



2025

ANNUAL REPORT



*pathways to
possibility*

GENNEXTMSP.ORG

Contents

2	Letters from Leadership <i>A Shared Table in Uncertain Times</i> <i>Making the Invisible Visible</i>
6	Early Childhood Quality & Access
8	Teacher Diversity & Teaching Diverse Learners
10	Postsecondary Preparation & Persistence
12	Pathways to Prosperity
14	Community-Level Outcomes
16	Social & Emotional Development
17	Pathways to Partnership
18	Our Network
19	Our Funders

A Shared Table in Uncertain Times

Generation Next continues to serve as a shared table where partners make sense of change together, align around data, and stay grounded in what students and families need most. As Co-Chairs of the Generation Next Leadership Council, we have seen firsthand how intentional convening brings greater collective power and impact.



Throughout 2025, Generation Next convened learning spaces where systems leaders examined challenges facing our schools and the partners who support them, and built shared understanding by using data as a common reference point. We lifted up promising work underway in Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS), including expanded literacy efforts, deepened college and career pathways, and amplified efforts to elevate student voice in decision-making. This all took place as schools and community-based organizations were making real-time decisions amid budget constraints, policy shifts, and growing concern about long-term sustainability.

Through collaborative work, the Generation Next Leadership Council identified belonging as something that must be intentionally created—through representation, safety, visibility, and relationships—and reminded us that **belonging is vitally important to the health and success of our students.**

To lift up this value, our coalition shared youth-reported social and emotional development data from the *Minnesota Student Survey*. In 2025, nearly 9,000 Minneapolis and Saint Paul students responded to the survey, the highest in nearly a decade (read more on page 16).

What stood out in 2025 was the contrast: even during a year marked by uncertainty and division, Minneapolis & Saint Paul recorded our highest percentage ever (64%) of students reporting a *Sense of Belonging*. At the same time, those experiences vary substantially across student groups. This report explores those findings in greater depth and reinforces our shared responsibility to sustain these gains, especially for students who are not experiencing that acceptance.

Above all, we are proud that this coalition continues to emphasize the importance of standing together during moments of instability—ensuring that students, families, educators, and community organizations are not navigating these challenges alone. This is a defining strength of the Generation Next model: it allows us to **move beyond isolated efforts and work as a connected ecosystem on behalf of young people in the Twin Cities.**

As we look to the year ahead, we are encouraged by the commitment of partners across sectors who continue to show up with humility, curiosity, and determination. Even amidst chaotic change and unprecedented uncertainty, the Generation Next coalition has demonstrated what it means to stay focused on students, families, and our broader communities.

Thank you to all who contribute to Generation Next. We are proud to serve alongside you.

JACKIE STATUM ALLEN
Program Operations Director, Bush Foundation

DR. LISA SAYLES-ADAMS
Superintendent, Minneapolis Public Schools




Generation Next Leadership Council Co-Chairs



Making the Invisible Visible

The past year brought unprecedented upheaval in federal actions, policy, and funding—with immediate and lasting impacts on young people across Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Through it all, Generation Next continues to focus on understanding who is being left behind, the barriers they face, and what it will take for our cross-sector coalition to deliver stronger outcomes for all. This is the core of our collective impact role: to make the invisible visible and support coordinated action across systems.

To do this, partners across our coalition continue to lift up systemic deficits and link up local assets with Generation Next connecting, supporting, and amplifying those efforts.

-  In 2025, we supported administrators and students from our local community colleges sharing and learning about effective models of student engagement, belonging, and retention.
-  We supported the expansion of Elevate Teaching’s Youth As Champions initiative in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul Public Schools.
-  We continue to monitor and educate about the impact of early care and education, through disruptions in federal funding and a large one-time investment of state resources.

Generation Next has long served as a hub for Minneapolis and Saint Paul (MSP)—a place where partners can see patterns, elevate insights, and understand how students are experiencing our youth-serving systems. Our MSP Education Equity Data Hub (more on page 17) brings together both the technical and relational aspects of data integration to build more accessible, transparent, and community-driven data and data practices. Using the *Six Conditions for Systems Change* framework, coalition members identified clear strategies for activating data for practice, policy, and resource shifts:

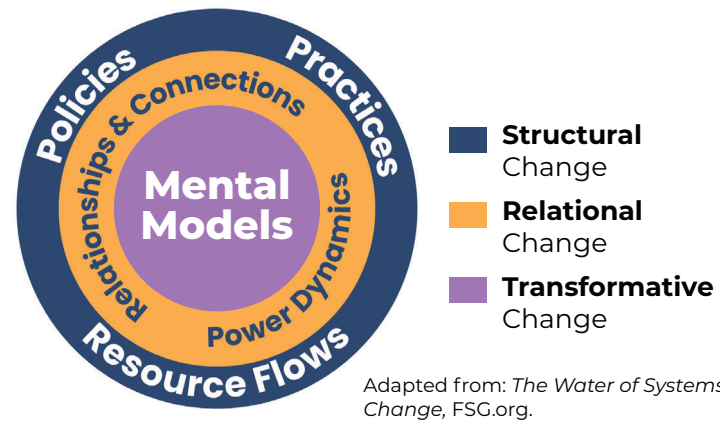
- ★ Linking fragmented data and connecting it with student experience
- ★ Ensuring data use is transparent and culturally relevant
- ★ Strengthening relationships so that data can build trust and lead to meaningful change

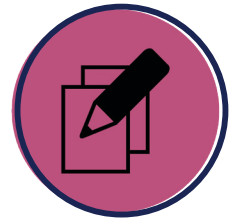
When we consider our national network StriveTogether’s bold challenge to “put 4 million more young people on a path to economic mobility” across the nation, our shared contribution is clear here in Minneapolis and Saint Paul: to **see all our young people and take action for their success, starting early and staying with them on their learning journey to and through early career.** By bringing data into conversation with community, we continue to build a unified network to ensure that every young person in the Twin Cities belongs and has clear pathways to success.

