

FIELD-LEVEL VISION AND AGENDA

7. Advance agenda-setting and coordinated action on high-impact and high-leverage topics in education connected to student experience

The following topics garnered particular interest among the people SERN engaged for **continued agenda-setting and coordinated action** in service of improving student experience. Many researchers and organizations have been making important progress in these areas for a long time, and the field could benefit from continued investment and aligned activities across research, practice, policy, and funding.

Make an affirmative, research-based case for why K-12 and postsecondary schools should attend to student experience. Research may not convince those who are staunchly opposed, but it has a role in informing and equipping families, educators, and leaders who are open to discourse and seeking what is best for students.

Demonstrate that institutions have the ability and responsibility to improve student experience equitably (see this [example](#) for policymakers that leverages research on postsecondary institutions).

Illustrate the impact of attending to student experience on outcomes that matter to students, families, practitioners, and policymakers. Avoid perpetuating “either/or” thinking related to student experience and academic outcomes, by emphasizing that students’ experiences should be inherently valued in their own right, *and* they are important predictors of the outcomes that practitioners and policymakers are held accountable for in the current system.

Facilitate K-12 and postsecondary educators’ and system leaders’ ability to improve student experience by supporting shifts in their own practice and the structures that surround them.

Examples raised in SERN’s input gathering included:

Provide supportive, lower-stakes professional learning opportunities for educators and system leaders to understand how they can improve student experience within their

spheres of influence. Specific topics named by field actors included: instructional practice, course design, educators’ beliefs and expectations, as well as transitioning from punitive to restorative discipline approaches.

Include in assessment and accountability systems supportive conditions and outcomes valued by students, families, and communities, including those connected to student experience.

Provide greater access to and more culturally relevant and sustaining support for mental health and well-being among both students and educators. Consider how broader structures in education can be changed to better support students’ and educators’ mental health.

Advance measurement and data use on student experience (e.g., co-create new measures with students, families, communities, and educators; [reimagine how data are used and the systems around them](#)) to attend to the diverse and nuanced ways that students experience school and to inform efforts to improve practices and policies.

Contribute to [organizing, messaging, and legal work](#) that protects equity-centered policies and practices that can support student experience and the educators and administrators who are implementing them. Consider how to act as part of a broader coalition and how to leverage research in

making the case for attending to student experience and defending against politicized attacks on educational equity.

Field actors also noted that a cross-cutting, root cause connected to progress on all these priorities is a focus on resource equity in education.

Study, elevate, and encourage policies that support individuals, educational spaces, and institutions poised to have an outsized impact on student experience, especially for students, families, and communities that have been marginalized. Examples raised in SERN's input gathering included:

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority Serving Institutions
- Educators of color and Indigenous educators in K-12 and postsecondary contexts
- Ethnic studies courses and departments in K-12 and postsecondary contexts
- Collaboration between community-based youth development programs and K-12 schools