

**NEW SCHOOLS
FOR ALABAMA**

2020 ANNUAL REPORT





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TYLER
BARNETT
*Executive
Director*

2020 has undoubtedly been a year of remarkable struggle and trauma for many. It has been uniquely difficult for our students and educators who have been forced in a single year to confront COVID-19, widespread unemployment, and historic racial and political unrest. But it has also served as a proof point for the education community, revealing just how caring, generous, and resilient our students, families, faculty members, and community allies can be when confronted with historic challenges.

I am especially heartened and amazed at how those in our charter school sector have pushed forward relentlessly, overcoming one barrier after another to make sure that the children they serve have access to a great education. Whether by accepting the challenge to build a new charter school amid a pandemic, innovating mid-course to reach kids at home, or simply finding a way to keep the doors open, the leaders in our movement have made incredible progress this year in the pursuit of educational equity.

In 2020, Alabama saw the opening of a new charter school in Birmingham and the approval of six new charter schools slated to open in the fall of 2021 (including the middle schools at Accel Day & Evening Academy and i3 Academy). We also saw statewide charter school enrollment jump 84% in one year, up from 1,187 to 2,189 students. And at New Schools for Alabama, we accepted two new fellows into our School Founders Program, both of whom will launch innovative new charter schools in the Birmingham area in the fall of 2022.

So, the future is bright for students in Alabama. And we can thank the charter school leaders and supporters who have dared to do something better. By next year, we are likely to have over 5,000 students in our state getting access to a better education by way of charter schools. But we must

not get complacent—5,000 students still represent less than 1% of the statewide student population, and we know that last year over 36,000 Alabama kids were enrolled in failing schools.

At New Schools for Alabama, we are embarking on the next phase of our work to resolve this inequity. We are establishing bold, long-term goals to rectify the disparities in Alabama's education system, and we aim to enlist talented, like-minded leaders in the movement.

So, please join us as we celebrate in our 2020 Annual Report the progress our schools and leaders have made over the past year. I hope you will see exactly what I see—that, while there remains a lot of work to do, there is also tremendous momentum. Together, we are taking massive strides towards ensuring that every child has access to a quality public education.

Thanks for your commitment.

Tyler

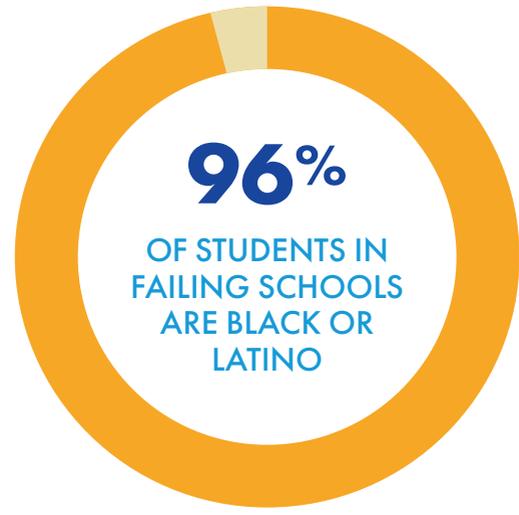
WHY WE'RE HERE



Alabama Ranks 50th in the Nation on Standardized Tests

AL
—
LAST PLACE

36,000 Students in *Failing Schools* in Alabama



44 DAYS

Black students attending charter schools gained the equivalent of 44 extra days in reading over their non-charter peers.

BLACK STUDENTS ATTENDING CHARTER SCHOOLS GAINED THE EQUIVALENT OF 59 EXTRA DAYS IN MATH OVER THEIR NON-CHARTER PEERS.