JOE MUNNICH
Executive Director,
Generation Next



Six Conditions of Systems Change





Early Childhood Quality & Access

Generation Next prioritizes equitable access to high-quality early childhood education (ECE) for all families in the Twin Cities. By addressing systemic barriers, we work to ensure that children—regardless of income, race, or zip code—receive the early learning opportunities they need to thrive.

How Families Navigate a Fragmented Early Childhood System

Throughout 2025, Generation Next worked to better understand what families experience when navigating early learning systems, particularly amid federal funding delays and cuts. Together, we delved into the complexity of scholarship pathways, the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and Head Start requirements, and the capacity constraints on families in navigating Minnesota’s mixed delivery early childhood system.

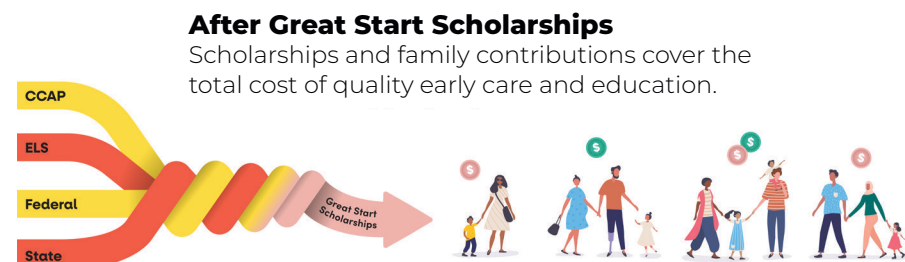
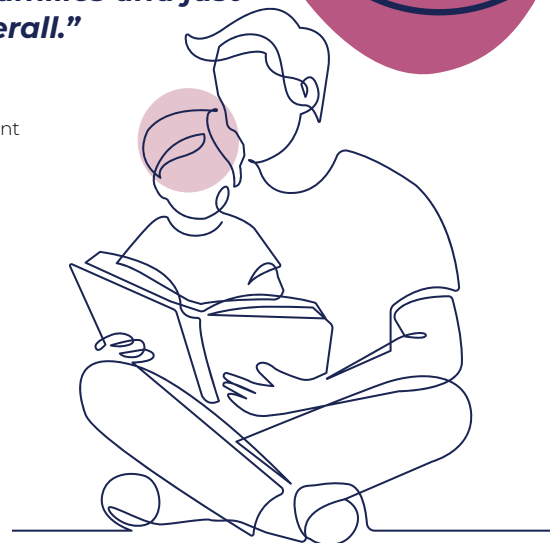
Building on lessons from past policy efforts, the Project Team looked closely at how early childhood programs — such as CCAP, Early Learning Scholarships, and federal and state funding—interact across a mix of funding sources and requirements. We highlighted both the opportunities and challenges of coordinating funding across programs, and what clearer alignment could mean for creating a more effective and sustainable system for children, families, and providers. At our Annual Leadership Retreat in 2025, ThinkSmall shared about the WeVision Early Education Initiative, which developed

recommendations on how to “streamline licensing, elevate the ECE profession, and improve quality assurance—not by tweaking the system, but by transforming it.”

When Minnesota transitioned to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) in July 2024, it brought new opportunities to better align funding, scholarship programs, and early learning guidance. Generation Next is focused on what clearer coordination could look like in practice, and what it would take for families to experience those changes in their lives.

“The agency is really designed to create a sustainable public face for children’s issues in state government... trying to ease access and navigation for families and just improve services overall.”

TIKKI BROWN
DCYF Commissioner
Generation Next 2025 Annual Event



Visual provided by ThinkSmall.

What the Data Show About Quality, Affordability & Access

Generation Next also examined how the language used to describe “quality” and “access” is understood by families, noting that definitions across organizations and communities are not always aligned or clear. At our 2025 Annual Event, which brought together over 90 education leaders, we shared how system fragmentation shapes day-to-day decisions for families in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. To address systemic gaps, we worked with partners in our coalition to explain affordability and access challenges in clear, accessible language.

Building on our 2024 local impact study of the Great Start proposal, Generation Next spotlighted findings in “Increasing Access to High-Quality Early Care & Education,” which showed the impact on families in local neighborhoods and communities around the state, who often pay well above the 7% affordability benchmark for child care, with infant care on average costing more than tuition at the University of Minnesota.

CHILD CARE CALCULATOR



The Think Small child care calculator estimates what a family would pay for child care if the Minnesota Legislature invested the resources necessary to meet its child care affordability goal.

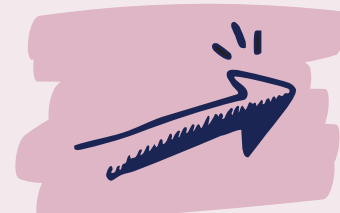


FOR MORE DATA...

