



# 2021 IMPACT REPORT

fueling teachers,  
schools & communities



**MEMPHIS  
EDUCATION**  
● ● ● fund



## WE'VE COME A LONG WAY TOGETHER



The summer of 2014 seems like it was yesterday. With momentum from Race to the Top and our nationally supported Teacher and Leader Effectiveness work, Memphis-Shelby County Schools was emerging as a district that was providing more public school options and autonomous school models, primarily driven by home-grown charter schools such as Power Center Academy in Hickory Hill and Freedom Preparatory Academy in Westwood. A promising new school turnaround mechanism was being launched to spark greater school choice and high-quality opportunities for Memphis students and families and encourage our local school district to urgently improve its lowest performing schools.

Memphis Education Fund, hailed as “Teacher Town USA,” was born from these efforts to support school and neighborhood improvement. Armed with \$125 million in commitments, we began work to fuel national school operators, ramp up the number of teachers and highly trained leaders, and establish a student-centered advocacy landscape.

Along the way, Memphis Education Fund and our community encountered challenges, welcomed national partners, and, most importantly, persevered for those 40,000 students that needed us the most. And while we set an ambitious goal to move our bottom 5% schools to the top 25% in five years, we laid the foundation to re-imagine the delivery of 21st century instruction, to accelerate student achievement, and to cultivate one of the most impressive local advocacy coalitions in the country. We didn’t sit on the sidelines; we rolled up our sleeves and demonstrated the Memphis “grit and grind” representative of our beautiful community.

**But there’s still much more work to do...**



“

We didn't sit on the sidelines; we rolled up our sleeves and demonstrated the Memphis "grit and grind" representative of our beautiful community.



# PROGRESS HAS BEEN A PROCESS...

“ As a parent advocacy organization, we stand WITH Memphis Education Fund in its efforts to improve educational opportunities for our children. Their work continues to seek out and consider parents’ voices. That type of REAL engagement is critical for future success for all.

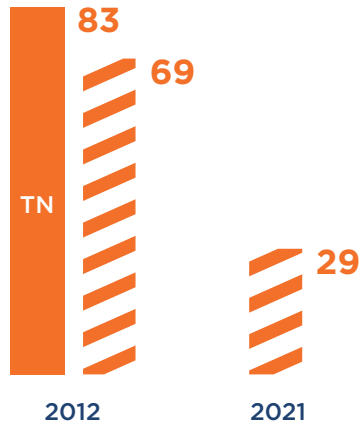
— SARAH CARPENTER  
THE MEMPHIS LIFT



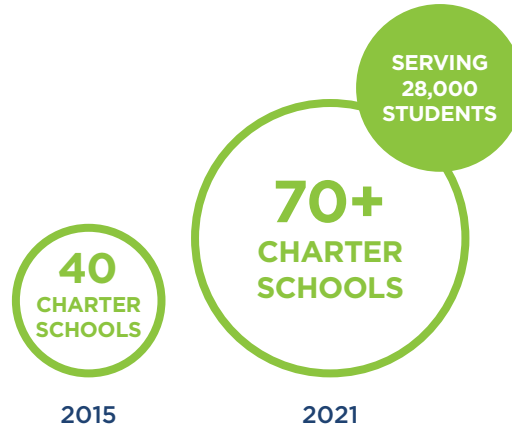
## So here's what's important to remember:

### LOW-ACHIEVING PRIORITY SCHOOLS ELIGIBLE FOR STATE TAKEOVER IN MEMPHIS & SHELBY COUNTY

Number of Schools in the Bottom 5%



### GROWTH IN HIGH POTENTIAL PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTIONS IN MEMPHIS



When the first list of low-achieving priority schools eligible for state takeover was released in 2012, Memphis and Shelby County had 69 out of the 83 schools across the state with student achievement levels ranked in the bottom 5%. Today, Memphis Education Fund has helped narrow that number of schools to 29. And the number of improved seats includes over 38,000 new seats in autonomous schools.

In 2015, there were only 40 charter schools disparately operating across a handful of neighborhoods.