59 EXTRA DAYS IN MATH 

WHAT WE'RE DOING

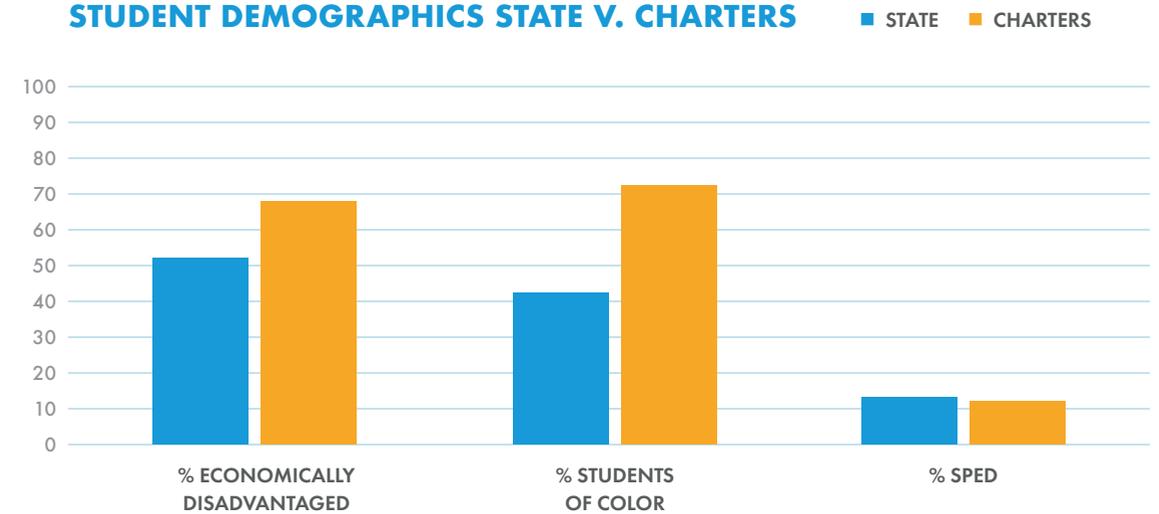
Students mired in failing schools can no longer wait for their existing options to improve. To help rectify the scourge of educational inequity in Alabama, we are jumpstarting the growth of new, innovative, tuition-free educational options with a focus on serving under-resourced communities.

Here's how the movement is growing—keep in mind, the table below only reflects the planned growth for schools that are already approved. We expect these numbers to increase significantly as new schools open.

ENROLLMENT DEMOGRAPHICS

While charter schools are rapidly expanding across the state, ensuring that more students have access to quality, tuition-free options, we are equally encouraged to see that charter schools are serving the children who need them the most. The following table represents a breakdown of key student demographic data among charter schools as compared to the state average.

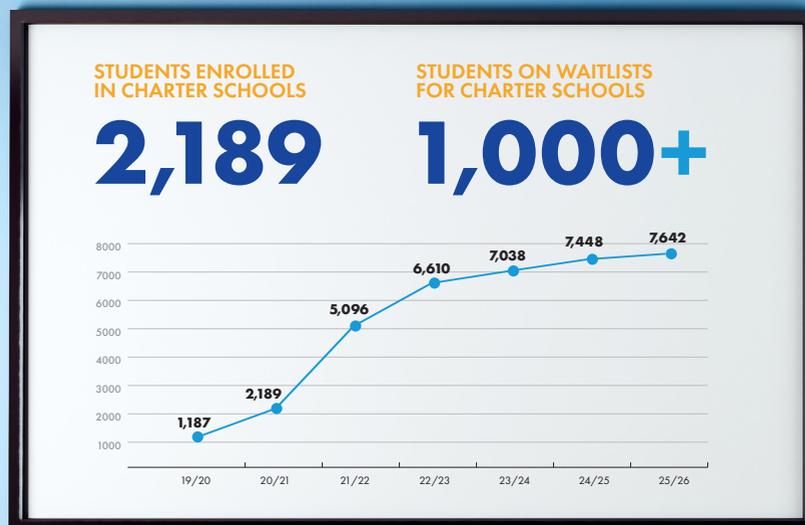
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS STATE V. CHARTERS



CHARTER SCHOOLS IN ALABAMA

The following schools are currently open or slated to open in the fall of 2021-22.

SCHOOL	LOCATION	GRADES SERVED	YEAR OPEN
Accel Day & Evening Academy	Mobile	6 – 12	2017 – 18
Breakthrough Charter School	Marion	K – 12	2021 – 22
i3 Academy	Birmingham	K – 8	2020 – 21
Ivy Classical Academy	Prattville	K – 12	2021 – 22
LEAD Academy	Montgomery	K – 12	2019 – 20
Legacy Prep	Birmingham	K – 12	2019 – 20
LIFE Academy	Montgomery	K – 8	2021 – 22
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Homewood	6 – 12	2021 – 22
MEF Conversion Charter Schools	Montgomery	K – 5	2021 – 22
University Charter School	Livingston	K – 12	2018 – 19



ALL ABOUT NSFA

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to support the growth of excellent charter schools in Alabama to ensure that every child has access to a quality public education.



OUR CORE VALUES



Equity

We work to ensure that all kids in Alabama have equitable access to a quality public education.



Quality

We are committed to supporting the development of high-quality charter schools by providing expert guidance to charter applicants, operators, and authorizers. We seek to be a respected resource for quality guidance, technical assistance, and policy support, as well as a quality source of information for all stakeholders.



Innovation

We value and embrace bold ideas, leading with a focus on what is possible and taking risks to challenge the status quo to significantly improve student outcomes when the current educational options do not meet the diverse needs of all kids.



Transparency

We are committed to holding high, research-based expectations for potential applicants and current grantees while providing candid feedback to groups in need of improvement.



Collaboration

We actively embrace new and existing relationships to facilitate deep collaboration among school systems, students and families, business communities, nonprofits, and other organizations to foster innovative solutions to educational challenges.

