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## **Families and Communities Key to Assessment and Accountability Decisions During the Pandemic School Year**

***Seek Common Ground Brings Together Six Statewide Education Advocacy Organizations  
Elevating Community Voices to Grapple with a School Year Like No Other***

Seek Common Ground (SCG), the innovation incubator that supports statewide and community-facing advocates pursuing equitable and sustainable education policies, today announced the launch of its Measurement, Assessment and Accountability (MAA) Phase Two Action Accelerator for statewide education advocates to ensure that families and communities drive decisions on statewide assessments and accountability systems in the midst of this uncertain school year.

The Action Accelerator is an idea lab: SCG provides project funding to organizations seeking to drive change in the field; research, and connections with thought partners, on salient topics and issues; and a forum for representatives of supported organizations to share ideas and learn. Drawing inspiration from networked improvement communities, collective impact and equitable design thinking, SCG Action Accelerators help promising ideas breakthrough.

“Families have many concerns as this school year begins—from their children’s health and safety and social and emotional well-being to ensuring that their kids are learning. No matter what school looks like—remote or in-person or a combination of the two—decisions about statewide tests in the spring and how to think about accountability during the pandemic and beyond should reflect families’ perspectives. SCG launched this Action Accelerator to ensure that family voice is at the heart of any and all decisions,” said SCG Chief Executive Officer Sandy Boyd, “Advocates in the field want to make sure MAA decisions are equitable and the views of students, families and educators are heeded.”

This Action Accelerator is an outgrowth of SCG’s pilot launch of the model last school year in which 12 statewide education advocacy organizations developed projects to center equity, community voices and sound research on reforming state systems for measuring, assessing and improving student outcomes. Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL) led a project to provide new legislators and state board of education members with unbiased information on the steps Louisiana had taken over the past decade to continuously improve student performance and what support the state would need to continue to provide to build on those efforts. In

launching a new project this school year to provide state leaders and families across the state with information and guidance on each of Louisiana’s 70 school districts reopening plans, CABL President, Barry Erwin, said, “We were pleased with the results of our participation in SCG’s pilot Action Accelerator last year. We are thankful to be able to work with SCG again this year to analyze the school reopening plans of parishes across the state and provide that information to decision makers from the statehouse to the kitchen table to see to it that no matter how schooling is organized in this trying time, that student learning is first and foremost.”

The six participating organizations span the nation, five of them having participated in last year’s pilot, and each has devised a new project to gather information from school systems and stakeholders to provide policy recommendations on centering equity and focusing on student outcomes for schools, grappling with the challenging circumstances of this unique school year. The organizations participating in the Action Accelerator are Expect More Arizona, Advance Illinois, Council for a Better Louisiana, The Education Trust—New York, Ohio Excels, and Tennessee SCORE. To learn more about these organizations and their projects, [click here](#).

As Dia Bryant from The Education Trust—New York said about their supported project, “We see an opportunity, given the heightened awareness of our state leaders to systemic inequities driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and the demands for social and racial justice from communities, to push for greater equity and see that we are meeting the needs of all students.”

The SCG MAA Action Accelerator is supported by the Walton Family Foundation. It will continue through the fall, providing advocates with a treasure trove of information to bring to school, district, system and governmental leaders to ensure they prioritize family and community voice in decision making this school year, and beyond.

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*Seek Common Ground, a New Venture Fund project, provides funding, networking and research to statewide and community-facing groups to drive local solutions to complex social challenges through its Action Accelerator. Serving as an intermediary between national organizations and philanthropy to reach and empower state and local efforts and coalitions, SCG seeks to scale up and replicate accomplishments to showcase successes and increase the body of knowledge on what works in social change movements. Learn more at [seekcommonground.org](https://seekcommonground.org).*

