



SUCCESS
STORIES
IN A YEAR
WE COULD
ALL USE
SUCCESS
STORIES



OUR SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS WEREN'T JUST RESILIENT, THEY WERE HEROIC

As most ACE partner schools moved to remote learning, the classrooms kids depended on for instruction, character development, and growth were gone.

In fact, most of the activities and familiar places that gave them hope were quarantined overnight. Graduations, proms, team sports, hanging with friends—all were abruptly taken away. Moreover, school lunches, safety, social interactivity, and general support disappeared.

But, this isn't a story about how COVID-19 kept our students from pursuing their dreams. Far from it. This is the story of the continued resilience of our scholars and schools.

ACE students and schools took on these new challenges with focus and determination, and dedicated themselves to sustained, innovative learning.

Within days, our partner schools were able to pivot to new and creative ways to engage students. Gymnasiums were used to teach classes, teachers went door-to-door to offer help, and families grouped together to support one another. Our community showed its vibrancy because prior to the pandemic, ACE scholars achieved a 98% high school graduation rate, and they were not going to let that rate decrease because of COVID-19.

Our private school sector is succeeding in balancing the goals of keeping students and teachers safe while providing a quality education during these difficult times. And, despite the economic challenges faced by our families, they are making the increasingly difficult financial sacrifice to stay in their schools.

ACE FOCUSED ON COMMUNITIES IN NEED

As our communities and families faced urgent, immediate challenges:



We encouraged our donors to give to organizations addressing those challenges, such as food banks and shelters.



We developed an online toolkit for families to access needed community resources, such as health services, remote learning tools, and technology resources.



We awarded one-time \$500 cash payments to 300 families directly impacted by job loss or reduced hours as a result of the pandemic, or an inability to work due to their child's school closure.



We provided our partner schools with guidance on navigating the federal CARES Act, state grants, and other vital resources.



We made a promise to support every returning student in the fall. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, we were able to keep that promise.





THE ACE TEAM WAS COMMITTED TO SUCCESS

Our staff of over 30 dedicated professionals across eight states rallied together, refusing to allow the challenges of 2020 to prevent us from serving our families. We leaned into our values of optimism, innovation, and accountability.

The team quickly shifted to a remote working environment, innovated, and found new ways to raise money and support schools. By the end of the year, we met our original budget goals for 2020.