Now, nearly every neighborhood in the city has either a proven, high potential operator with growing feeder patterns of innovative, diverse school models or a fast growing neighborhood public school option. Memphis now has over 70 charter schools serving about 28,000 students — nearly one-quarter of all public school students in a city of 119,000 students.

Memphis Education Fund has helped to establish a true portfolio district with real parent choice—with a comprehensive and interactive Memphis School Guide that allows parents and families to evaluate multiple school options, as well as easy-to-understand individual learning plans for all students.



**BUT THE POLICY AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
WINS CANNOT BE  
UNDERSTATED**

At both the state and local levels, Memphis Education Fund has helped to pass key legislation and district policy that holds operators and districts more accountable, while also supporting school improvement and greater choice for students and families.

The work of Memphis Education Fund and its advocacy coalition has led to:



The establishment of a recurring State Facilities Fund that allocates resources directly to charter schools to mitigate their operating expenses related to building infrastructure



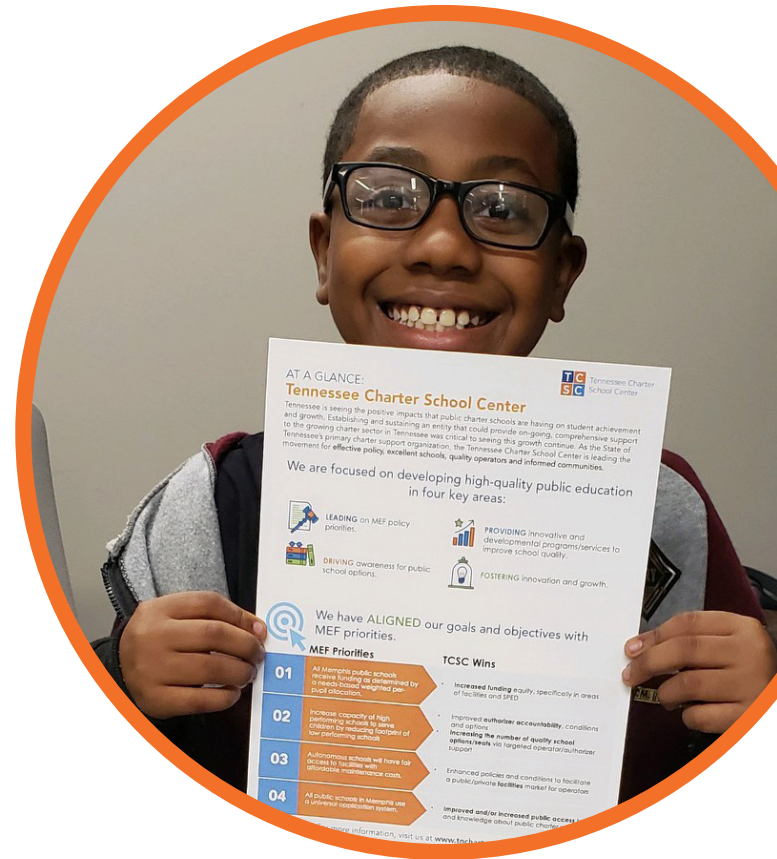
Tennessee's State Charter School Commission that can independently authorize high quality, high potential charter operators to serve students in any neighborhood



The formation of a Charter School Compact Policy that governs consistent practices and allocation of resources to charter school operators that are currently serving 24% of the public school student population



And while Memphis Education Fund's legislative and policy enhancements have paved the way for schools, teachers, and leaders to more effectively and efficiently deliver improved academic instruction to students, we must also acknowledge the tireless efforts to support and develop our community-based leadership with communities of practice and national learning visits to inform their decision making





# TALENT AND INNOVATION HAVE CATALYZED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



**3,000**  
EDUCATORS



**\$50M**  
INVESTMENTS



**COMMITMENT  
TO START-UP  
INITIATIVES &  
INNOVATIONS**

Memphis now has a constellation of talent partners that have yielded over 3,000 educators committed to serving the students of Memphis and Shelby County.

