

## RESOURCES

### 11. Encourage more public dollars for research on student experience and the mobilization of these research insights in education; rely on philanthropy for a targeted, complementary role

Research funding affects [which scholars remain in the field and what knowledge we have to draw on](#) to inform changes to education practice and policy. Most funding for education research comes from public sources, including the federal government; however, federal funding for education research has had a relatively narrow focus. For example, the [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine \(NASEM\) committee](#) tasked with producing recommendations to the federal [Institute of Education Sciences \(IES\)](#) on the future of education research noted that past education research funding from IES has favored randomized controlled trials, and largely supported [interventions focused on students](#) and measurement of student-level characteristics, particularly standardized achievement test scores and grades, which provide an incomplete picture of students' experience in school and the contextual factors that shape it.

**Public funding for education research and for the mobilization of research insights in education must place a greater emphasis on how practices, policies, and norms shape student experience** to advance the field's research knowledge base. The impact of such investments on the field will rely on **public funding bodies like IES taking up guidance offered in the NASEM report**. These recommendations include expanding the range of student outcome measures that are used, measuring "structural and contextual factors that shape student outcomes," and examining educator practice, the role of school leaders, and how "the instructional environment and interactions... shape students' learning and experience." Recommendations in this report also have implications for other federal funding sources for research on education.

Philanthropy has greater flexibility but spends far less on research than the federal government. Even when philanthropy goes through periods of more limited funding for research, which may currently be the case, **philanthropic funders have an essential role to play by investing in research and research mobilization in high-leverage ways and diversifying the scholars and scholarship funded in the field** as a whole.

[Encourage federal funding bodies to focus on student experience and adopt recommendations from the NASEM report.](#)

**Encourage federal funding bodies that support education research to place a greater emphasis on student experience in future funding calls** (e.g., make the case for a focus on student experience with key decision-makers, increase exposure to research on student experience).

**Encourage the Institute of Education Sciences and other federal funders of education research (e.g., National Science Foundation) to adopt recommendations in the NASEM report**

**that would aid the generation and use of practically relevant, interdisciplinary, and equity-centered research on student experience.** Education philanthropy and other education actors can support and augment the efforts led by individual scholars and professional societies focused on education research to encourage the uptake of the recommendations.

[Philanthropic investments for research and research mobilization should be strategically targeted and complementary to public funding.](#)

**Leverage philanthropic funders' ability to invest on [faster cycles and with more potential for flexibility](#) in the use of dollars to promote more responsive and creative work by researchers and cross-sector partnerships involving research.**

**Target funding toward researchers from historically underfunded groups**, especially scholars from racially minoritized groups, and scholars from institutions beyond those that are the highest status and best resourced. Consider investing in entities that have deep relationships, knowledge of, and credibility with such scholars and institutions and might act as potential sub-grantors.

**Invest in earlier stage ideas and [earlier career scholars](#) focused on student experience.** Scholars in the SERN community have noted that these investments can build out their ideas and experience in ways that can make them more competitive for future public funding. In doing so, take steps to identify and counter practices that privilege certain types of scholarship and scholars (e.g., see priority [#4](#) on elevating research on student experience by scholars of color and early career scholars).

**Expand investments to include a broader range of research methodologies**, recognizing that multiple methodological approaches and designs are necessary to generate practically relevant insights on complex issues like how education systems can transform to better support student experience.

**Invest in promising approaches to research bridging work that can serve as examples and models across a diverse range of contexts**, especially those that engage in equitable collaborations that share power and incorporate co-construction methods.

**Consider how philanthropic funders might engage with public funders to advance shared understanding and public-private partnerships** that facilitate research knowledge-building and use in the student experience field.