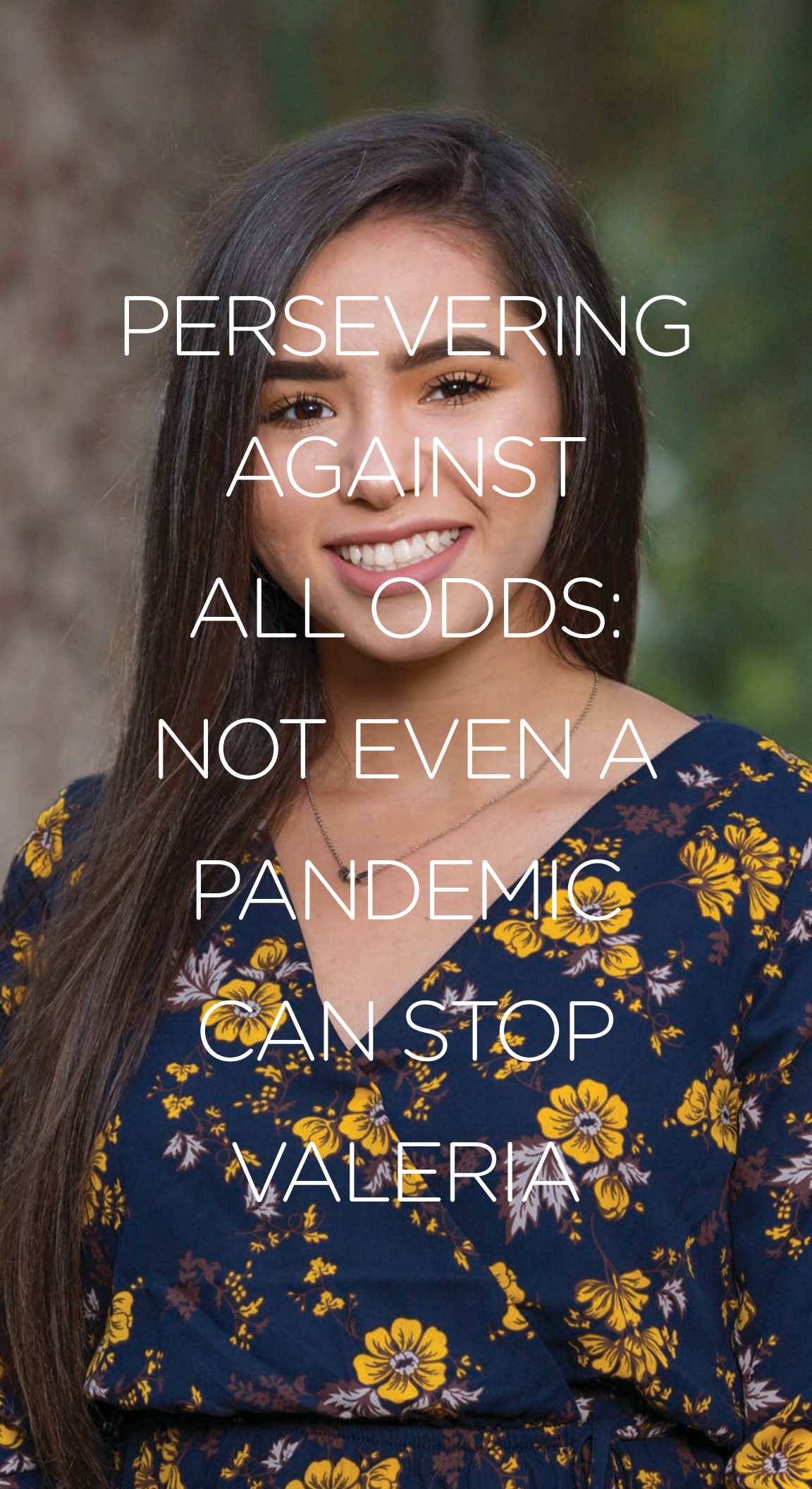
ACE HELPED SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES NAVIGATE THE CRISIS

We provided over 800 partner schools with guidance on navigating the federal CARES Act and state grants to help keep schools open and students enrolled throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Our team surveyed partner schools and ACE families throughout the year to understand the full extent of the economic and health impacts of the pandemic. We identified the immediate needs of our constituents and connected them to government and private resources.

15% REDUCTION

WE REDUCED OUR
OPERATING BUDGET BY
15% WITHOUT LAYING
OFF STAFF



PERSEVERING
AGAINST
ALL ODDS:
NOT EVEN A
PANDEMIC
CAN STOP
VALERIA

VALERIA'S STORY

Nothing ever comes easy for our students—resiliency is in their DNA. They were not about to let something as devastating as a global pandemic quarantine their dreams.

Especially Valeria. The daughter of Mexican immigrants, Valeria is no stranger to hard work. Like 89% of ACE scholars, she enrolled in college immediately after high school graduation. On top of her college course load, she worked two jobs to help provide for her family.

When COVID-19 hit, Valeria faced unemployment. She and several family members contracted the virus. She'll be the first to admit it was scary. But Valeria was determined to keep her dream alive.

During quarantine, she tutored to make ends meet.

She shopped for her family's groceries and cooked and cleaned for her parents. She maintained her studies. And she helped her brother, Hector, deal with the distractions that came with remote learning.

Hector is also an ACE scholar. In fact, it was Valeria who helped him apply to ACE. That's because Valeria knows just how much ACE has done for her. And she intends to pay it forward by opening doors for others.

After college, Valeria plans to go to law school and eventually practice immigration law to help empower hard-working families like hers pursue the American Dream. Valeria's story is an American story. A story about grit, determination, and resilience. It's a story about hope.

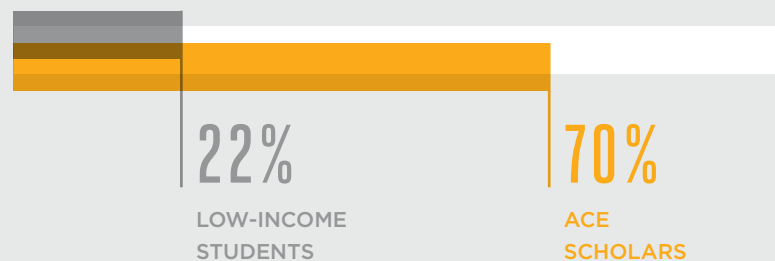
ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL

READING

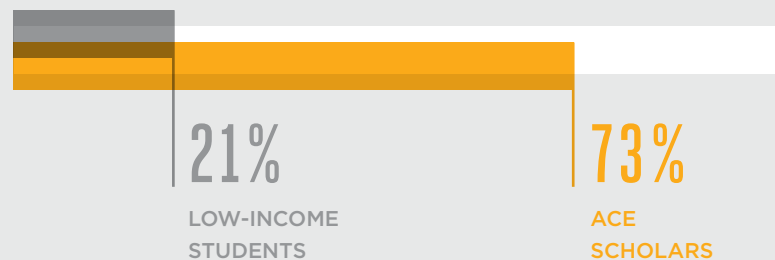


Success starts at an early age. ACE scholars in 4th grade have a reading proficiency 3.2 times higher than their low-income peers, and 3.5 times higher in 8th grade.

4TH GRADE PROFICIENCY



8TH GRADE PROFICIENCY



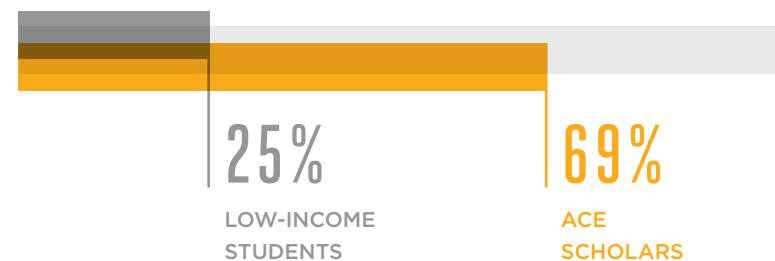
ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL

MATHEMATICS



They also excel in math with a proficiency that is 2.8 times higher than low-income students in 4th grade, and an astonishing 4.3 times higher proficiency in 8th grade.

4TH GRADE PROFICIENCY



8TH GRADE PROFICIENCY



A 98% GRADUATION RATE



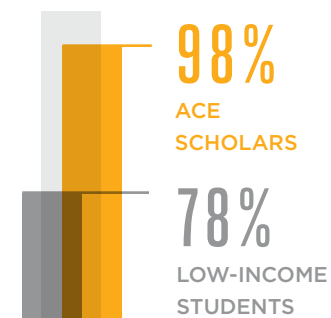
GRADUATION CEREMONIES MOVED FROM GYMNASIUMS TO PARKING LOTS, BUT THAT DIDN'T STOP THE CELEBRATION

In 2020, ACE scholars graduated high school at a rate of 98% compared to a 78% graduation rate for their low-income peers.

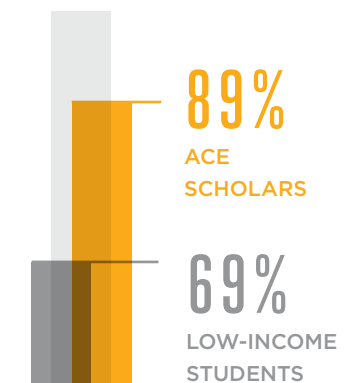
ACE produced a ten-year impact report (2009-2019) and found that 89% of ACE graduates enrolled in college immediately following high school, well above the national average of 69%.