As part of our \$50 million investment in Shelby County, Memphis Education Fund has scaled and stabilized the presence of nationally-proven organizations such as Teach For America, New Leaders, and Relay Graduate School of Education.

These investments also led to cutting-edge, game-changing commitments to start-up initiatives such as ManUp, an organization training Black male teachers, and partnerships with long-standing community pillars such as the University of Memphis RiverCity Partnership to ensure a pool of diverse, homegrown talent.

The old adage “it takes a village” couldn’t be truer than in Memphis; and we believe our consistent, laser focus on PEOPLE, and, in particular, people committed to the texture and culture of Memphis has been one of our game-changing principles.





**WE'VE DEMONSTRATED  
AGILITY AND LEADERSHIP IN  
THE FACE OF A PANDEMIC AND  
LEARNING LOSS CRISIS**

*SUPPORT NOW*

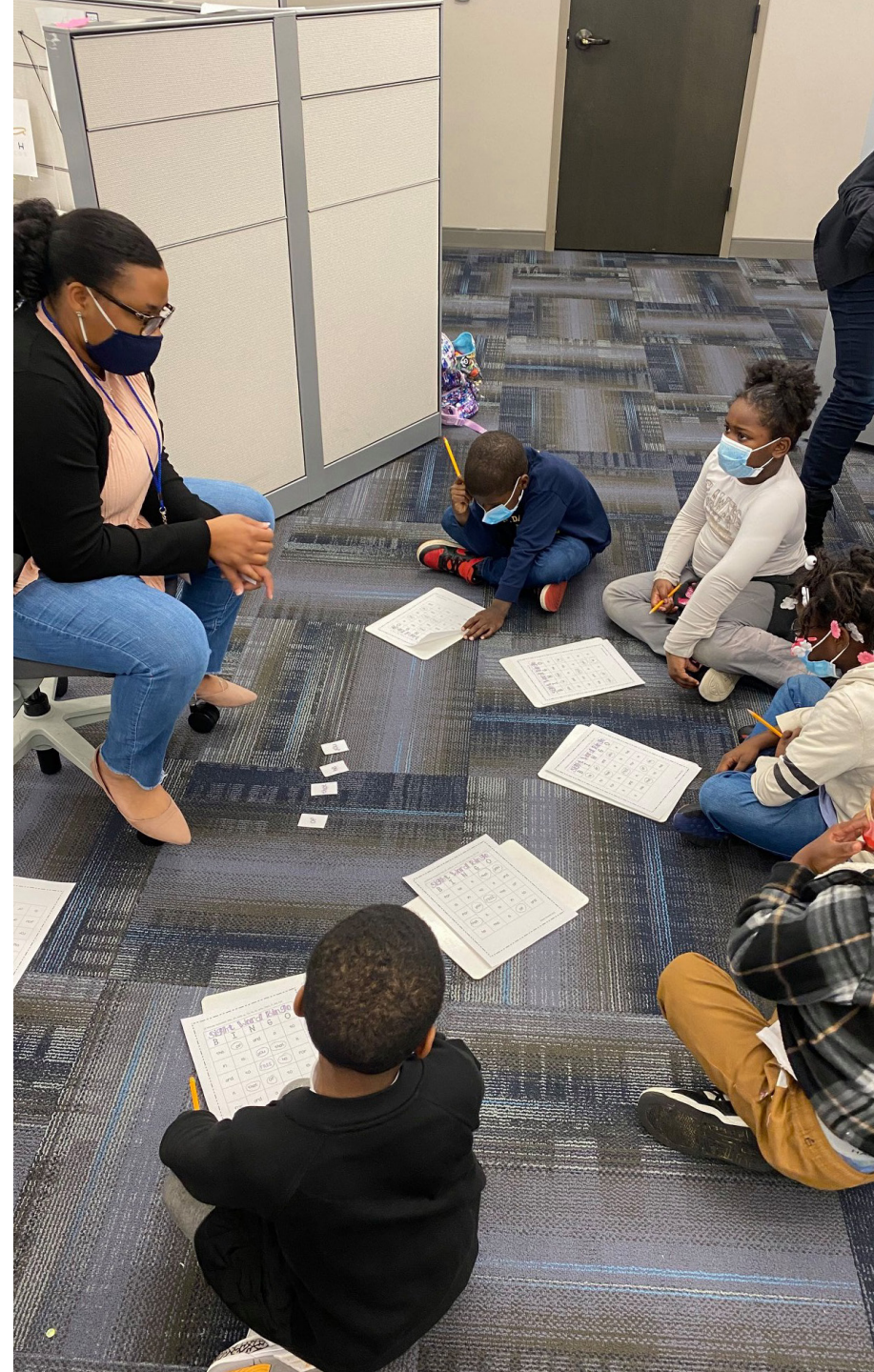
2020 unfolded as a year like none other we've ever seen. But, in partnership with our corporate, philanthropic, and community partners, Memphis Education Fund demonstrated leadership and compassion to support the families of the students we have faithfully served since our inception.

Our Family Grant Program, South Memphis Tech Project, and Virtual Learning Center were all quickly deployed to mitigate distractions and keep students learning as they (and their families) adapted to a learning environment that was restricted to remote learning and reduced direct student-teacher interactions.

We deployed nearly  
**\$2 MILLION**  
in total resources across every  
neighborhood in the city.

We directly supported  
**OVER 10,000**  
students and families in 2020.

Supporting students and families through the pandemic reminded us not only of the dramatic impacts of learning loss due to long gaps in classroom instruction but also the need to take a holistic, community-based approach to overcoming the academic hurdles and social barriers that our Memphis students face.





# BUT THERE IS STILL SO MUCH TO DO...

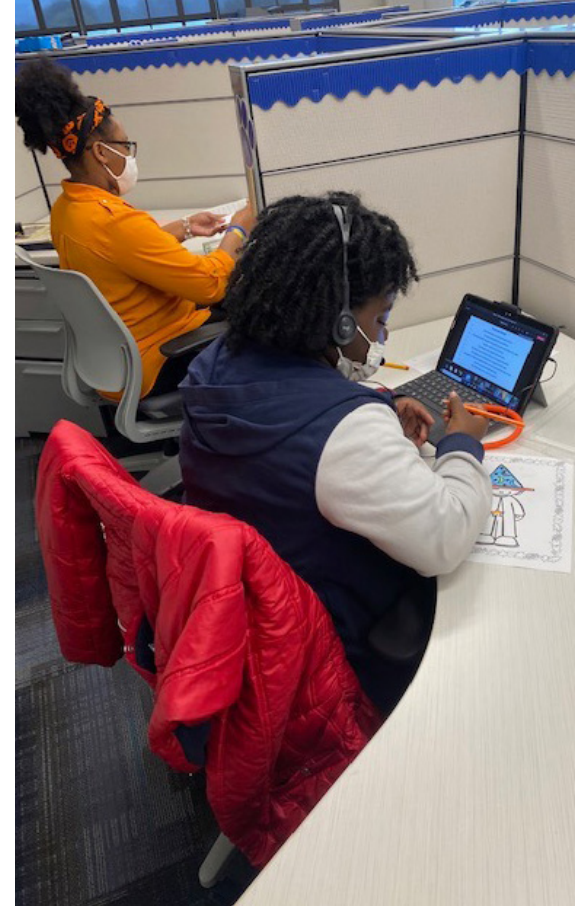
“ Memphis needs an intentional, transformative strategy to improve public K-12 education. Our funding body proudly supports Memphis Education Fund - an entity with experienced leadership, a thorough knowledge of the educational landscape, and a proven track record of coordinating advocacy and sparking innovation.

— MEMPHIS PHILANTHROPIC LEADER



## And so what's next?

Memphis Education Fund remains relentlessly focused on improving student outcomes and continues to take bold steps moving forward. It will take fearless, cage-busting leadership and the leverage of public and private resources, but we know we have the right framework and foundation for future success.



