

Focus on the Frontlines in Education

Closing the
opportunity
gap in America's
underserved
communities



The Stark Reality

Chronic absenteeism and teacher attrition both play a part in widening the very real opportunity gap in our most underserved communities.

- Under-resourced students often choose to skip class to avoid the [social stigma related to a lack of basic essentials](#).
- School-age [girls must overcome the additional barrier of lacking feminine hygiene products](#), which increases the likelihood that they will miss school.

Absenteeism is a key indicator of a student's likelihood to drop out of high school.

- Research across the country shows that chronic absenteeism is as strong a predictor of high school graduation rates as grade point average¹ and course failures, and that attendance is a better predictor of graduation rates than eighth-grade test scores.²

¹ In a study of Baltimore Public Schools

² Per St. Paul Public Schools

Underserved communities across America are fighting an uphill battle to deliver quality education to all students. Chronic absenteeism and rampant teacher burnout combine to keep students from receiving the education they need to help them achieve their full potential. We believe access to basic school and hygiene supplies is one way to make a difference in this fight. With proper resources at their disposal, students find the confidence to return to school day in and day out. Teachers, too, are empowered to do their best work when they are supported by the resources they need to maintain effective, equitable learning environments.



Teacher burnout and attrition are devastating to student potential.

- Teachers are the number one in-school influence on student achievement, but [schools struggle to find and retain highly qualified individuals](#) to teach. And this struggle is tougher in high-poverty schools.³
- It's well known that teachers spend their own money to buy supplies needed for their students and classes. However, a recent KINF survey revealed that, with the average teacher salary, [teachers are spending up to two paychecks each year](#) to purchase supplies.

Both factors are more prevalent in underserved communities, creating an opportunity gap with lifetime repercussions.

- Research shows that [students from low-income families dropped out of high school at twice the rate](#) of higher-income families in 2017. Teach for America also reports that 78% of low-income students graduated high school on time in 2017, compared to 85% of students overall.
- Furthermore, [children of color are more than two times more likely to be born into poverty](#), and they constitute nearly half of all children in American public schools.
- Rate of achievement, evidenced as early as fourth grade, appears to be a powerful predictor of high school and college graduation rates, [as well as lifetime earnings](#).⁴



The need is clear. Equipping students and teachers with the tools they need to succeed is a top priority—and your donation can help do just that.

While there are many factors that contribute to issues of absenteeism and teacher attrition, there is one fundamental barrier that we can help eliminate—the lack of necessary resources.

[95%](#) of our educators report that access to basic school supplies helped them create an equitable learning environment.

Additionally, access to resources made a measurable impact on students' interest in learning ([77%](#)), self esteem ([78%](#)), class participation ([83%](#)) and class preparedness ([93%](#)).



The resources we provide matter because they represent belonging and ownership of a student's education and a teacher's career. They empower students to recognize that they have choices, and to make those choices for themselves and their futures. They bolster teachers supporting students who are struggling to break the cycle of poverty. They also help to remove the social stigma and psychological burden of need.

³ The teacher shortage is real, large and growing, and worse than we thought equitable classrooms.

⁴ McKinsey and Company (2009) The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools

We address the opportunity gap in three key ways:



We provide the supplies **teachers** need to be successful, so they can focus on their students and not on the burden of finding funding or paying for supplies themselves.



We provide **students** with the tools they need to succeed, so they have the confidence and support needed to keep attending school.



We provide **manufacturers and retailers** with a way to turn excess supply of needed resources into a business-friendly solution that contributes positively to communities in need.

Through our network of 42 well-established resource centers across the country, we have provided over \$1 billion in product over the last 25 years. In fact, each year we provide over \$100 million in resources, and last year we served over 5 million students and over 200,000 teachers.

We continue to pilot new and innovative solutions with school systems and private partners across the country, but it is only with the support of partners like you that we can continue to do this work.

With your continued support and partnership, we can give students the confidence to keep coming to school. We can empower great teachers to continue teaching in the communities that need them most. And we can break the tangible barriers holding these underserved communities in a cycle of poverty and limited potential.

It's more than just a backpack.