Visit the Community-Level Outcomes on page 14 or use the QR code to access the Generation Next Data Center.



pathways to progress



2026 Priorities Within the Generation Next Ecosystem

Generation Next coalition members identified several collective actions to strengthen early childhood quality and access:

- ★ Strengthen navigation supports and align communication across scholarship, CCAP, and Head Start pathways
- ★ Continue improving the quality and consistency of early childhood data
- ★ Support our partners through an ever-changing policy and funding landscape
- ★ Clarify system roles and messaging so families can more easily access information about early care and education in Minnesota
- ★ Connect early childhood work with broader PK–3 alignment efforts across districts
- ★ Build shared narratives and messaging about early childhood quality and access in partnership with our Project Team and the full Generation Next coalition



Teacher Diversity & Teaching Diverse Learners

Generation Next prioritizes fostering diverse and sustainable teacher pathways to support the needs of all students in the Twin Cities. By connecting stakeholders, amplifying existing efforts, and addressing systemic barriers, we aim to ensure that teachers of color and Indigenous educators are supported, valued, and empowered to thrive in their careers.

Understanding the Journey of Educators

Generation Next brought together our Teacher Diversity & Teaching Diverse Learners Project Team to draw on partner insights, research, and lived experience to better understand the teaching profession as a connected journey—from exploration through career support.

Research from the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement (CAREI) Teaching Pathways Study and the Department of Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development (OLPD) provided new insights into the experiences

of Black, Brown, and Indigenous teaching candidates across high school, higher education, and early employment that informed our work throughout the year.

The *Teaching Pathways* study, along with district updates, *Youth as Champions* materials, and statewide mentoring and onboarding information, offered a fuller picture of how experiences influence who ultimately becomes and stays a teacher in the Twin Cities.



Bringing Students into the Teaching Conversation

Generation Next continues to expand who is engaged in conversations about the teaching profession, facilitating the participation of Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS) and Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) in Youth as Champions (YAC), a program of the Elevate Teaching movement. YAC created an intentional space for over 30 youth to reflect on the teaching profession, especially through the activities grounded in Elevate Teaching's six key messages.

Our preliminary findings from YAC show the importance of including youth voice and leadership to advance the Teacher Diversity priority area. We had an opportunity to present this work to educators from across the state at the University of Minnesota's Leading in Equity, Action, and Diversity (LEAD) Conference. At our session: "Youth as Champions to Elevate the Teaching Profession," MPS and SPPS shared how they, along with Generation Next and Elevate Teaching, are engaging students through YAC to uplift the teaching profession.

"I really love being around kids... I could help them and leave an impact on their life."



YAC STUDENT PARTICIPANT



pathways to progress



2026 Priorities Within the Generation Next Ecosystem

As this work continues, Generation Next and Project Team members plan to:

- ★ Work more closely with districts and higher education partners to create clearer expectations and supports for future educators
- ★ Build stronger, more consistent mentoring and induction experiences that reflect statewide guidance and local needs
- ★ Grow the *Youth as Champions* program to lift up early educator pathways for students across Minneapolis and Saint Paul
- ★ Strengthen the way we collect and share workforce data across the teacher journey—from teacher preparation through retention and early career supports
- ★ Stay coordinated as policy and funding landscapes shift, ensuring funders and organizations can adapt together

Elevate Teaching Six Key Messages



teaching is creative



teaching is legacy



teaching is teamwork



teaching is community building



teaching is opportunity



teaching is evolving

MORE INFORMATION ON ELEVATE TEACHING





Postsecondary Preparation & Persistence

Generation Next addresses significant disparities in postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion rates for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students. To address these disparities, we have partnered with comprehensive postsecondary transitions and persistence approaches that incorporate academic, social, personal, and institutional factors as key drivers of student success.

Belonging as a Shield and Weapon

At the 2025 National Conference on Race & Ethnicity (NCORE), the impact of our multi-year partnership with Minneapolis College and Saint Paul College became visible. Students from programs including Bridging the Equity Gap (BTEG) and the Identity, Leadership, Excellence, Accountability, and Dedication program (iLEAD) shared that their persistence was driven by a transformative sense of belonging.

By moving away from “fixing students” and toward “transforming institutions,” our partners are proving that when we align data-driven insights with identity affirmation, students no longer feel that they must navigate the system alone.

MORE THAN A FIELD TRIP: STUDENT REFLECTIONS PROVE THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE IMPACT



Why We Must Act Now

Using the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS) and institutional data, we track the transition from high school to career. The numbers reveal a stark “persistence gap” that requires immediate, systemic intervention.

Our research highlights three critical levers for success:

- **The Dual Credit Advantage:** Participation in college coursework during high school is a strong predictor of postsecondary credential completion. However, Black and American Indian males currently face the highest disciplinary rates and lowest enrollment in advanced coursework.
- **The Developmental Trap:** Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and white students placed into non-credit developmental courses in postsecondary are significantly less likely to complete a degree.
- **The Belief Gap:** At our 2025 *Practitioners’ Forum*, Dr. Calvin Hadley of Howard University identified the belief gap as the disparity between a student’s potential and the expectations held by institutional actors. This “soft bigotry of low expectations” is a primary structural barrier to persistence.



FOR MORE ON
THESE FINDINGS



Responding to What Students Need Now

Our coalition has shifted toward a dual-strategy approach: addressing institutional culture and scaling Relational Support Models inspired by the City University of New York (CUNY) Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP) and #DegreesNYC frameworks.

- **Scaling High-Touch Support:** We are moving toward “warm handoffs,” prioritizing qualitative advisor communication over simple GPA data. This ensures that a student’s career aspirations and personal challenges are understood as they transition between semesters or institutions.
- **Institutional Readiness:** Success is driven by institutional factors rather than just individual student “grit.” This includes increasing intentionality in hiring Black and Brown educators and providing implicit bias training to dismantle the barriers that lead to student attrition.

BUILDING EQUITABLE
POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS
FOR BIPOC STUDENTS PLAYBOOK

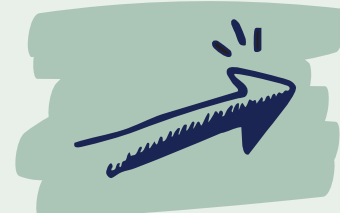


“For the first time, I didn’t have to shrink myself to fit into a classroom. My advisor didn’t just look at my GPA; they saw my housing struggle and my career dreams as part of the same story.”

iLEAD Participant



pathways to
progress



2026 Priorities Within the Generation Next Ecosystem

Generation Next is moving beyond process toward measurable outcomes. Our roadmap includes:



The 2026 Learning Exchange: We will host New York City stakeholders in Minneapolis and Saint Paul to share strategies for scaling high-dose advising and economic mobility



The Practitioners Forum: Our first in-person annual forum centers on Insights from Practice, Implementation, and Voice as foundational tools for change, turning direct student feedback into actionable campus policy



Data-Driven Advocacy: We will utilize expanded SLEDS capacity to track long-term persistence and map how specific credentials correlate to local wealth-building for BIPOC graduates



Culturally-Sustaining Programs: We will continue the growth and integration of BTEG and iLEAD across partner institutions to provide the social scaffolding necessary for students to thrive

By centering the voices of those most impacted, we aren’t just tracking students—we are clearing the path for the next generation of leaders to show up without shrinking.

pathways to prosperity

This visual illuminates the pathways of students from low-income households (eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch in K-12). Results from this group are shown in purple and green and summarized in circles.



A substantial number of students and families experience persistent economic hardship in MSP. **40% of students in this analysis were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch every year from Kindergarten through 12th grade.**



Despite persistent economic hardship, **the vast majority of these students (85%) graduated from high school, nearly the same as students overall (87%).**



While 26% of these students earned a postsecondary credential, that was lower than the overall rate of 34%.



Of the students from low-income backgrounds who did earn a postsecondary credential, **56% of them went on to earn a wage above the ALICE threshold,** higher than the percentage (47%) of all students.

Free and Reduced Lunch

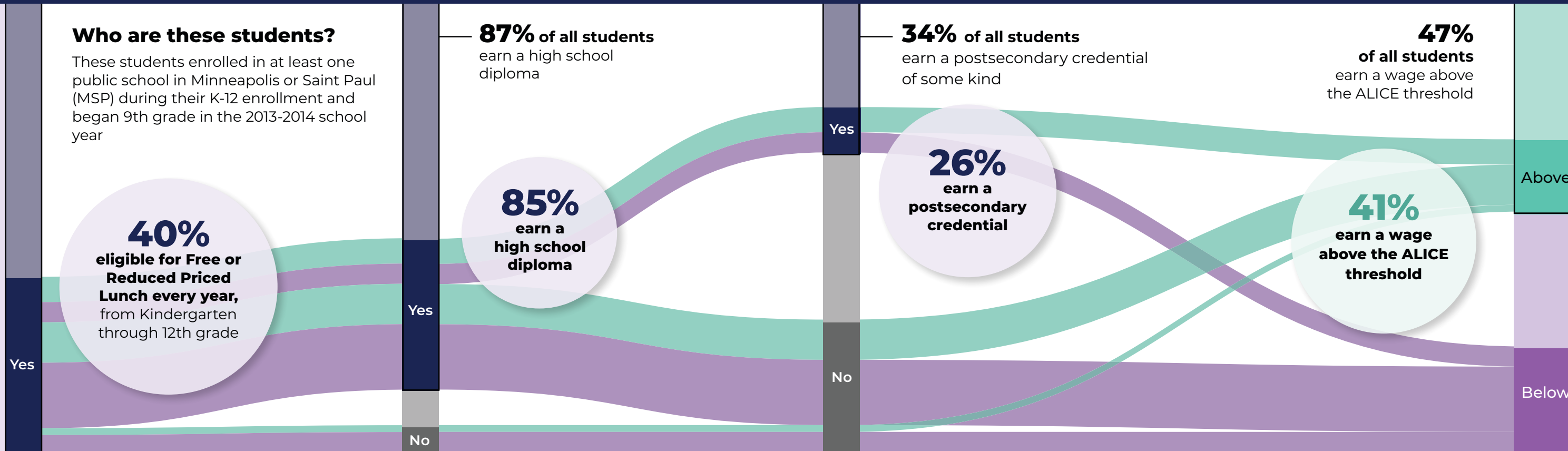
High School Graduation

Postsecondary Credential

ALICE threshold

By bringing data across systems into one shared picture, we are making the invisible visible – identifying which students are not experiencing success, where inequities are most concentrated, and what conditions are holding young people back. Through our partnership with the Minnesota Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDS), we are able to see a clear and measurable picture of our collective impact and the work still ahead. Generation Next is in a unique position where we can see ALL students across all systems and sectors in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Source: MN SLEDS, analysis by Generation Next



Community-Level Outcomes

Data Insights

Different Indicators Tell Different Parts of the Story. Each measure captures a distinct phase of the Learning Journey, often for different students and years, which is why the numbers vary across Kindergarten Readiness, Early Grade Reading, and High School Graduation.