But perhaps the most telling statistic of all is that 86% of ACE scholars who enrolled in a four-year university program completed their degree.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE



COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATE



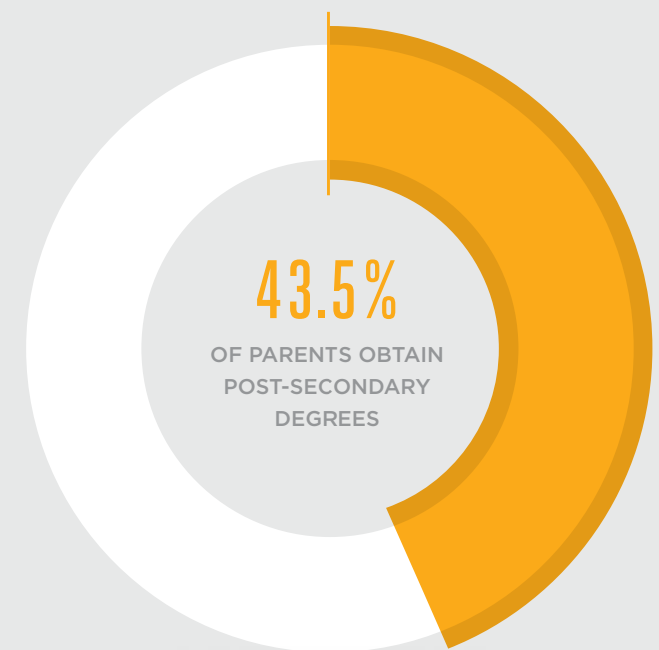


ACE SCHOLARS LEAD THE WAY FOR THEIR BROTHERS, THEIR SISTERS AND SOMETIMES, EVEN THEIR PARENTS

Our research shows that when a child becomes an ACE scholar, education becomes a family focus.

Siblings see first-hand just how ACE opens doors and changes lives. Parents with children in the ACE program improve their own education. In fact, 43.5% of ACE parents in the program for three or more years went back to school to obtain post-secondary degrees of their own.

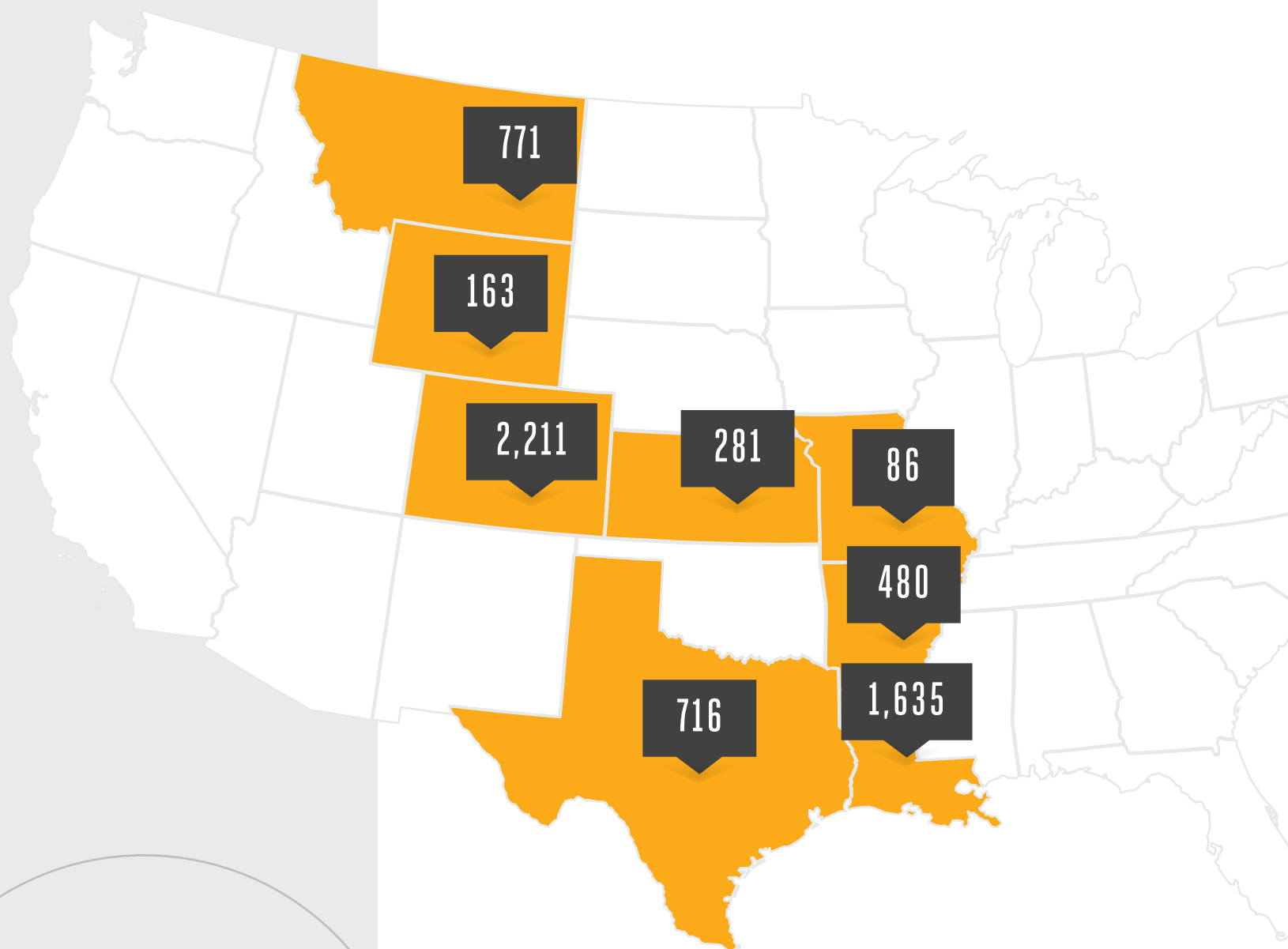
This leads to improved employment and housing stability.