Moving forward, here are our key priorities:

1

Increase funding for Tennessee students with a more equitable, transparent funding formula

2

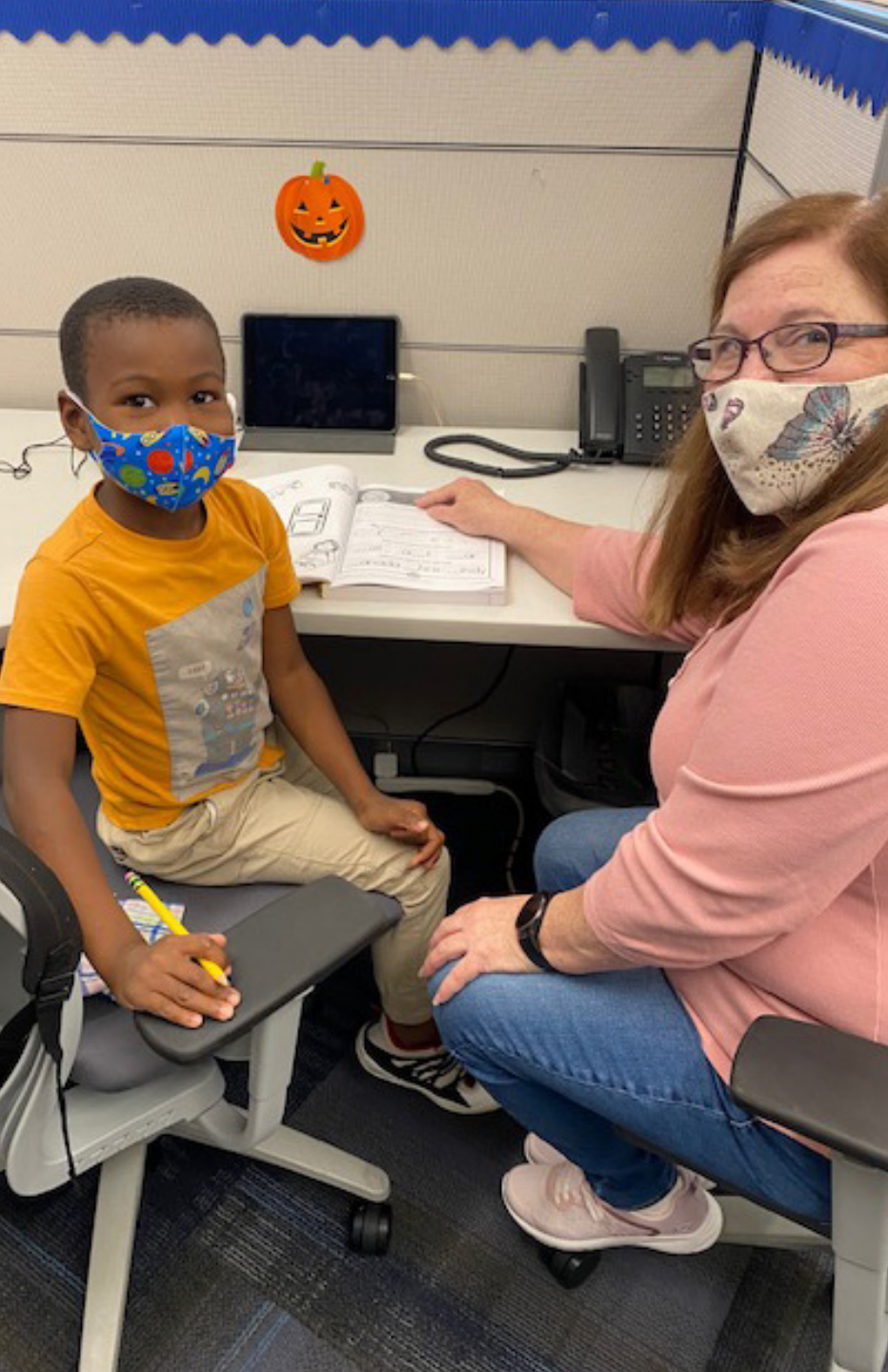
High quality school choice in every Memphis neighborhood, with every autonomous school above 25% in Reading and Math proficiency

3

Increase learning time and instructional quality for all Memphis students

4

Provide no-cost public facilities to proven and high potential autonomous school operators in Memphis



Our goal is to make Memphis the North Star — the brightest and most promising urban center in the country. To do so, our work over the next decade will be focused on efforts to achieve the following benchmarks:



Per-pupil spending in Tennessee ranks in the top **30%** of the country



Add **15,000** high-quality autonomous school seats



A 21st century balanced calendar with the equivalent of **1,600** enhanced instructional hours per calendar year



Memphis as **top 10** urban district in nationally-normed Math & Reading assessment

**INVEST NOW**

## A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



As President and CEO of Memphis Education Fund, I take great pride in being from Memphis, and leading the advocacy and community investment in systemic school improvement. And as one of the few Black leaders in the country helping this advocacy and philanthropic work, I also take great pride in the promise of **OUR** future generations.

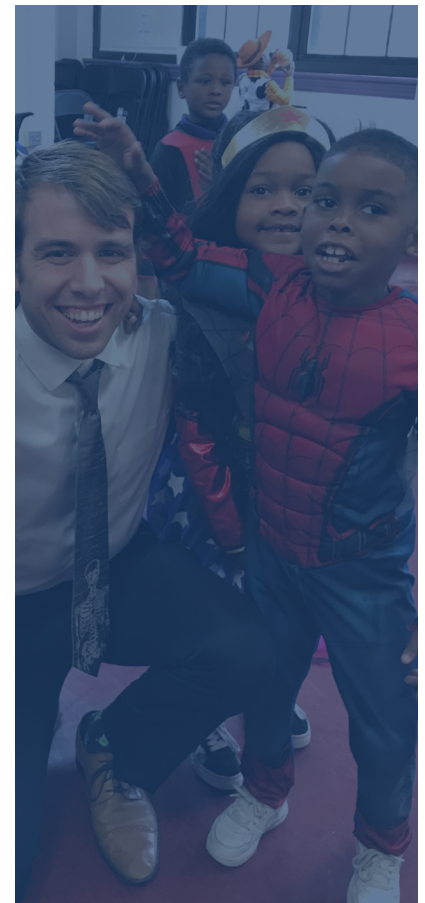
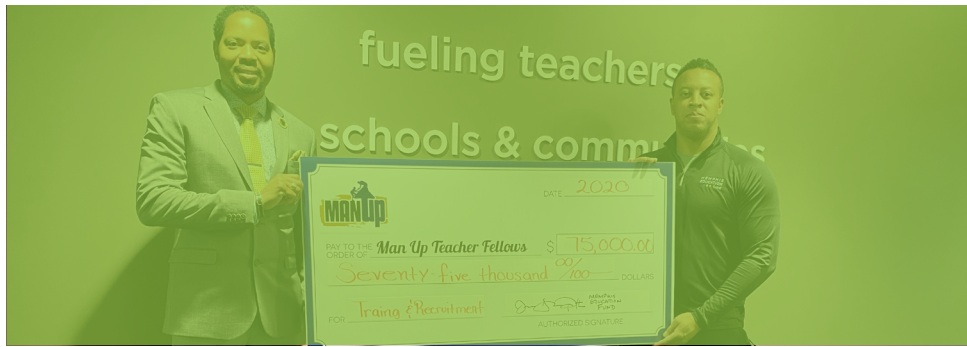
We can and will succeed on behalf of our children. We cannot do it alone. We need your support and the persistent support of our community. By working together, I know **WE WILL WIN!**

With love and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Terence Patterson".

J. Terence Patterson





**Memphis Education Fund**

---

1350 Concourse Avenue  
 Suite 434  
 Memphis, TN 38104  
 (901) 435-0400  
[memphiseducationfund.org](http://memphiseducationfund.org)  
[@memphisedufund](https://www.instagram.com/memphisedufund)

