



ENDING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE: A CROSS-SECTOR PUSH FOR REFORM

For years, funders, advocates and public-sector partners have been working in close collaboration to reform the school discipline system that disproportionately targets children of color and puts students on a path to prison instead of higher education. ***Tilling the Field: Lessons About Philanthropy's Role in School Discipline Reform*** offers a history of the movement, the achievements made thus far and insights that can inform future school discipline reform efforts and other policy change movements. The report is meant as a guide for philanthropies seeking to partner with government stakeholders to advance policy reform as well as a resource for federal agency staff to build understanding of the value of collaboration with philanthropic institutions.

Atlas Learning Project

Now more than ever, funders need to learn from each other and put effective approaches and strategies into action. ***Tilling the Field*** is part of the Atlas Learning Project, a suite of resources from The Atlantic Philanthropies and other experts in the field aimed to help funders think strategically about how to defend, sustain and advance progressive policy change. With smart thinking, bold action and sustained focus, funders and advocates will be better positioned to succeed in advocacy and policy change.

TOP INSIGHTS FROM THE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFORM MOVEMENT

- By taking a hands-on, highly engaged approach, foundations can push issues to the forefront of the policy agenda and help identify effective solutions. Specifically, philanthropies are uniquely positioned to serve as “connective tissue,” facilitating relationships and discussions between advocates and public sector partners.
- Working in alignment allows partners to serve in a flexible set of roles that take advantage of their differing strengths. By leveraging each other, partners can address complex problems that require system-wide solutions that no individual entity could tackle on its own.
- Combining internal and external strategies can accelerate the pace and scale of change. Public-sector leaders often need outside pressure to make changes as well as support within their agency or organization to implement meaningful reforms.
- Achieving reform on a decentralized issue requires working on multiple levels – federal, state and local – and along a spectrum of activity – including policy change, implementation, data collection and enforcement. Funders must work in all of these areas simultaneously and holistically to identify effective solutions and advance them quickly.
- Framing an issue effectively attracts partners, builds momentum and positions the issue favorably against competing interests. Smart framing means focusing on the core values driving the issue, looking at the issue from a system-wide perspective and using data to make the case for reform.

“Reforming school discipline policies and eliminating disparities in their use are essential to improving the educational and employment prospects of millions of U.S. youth.”

TILLING THE FIELD: LESSONS ABOUT PHILANTHROPY'S ROLE IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFORM