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## **New COVID-19 Recovery Action Accelerator Focused on Elevating Community Voices in School Reopening Plans Launched**

***Seek Common Ground Brings Together 12 Community-based Organizations to Ensure Families, Students, and Educators Drive What School Looks Like This Fall***

Seek Common Ground (SCG), the innovation incubator that supports state and community-based organizations pursuing equitable and sustainable education policies, today announced the launch of its COVID-19 Recovery Action Accelerator focused on elevating the voices of the most impacted – families, students, and educators – for school reopening planning and ongoing dialogue.

The Action Accelerator is an idea lab: SCG provides a forum for community representatives to address vexing societal issues with knowledge, connections, and resources. Drawing inspiration from networked improvement communities, collective impact and equitable design thinking, SCG Action Accelerators help promising practices and strategies breakthrough and grow.

“Lots of decisions are being made right now about what back to school will look like. SCG launched this Action Accelerator to ensure that community stakeholders are at the center of those discussions and decisions,” said SCG Chief Executive Officer Sandy Boyd. “What school looks like this next academic year is going to be an ongoing process, as the pandemic will undoubtedly throw us new curve balls. We want to make sure decisions are driven by those most impacted.”

SCG publicized the [opportunity for organizations to present ideas earlier this summer](#), asking state and community-facing advocates to propose short-term, high-impact projects that elevate the priorities of families, students, and educators in school reopening plans. Twelve organizations from across the country met SCG’s criteria to participate in this Action Accelerator, which marks SCG’s entry into the COVID-19 recovery space.

“We believe in the power of community-driven solutions to the greatest challenges of our day, and there is no bigger challenge than the COVID-19 pandemic and how reopening schools will impact educational equity,” said SCG Chief Common Ground Officer Michael Gilligan. “We at SCG are honored to provide a forum for these 12 amazing organizations to put their ideas into action.”

The 12 participating organizations comprise two cohorts, one on community-led research to elevate local stakeholders’ expectations for the upcoming school year, and a second focused on mobilizing families, students and educators to drive the changes needed for an equitable and safe educational experience:

### **Cohort 1: Participatory Action Research**

- [The Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence](#) (Montgomery County, MD)
- [Climb Higher Colorado](#) (Colorado)
- [Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education](#) (Early County and Grady County, GA)
- [Greater Baltimore Urban League](#) (Baltimore, MD)
- [Intercultural Development Research Association](#) (IDRA) (San Antonio, TX)
- [Prichard Committee Student Voice Team](#) (Kentucky)

### **Cohort 2: Community Mobilization**

- [Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth](#) (San Francisco, CA)
- [Community Alliance for Public Education](#) (Durham, NC and statewide)
- [Louisville Urban League](#) (Louisville, KY)
- [Public Policy and Education Fund of New York/ Alliance for Quality Education](#) (New York)
- [Young Organizers United](#) (Manchester, NH)
- [Youth & Community Engagement](#) (Portland, ME)

Details on all the selected programs in the SCG COVID-19 Recovery Action Accelerator are [available here](#).

As Muntaha Mohamed from Youth & Community Engagement in Portland, Maine said about the Action Accelerator, “We hope the SCG Learning Community can help us to keep the feeling of momentum that this summer of Uprising has created, and to strike the balance between hopeful excitement to transform the perception of what we imagine is possible to change, and to still hold reasonable expectations during this process.”

“The Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence is working to unite the power of two historically disenfranchised communities (who now comprise a majority of the public school students in Montgomery County, MD) so that they can draw on their lived experiences to reveal, and advocate for redress, of systemic patterns of inequity,” said Black and Brown Coalition member Shirley Brandman. “Our Accelerator project engages directly with the students, families and educators hardest hit by COVID-19 to genuinely explore, in their own voice, the barriers to educational engagement engendered by COVID but also to probe where and how schools must embrace responsibility to urgently redress the lack of basic necessities to effectively support learning success for Black, Brown and poor children going forward. We are excited to participate in this work and learn from others across the country who share our aspirations.”

The work of the SCG Action Accelerator will begin on August 1, 2020, and continue through the fall, as the school reopening process promises to be ongoing and ever-changing as new issues arise in the fight against COVID-19.

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*Seek Common Ground (SCG), a project of the New Venture Fund, provides forums for state- and community-facing education advocates to promote local, authentic agenda setting to drive sustainable educational excellence and equity. Through the Action Accelerator, SCG provides an ecosystem for experimentation, connecting impacted communities to address vexing societal issues. SCG serves as an intermediary between national organizations and funders seeking to reach and empower state- and community-facing organizations and the state-and community-facing coalitions with whom we partner. Learn more at [seekcommonground.org](https://seekcommonground.org).*