Equity Insights Come From Looking Within Each Indicator. Comparisons are most useful when they focus on student groups within the same measure and year, rather than across different outcomes.

Data Should Be the Beginning of the Conversation, Not the Final Word. These indicators are provided to engage partners in aligned planning and action to improve outcomes for all students. Generation Next invites you to join us in collective impact—working together toward measurable, system-level improvement.

Notes

¹ Low risk indicates the highest score range. All years' results were calculated based on most recent benchmark revision.

² The school year displayed refers to the year in which students were expected to graduate (i.e., four years after enrolling in 9th grade).

³ The year displayed refers to the year students graduated from high school.

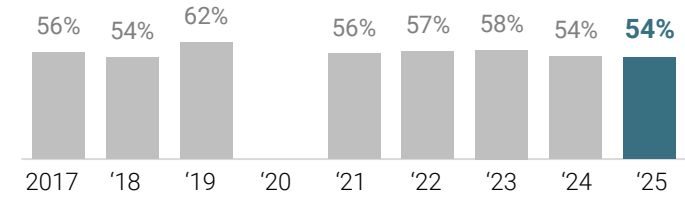
Generation Next was founded to improve student success across Minneapolis and Saint Paul (MSP). **Taken at scale, we use measures of overall success and outcomes by racial and ethnic groups to hold ourselves accountable as leaders for our community's well-being.**

Kindergarten Readiness

54% low risk¹ on early reading (Fall of K) **2025**

Source: MPS and SPSS

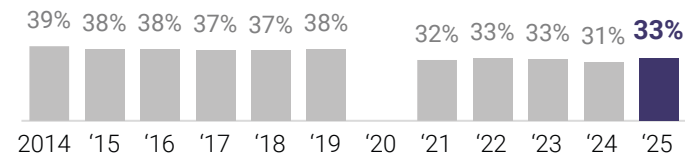
Except for Kindergarten Readiness, these results include responses from all public schools (district and charter) within the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, referred to here as MSP.



Early Grade Literacy

33% proficient on MCA Reading (3rd grade) **2025**

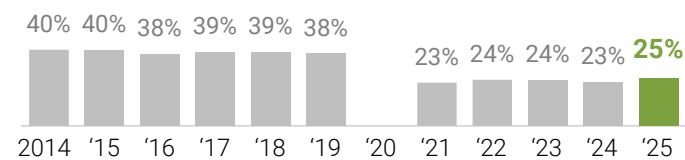
Source: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)



Middle Grade Math

25% proficient on MCA Math (8th grade) **2025**

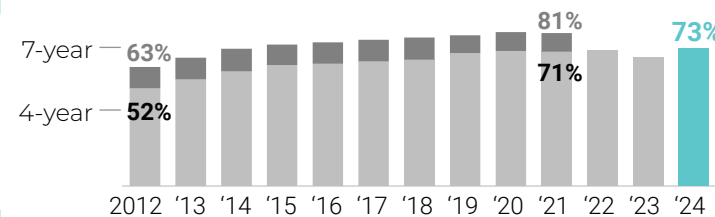
Source: MDE



High School Graduation²

73% of all class of **2024** students graduated in 4 years

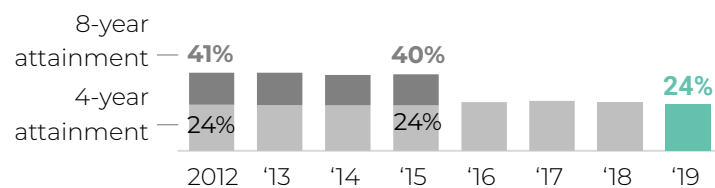
Source: MDE



Postsecondary Attainment³

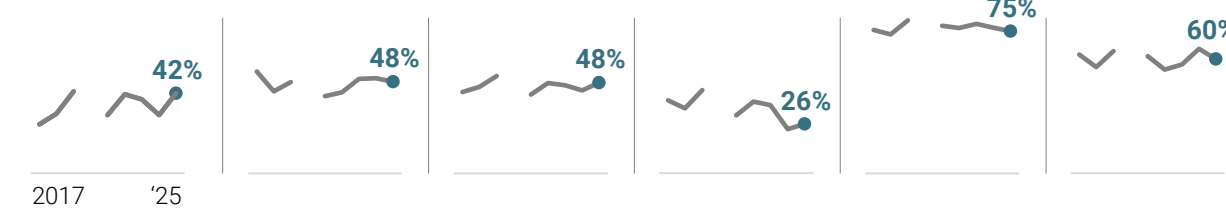
24% of all **2019** high school graduates completed a postsecondary credential within 4 years