ACE HONORED ALL SCHOLARSHIP COMMITMENTS

In the 2020-21 school year, ACE provided scholarships for 6,356 students across eight states, honoring all of our scholarship renewals for the school year.

Looking ahead, there are still thousands of open desks waiting to be filled with deserving children. We remain committed to our mission of providing every child with access to a quality education.



6,356

TOTAL
SCHOLARSHIPS
FOR THE SCHOOL
YEAR

47,512

OPEN DESKS IN ACE
PARTNER SCHOOLS

2020-21 ACE SCHOLARS

ARKANSAS	480
COLORADO	2,211
KANSAS	281
LOUISIANA	1,635
MISSOURI	86
MONTANA	771
TEXAS	716
WYOMING	163

HISTORY MADE: THE SINGLE BIGGEST VICTORY FOR SCHOOL CHOICE



Kendra Espinoza and her children on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court

2020 WAS A YEAR OF INCREDIBLE PROGRESS FOR SCHOOL CHOICE POLICY

After more than 150 years of political battles and 10 years of legal wrangling in both Colorado and Montana, we finally saw state constitutional Blaine Amendments laid to rest by the Supreme Court of the United States in *Espinoza v. Department of Revenue*. These provisions have long been the largest legal stumbling block for school choice programs.

The defeat of Blaine Amendments was perhaps the single most important education victory in the legal arena since *Brown v. Board of Education*. It was a monumental win that will ultimately pave the way for hundreds of thousands of students to access the education they deserve. Our Policy team drafted three amicus briefs for this landmark case, one of which was cited (alongside others) by Justice Alito in his concurrence to the majority decision. ACE is proud to have played a part in bringing this moment to fruition alongside our national partners.



AFTER 150 YEARS OF POLITICAL BATTLES, WE FINALLY SAW BLAINE AMENDMENTS LAID TO REST BY THE U.S. SUPREME COURT.



THE ACE POLICY TEAM HAS FACILITATED NEARLY 12,000 CONTACTS BETWEEN MEMBERS OF THE ACE NETWORK AND VARIOUS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.



WE HAVE WORKED ALONGSIDE THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE WHITE HOUSE ON THE INCLUSION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS UNDER FEDERAL COVID-19 RELIEF LEGISLATION.

