crisis. We shared research and insights with the study group, brought partners to the table, and worked hand-in-hand with policymakers to build an action plan for the coming years. 🏡



SPOTLIGHT

Where Are Our Kids? Unpacking Chronic Absenteeism In Minnesota on amplifiED

We invited Jim Davnie, Executive Director of the Minnesota Alliance with Youth, to the podcast to discuss their hands-on work in supporting student attendance. The conversation explored the definition of chronic absenteeism, its causes, and its impact on students and the school community. We discussed the challenges of chronic absenteeism in Minnesota schools and the efforts being made to address the issue, highlighting the collective focus of legislative leaders and the involvement of various organizations in tackling the issue during the 2024 legislative session.



Minnesota media discusses attendance and chronic absenteeism





Fighting for Effective School Discipline

EdAllies is a core member of the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition, ensuring that state policy guides schools toward effective discipline practices that keep kids safe and help them build long-term skills. In 2024, this meant significant work to defend previous progress.

A heated debate about the use of prone restraint and other dangerous holds by in-school police officers and school staff was a top-line issue for policymakers. We came together with partners in the discipline and disability communities to push back against efforts to legalize the use of these holds. We mobilized and amplified student and community voices, and ensured community perspectives—not just police voices—were considered in negotiations. While the use of holds by police officers and school staff was unfortunately legalized, it came with the caveat that districts would need to adopt a policy for contracting with and collecting data on the use of police officers in schools. These processes and policies are efforts we continue to participate in and leverage as we fight to protect Minnesota's students from harm caused by excessive force. 🏡



Erin Sandsmark of the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition and Josh Crosson talk to media about prone restraint in schools



► Addressing Barriers for Teachers of Color

As of 2023, students of color and Indigenous students made up about 38% of Minnesota's K-12 population, but teachers of color and indigenous teachers made up only about 6% of the total workforce. Extensive research shows that these gaps matter for student outcomes, with teacher diversity bringing a host of benefits, from improved graduation to increased likelihood of college enrollment.

EdAllies convened a Community Action Team (CAT) to examine the barriers that prevent teachers of color from entering the workforce. The cohort shared their findings over the course of 2024, from a report that identified barriers and solutions to teachers of color entering the workforce, to an event digging in on the context and next steps, to a podcast elevating key themes. Because barriers are structural and long-standing, we must do more than tinker with our broken systems, and instead re-vision them from the ground up with the needs of teachers of color at the center. 🏡

🔍 SPOTLIGHT

Paid Student Teaching

One key barrier identified by the CAT was unpaid student teaching requirements. Too often, potential educators aren't able to drop everything for a full-time commitment without pay, so move off the teaching track. This issue was a top priority during the 2024 legislative session, with policymakers ultimately investing in a paid student teaching pilot program. As currently designed, teacher candidates at eight colleges and universities will be paid for their student teaching work. We are focused on continually improving and expanding the program over time, while prioritizing underrepresented teachers.



Read the CAT report findings



Community Action Team participants take part in a panel at report release





Getting All Kids Ready for College & Career

This year, we worked to expand access to rigorous, college-level coursework for all students and to streamline the transition from high school to college and career.

One area where Minnesota can improve its support for college transitions is by improving our low FAFSA completion rates. Minnesota is ranked as having one of the lowest FAFSA completion rates in the country, leaving millions of dollars on the table and making college less affordable for Minnesota students. We joined in coalition with college access partners to change this. A proposal to require universal completion got serious bipartisan consideration, paving the way for future work to remove basic logistical barriers.

Meanwhile, we elevated an evidence-based model known as “automatic enrollment”—a policy that would ensure students are placed in advanced coursework when they demonstrate readiness through a variety of measures, such as grades, assessments, and self-identification. This policy would modify entry into coursework such as AP, honors, and PSEO from teacher recommendations as the primary method, which often overlooks the proficiency and skills of students of color and students with disabilities, to the inclusion of objective standards that automatically place students into coursework that opens the doors to lifelong success. While a proposed pilot that would have tested the idea of automatic student enrollment in a selection of schools wasn’t funded, we activated a state-level conversation and brought in experts from other states where the policy has shown great success. 🏠



Coalition Wins Best Defense Eddie for Protecting MCA Data Release Process



EdAllies, Great MN Schools, and Educators for Excellence celebrate Eddie win

In 2024, new language was introduced that would move the deadline for public reporting of Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) test results from September to December 1. We helped spearhead organized pushback against this short-sighted change, knowing that data must be released in a timely manner for families and schools to take action on the results. Delaying the MCA reporting would have taken the power of information away from families and communities, reducing MCAs’ value and relevance.

Due to pressure generated from the coalition, the proposal was tabled and alongside our partners at Great MN Schools and Educators for Excellence, we won the Best Defense award from the Policy Innovators in Education (PIE) Network Annual Conference.