Source: MN SLEDS, analysis by Generation Next

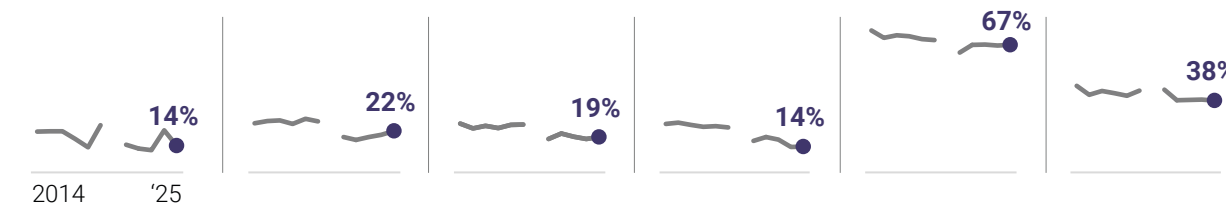


Am. Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African Am.	Hispanic/Latino	White	Multi-Racial
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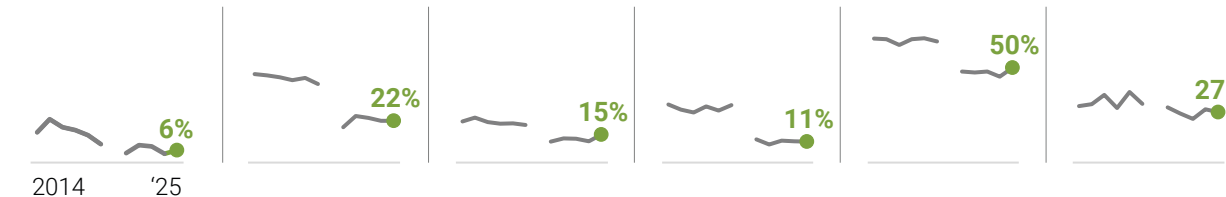
Kindergarten Readiness



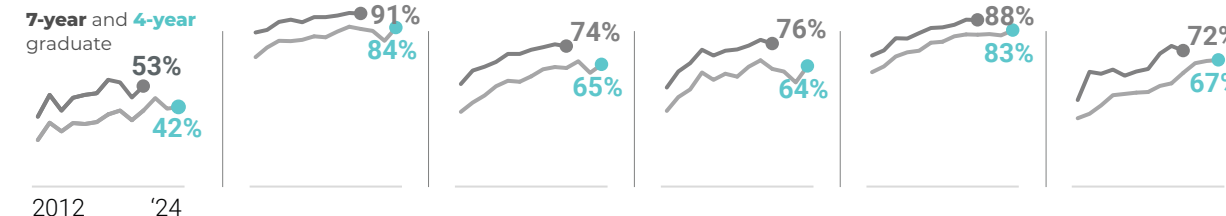
Early Grade Literacy



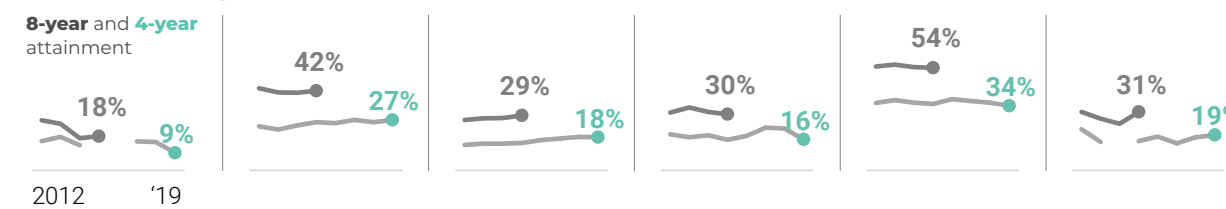
Middle Grade Math



High School Graduation



Postsecondary Attainment



Overall, MPS and SPSS Kindergartners in Fall 2025 were **similarly prepared for literacy** as 2024 Kindergartners. A slightly higher percentage of American Indian, African American, and Latino students were ready, narrowing disparities, though they still remain large.

Local MCA results were slightly higher overall for 3rd graders in reading and 8th graders in math, though still well below pre-2020 levels.

The high school graduating class of 2024 had a **higher overall rate** than in previous years, partly due to correction of a reporting error from last year.

Postsecondary attainment for MSP public high school graduates **has remained steady** overall and for all student groups.

MSP public school students reported **more social and emotional skills, supports, and sense of belonging** than in past years. See the next page for more detail on all of these indicators.

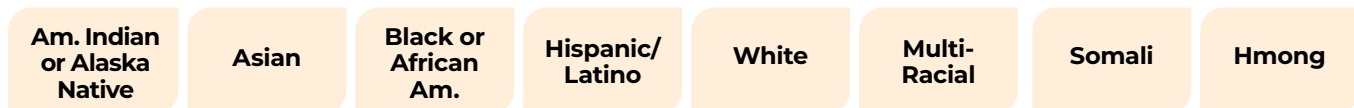
Social and Emotional Development

To explore further, including disaggregated data and numbers (Ns), visit our Data Center at gennextmsp.org/data or scan the QR code.