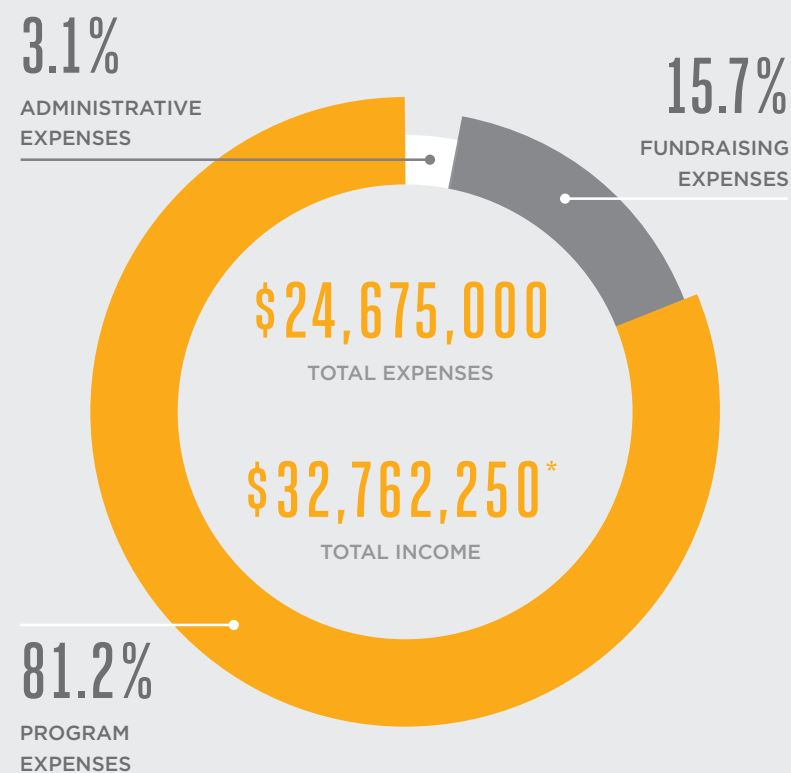
ACE HAS ALSO SEEN MAJOR PROGRESS IN ITS LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY WORK

Beyond *Espinoza*, ACE has seen significant progress in its legislative advocacy work. We are playing a leading role in 2021 legislative efforts to expand tax credit programs in Montana and Kansas, as well as to pass a new tax credit program in Arkansas, and to reform an unfair law related to 529 savings accounts in Colorado. We have also worked alongside numerous national partners, including the U.S. Department of Education and the White House, on the inclusion of private schools under federal COVID-19 relief legislation.

We have taken significant strides forward in our policy engagement and data work.

The ACE Policy team has facilitated nearly 12,000 contacts between members of the ACE network and various government officials. We also hosted Civics Day events for partner schools in three state capitols, launched a pilot Educator Ambassadors Network in Colorado to train partner school leaders for policy work, hired a Data and Evaluation Manager, and conducted several surveys of families and schools to see how they were coping with the challenges of the pandemic.

80% OF OUR MONEY GOES DIRECTLY TO HELPING KIDS



Thanks to the support of our donors, families, students, and staff, 2020 turned out to be our best year despite it being one of the most challenging we've ever faced.

In 2020, Charity Navigator awarded ACE their highest honor, a 4-Star Rating for Financial Health, Accountability, and Transparency.

For eight years in a row, ACE has earned the 4-Star Rating, an honor only 5% of charities evaluated by Charity Navigator have received.



*Pre-audit numbers

"THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING IN ACE KIDS—FOR MANY, IT'S THE FIRST TIME ANYONE HAS BELIEVED IN US"

That's a direct quote from an ACE alumna. And it shows just how much your support means.

So, while 2020 challenged all of us in unexpected ways, we owe our gratitude to supporters like you who allowed ACE to remain a reliable resource for the families we serve. With your assistance, our students continued to prove the power of a K-12 scholarship. In fact, ACE graduates currently attend colleges and universities in 46 states.

This extraordinary year revealed a core strength of the ACE community: resilience.

Despite facing increased financial hardship, ACE families stayed invested in their children's private education. You stood by our families—closing the tuition gap for 6,356 deserving students across eight states. And they persevered. Invigorated by your support, our scholars demonstrated a renewed commitment to making the most of their educational opportunity.

Looking forward, we are motivated by how essential our program is to student success. And we are resolute in our mission to continue providing freedom of choice in education. Thank you for keeping our mission among your priorities. We couldn't do this without you.