Foundations & Corporations

3M

Ciresi Walburn Foundation

Frey Foundation

B.C. Gamble and P.W. Skogmo Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation

General Mills

GHR Foundation

Great MN Schools

Greater Twin Cities United Way

Hubbard Broadcasting

Jay and Rose Phillips Family Foundation

Joyce Foundation

McKnight Foundation

Mortenson Family Foundation

Sauer Family Foundation

The Food Group MN

The Graves Foundation

Families and Individuals

\$10,000+

The Julie and Doug Baker Jr Foundation

Daniels Family Fund

Douglass Brandenburg Family Foundation

JAB Foundation

Piper Family Fund II

Smikis Foundation

\$5,000–\$9,999

Ian Black

Brown Family Foundation

Gullickson Family Fund

Remele Family Fund of The Minneapolis Foundation

RWC Foundation

Soran Foundation

Ben and Mary Whitney

\$1,000–\$4,999

Zachary Abrams

Albright Foundation

Arend Family Impact Fund

Paul Gunderson

Jenifer Loon

Karin Lucas

Anne Mahle

Lynnell Mickelsen and John Bellaimy

Richard and Karen Sellers

\$500–\$999

Virginia Davis

Finch Farm Fund

Holly Kragthorpe

Gabriel Sandholm

Daniel Sellers

Up to \$500

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Victoria Benson

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Daniel Hodges

Ann Johnson

Krista Kaput

Karn M. Engelskjerd

Andrew Minck

Kirsten O'Brien

Tim Penny

Andrea Roethke

Meredith Samuelson

Katy Schultz

Claire Sislo

Oron Stenesh

Jennifer Stern

Jill Stever-Zeitlin

Margaret Sullivan

Natalie Trevino

What Partners Are Saying About EdAllies

▶▶▶ "When I think about education equity, I value EdAllies analysis. I can trust that they have done their research and convened thought leaders for strategic conversations. This is how you become a trusted messenger."

—Response from Annual Partner Survey

▶▶▶ "I am a massive fan of EdAllies and their work! EdAllies produces high-quality, actionable resources and are on the ground moving things in Minnesota. As a partner at a national org working with lots of different state partners, EdAllies is the ideal collaborator. Positive, high-energy, high-quality, well-connected."

—Response from Annual Partner Survey



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& Advancement

MEREDITH SAMUELSON
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MARGARET SULLIVAN
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Manager

NATALIE TREVINO
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KNIGHTEN**
Capitol Pathways Intern

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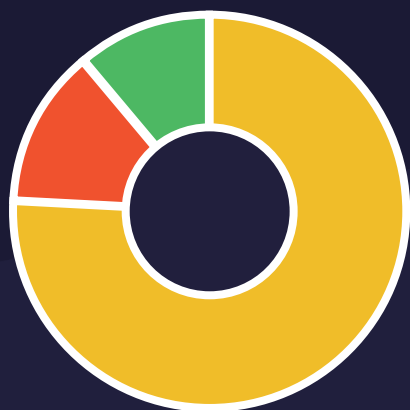
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Community Impact Chair
GreenLight Fund Twin Cities

JOSHUA FUCHS
Red Wing High School

ANN JOHNSON
Northside Achievement Zone

JENIFER LOON
People Reaching Out
to People (PROP)

TASHONDA WILLIAMSON
The Link MN



FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

■	Program	76%
■	Administration	13%
■	Fundraising	11%

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

ASSETS		\$2,214,994
Current assets		\$1,716,378
Cash and cash equivalents		\$1,676,470
Pledges receivable		\$0
Prepaid expenses		\$22,936
Right-of-use asset (Lease)		\$16,972
Property and equipment, net		\$35,171
Contributions receivable		\$463,445
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		\$2,214,994
Current liabilities		\$117,442
Accounts payable & accrued payroll		\$5,907
Fiscal sponsees		\$83,240
Deferred lease liability		\$28,295
Net assets		\$2,097,552
Without donor restrictions		\$1,127,813
With donor restrictions		\$724,166
Board designated for operating reserve		\$245,573

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	\$1,410,654
Contributions	\$1,335,432
Program revenue	\$1,115
Interest income	\$62,205
Other	\$11,902
EXPENSES	\$1,042,298
Program	\$761,235
Supporting services	\$281,063
Administration	\$154,120
Fundraising	\$126,943
NET ASSETS	
Change in net assets	\$368,356
Beginning of year	\$1,746,841
End of year	\$2,115,197

STATEMENT OF FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES

SALARIES AND BENEFITS	\$816,999
Salaries	\$651,358
Employee benefits	\$113,879
Payroll taxes	\$51,762
EXPENSES	\$200,546
Fees for services	\$61,744
Office expenses	\$25,994
Information technology	\$18,618
Advocacy and promotion	\$14,187
Occupancy	\$46,378
Travel	\$11,374
Conferences and meetings	\$3,638
Insurance	\$4,861
Other	\$13,752
Depreciation	\$24,753



To learn more, get involved, or make a contribution
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