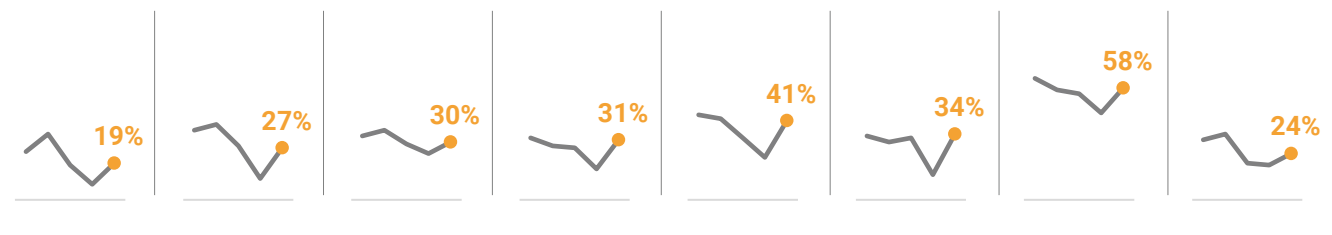
Social and Emotional Development

Generation Next recognizes the importance of social and emotional development as not just a means to academic success, but as a critical indicator in its own right.



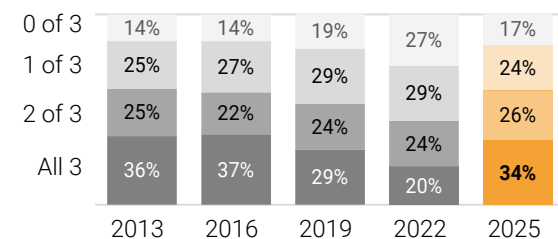
Over 1/3 of MSP 8th and 9th graders reached Equipped for Learning (3 of 3 Skills) in 2025, the highest since 2016. Percentages Equipped for Learning (3 of 3 Social and Emotional Skills) are back near or above 2019 for all racial and ethnic groups

These results include responses from all public schools (district and charter) within the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, referred to here as MSP.



Skills

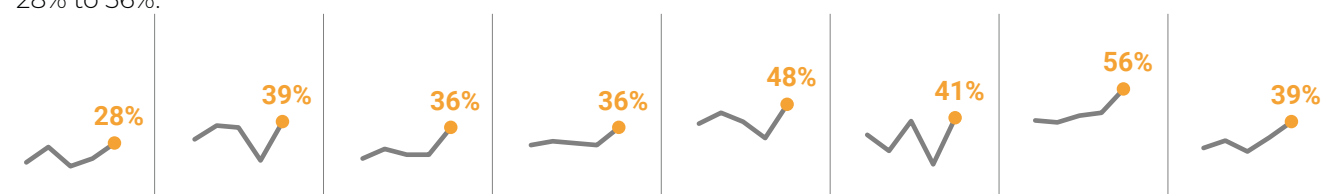
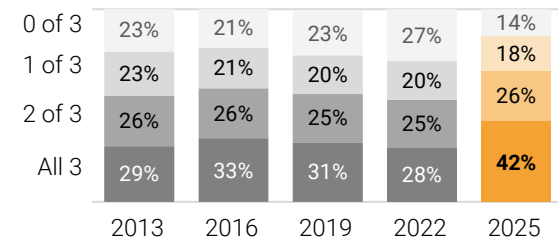
34% equipped for learning (8th & 9th grade) 2025



Supports

42% of students reporting 3 of 3 Supports (8th & 9th grade) 2025

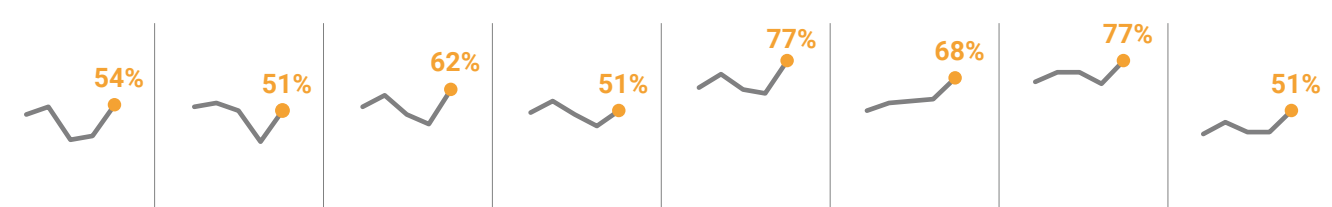
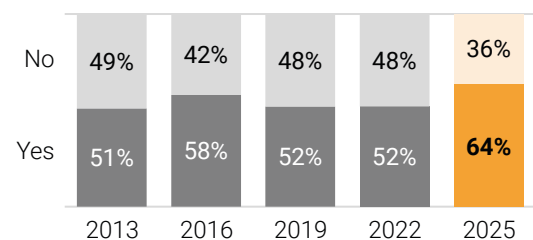
MSP 8th and 9th graders in 2025 recorded the highest percentage ever (42%) with 3 of 3 Social and Emotional Supports. Results for racial and ethnic groups reporting 3 of 3 Supports range widely, from 28% to 56%.



Sense of Belonging

64% students reporting sense of belonging (5th, 8th, 9th & 11th grades) 2025

In 2025, nearly 2/3 of surveyed MSP students responded at the Equipped level for Sense of Belonging, the highest ever. Sense of Belonging ranges from 51% to 77% among racial and ethnic groups.



Source: Minnesota Student Survey; analysis by Minnesota Youth Development Research Group. School participation in MSS has changed over the years, but analysis confirms it did not meaningfully affect variation in results.



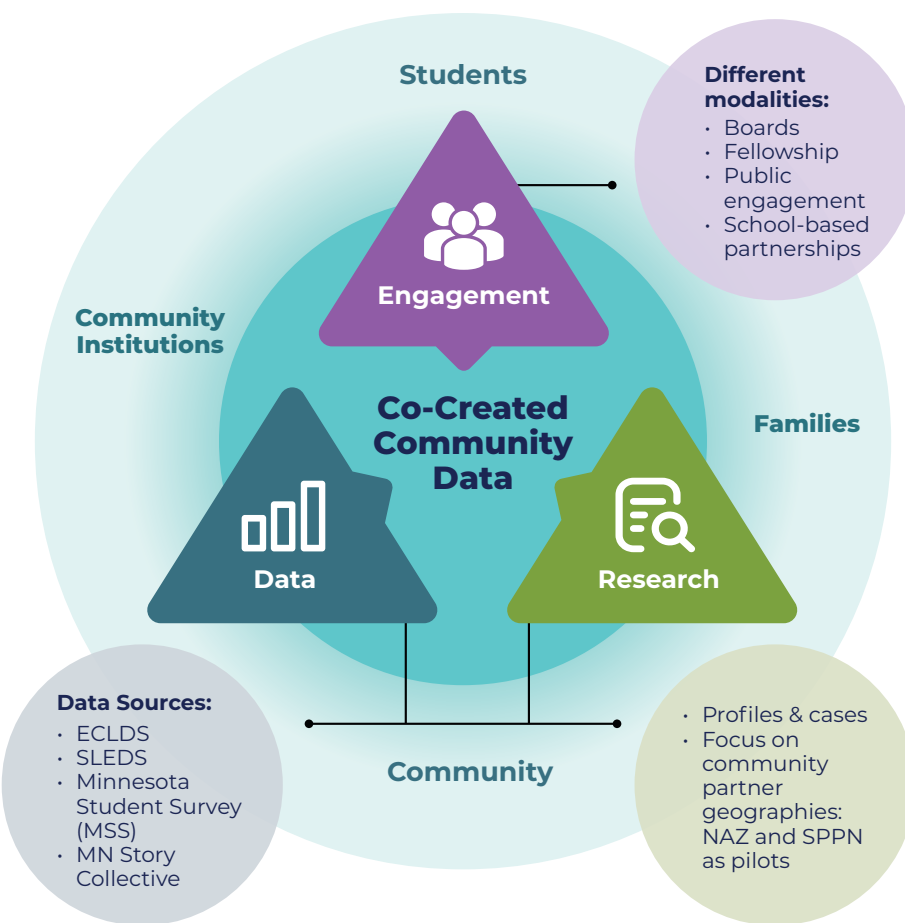
pathways to partnership

In 2025, Generation Next continued our work with the national Equity in Practice Learning Community (EiPLC), led by Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP), in partnership with the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ), Saint Paul Promise (SPP), and Wilder Research. Over the last year, our work focused on putting the idea of the MSP Education Equity Data Hub into practice.

In 2025, EiPLC partners hosted meaning-making sessions, where community participants explored existing data, talked through what it showed, and raised new questions the Data Hub could help answer to better support students and families.

The team plans to continue putting data into conversation and building a community advisory board. Generation Next remains focused on shared governance, community voice, and collaboration, recognizing that data is most useful when communities trust it and see themselves reflected in it.

Data about children, families, and communities in Minnesota belongs to the people, not to institutional bodies.



As a proud member of the Education Partnerships Coalition (EPC), Generation Next continues to work alongside eight fellow place-based organizations serving children, youth, and families across Minnesota.

In January 2025, the EPC convened more than 60 cross-sector leaders at the State Capitol for a Community Roundtable on strengthening Minnesota's education-to-workforce data systems. Generation Next Executive Director Joe Munnich served as MC as legislators, agency leaders, youth, and community partners planned how to modernize infrastructure to ensure data is accessible, secure, and actionable.



The 2025 EPC Day on the Hill brought together youth and parent/caregiver advocates from across Minnesota to meet directly with legislators and share what's happening in their communities. Together, partners supported the 2025 EPC Legislative Priorities, which reflect input from EPC's nine member communities and more than 600 partner organizations across the state.

Leadership Council

*Executive Committee members

Jackie Statum Allen*

Co-Chair

Bush Foundation

Heather Britt*

Wilder Research

Tikki Brown

MN Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)

Paul Cerkvenik

Minnesota Private College Council

Rose Chu

Elevate Teaching

Rebecca Fabunmi

City of Minneapolis

Frank Forsberg

F.P. Forsberg Consulting LLC

Sonia Gass

Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington (CAP-RW)

Danielle Grant

Achieve Twin Cities

Rabya Hassen*

Mortenson Family Foundation

Heidi Johnson

ECMC Group

Cisa Keller

Think Small

Trumanue Lindsey Jr.

Minneapolis College

Jazmine Logan

Cargill Foundation

Joel Luedtke

Phillips Family Foundation

Carlos Mariani Rosa

Minnesota Education Equity Partnership (MnEEP)

Jesse Mason

Minnesota State

Garrison McMurtrey

Ramsey County

Christa Mims

Hennepin County

Eric Moore

African American Leadership Forum (AALF)

Deidra Peaslee

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Dr. Briellen Griffin, EiPLC member and Generation Next Data Committee Chair, co-facilitated “Building More Equitable Data Practices” at the 2025 StriveTogether National Convening alongside Promise Partnership Utah and Baltimore’s Promise.



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