ALL ABOUT NSFA

OUR WORK

To accomplish our mission, we concentrate our work on four distinct areas of service—we call these our *Strategic Pillars*.



1. NEW SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

We recruit high-quality charter school operators from out of state and develop homegrown leaders to build great schools throughout Alabama.

2. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

We provide charter school applicants, operators, and authorizers with expert guidance on technical needs such as developing an application, reviewing an application, finding a facility, managing the back-office, and more.

3. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We ensure that parents and communities have access to clear information about school quality and the benefits that other options may present.

4. POLICY ADVANCEMENT

We work with policymakers and administrative agencies to ensure that the regulatory landscape is supportive of high-quality charter schools.



ALL ABOUT NSFA

OUR GOALS

- By 2023–2024, we will have supported the launch of at least **15 new high-quality charter schools in Alabama**, at least 75% of which will serve **60% or greater economically disadvantaged students**.
- By 2023–2024, we will have provided **expert technical assistance to every charter school and charter school authorizer in the state**.

OUR TEAM



Tyler Barnett
Executive Director



Candie Price
Communications Manager



Chris Reynolds
Senior Advisor



Mike Brown
Senior Advisor



Nivory Gorden
Policy Fellow

OUR BOARD

BOARD MEMBER	COMPANY
Khadijah Abdullah	Shipt
Dave Borden	Aldridge, Borden & Co.
Carol Butler	Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation
Nick Gaede	Bainbridge, Mims, Rogers & Smith
Charles Jackson	Auburn University - Montgomery
Maria Kennedy	The Daniel Foundation of Alabama
Miho Kubagawa	New Schools Venture Fund
Dr. Jan Miller	University of West Alabama
Dr. Jeremiah Newell*	Accel Day & Evening Academy
Richard Perry	DuPont
Emily Schultz	National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

*ex-officio

BY THE NUMBERS

2 Grant Programs

2 Years in Motion

8 Total Grant Awards Made

100%

OF GRANTEES RESULTED IN NEW CHARTER SCHOOLS



\$9.72 MILLION

TOTAL GRANTS AWARDED

OUR GRANTEES

In 2019, New Schools for Alabama was awarded a \$25 million U.S. Department of Education Grant. This funding allows us to support the growth of at least 15 high-quality charter schools by awarding startup grants of up to \$1.5 million each on a competitive basis.

To date, we have made 6 awards for a total of \$9 million in funding for excellent new charter schools serving economically disadvantaged students in Alabama. The following represents our grantees to date:

SCHOOL	LOCATION	GRADES SERVED	YEAR OPEN	AWARD
i3 Academy	Birmingham	K-5	2020 - 21	\$1,500,000
MEF Conversion Charter Schools	Montgomery	K-5	2021 - 22	\$1,500,000
Accel Day & Evening Academy Middle School	Mobile	6-8	2021 - 22	\$1,500,000
Breakthrough Charter School	Marion	K-12	2021 - 22	\$1,500,000
LIFE Academy	Montgomery	K-8	2021 - 22	\$1,500,000
Magic City Acceptance Academy	Homewood	6-12	2021 - 22	\$1,500,000

CSP GRANTEES

Accel Day & Evening Academy Middle School

MOBILE / GRADES 6-8 / SERVING 305 STUDENTS

Accel, Alabama's first charter school, opened in 2017-18 serving 240 students in grades 9-12. The school was launched by the Mobile Area Education Foundation, which has been accelerating the improvement of public education in the Mobile area for over 20 years.

Accel focuses on serving uniquely vulnerable populations – those who are disinterested in the traditional learning environment, those who are disconnected from the learning environment, and those who are over-aged, under-credited, or have already dropped out of school. Accel's model is a competency-based, student-centered, blended-learning model, which leverages wraparound services and case management supports to meet students' needs and help all students persist and achieve their goals of graduating college and becoming career ready.

Recognizing the demand to serve more kids and the need to support students at an earlier age, Accel gained approval to expand down to middle school starting the 2021-22 school year. Led by Dr. Jeremiah Newell, the Accel charter network will now collectively enroll over 500 students grades 6-12.

Breakthrough Charter School

MARION / GRADES K-12 / SERVING 426 STUDENTS

Breakthrough Charter School is a community-driven charter school developed in partnership with three historic local organizations—Marion Military Institute, Judson College, and Main Street Marion. The mission of Breakthrough Charter School is to prepare students in Perry County for success as citizens and leaders by providing a rigorous, service-oriented, and project-based public school that supports the social-emotional development of each individual child.

Led by Darren Ramalho, an alum of our School Founders Program, Breakthrough Charter School intends to foster a rigorous learning environment that prepares our students for success and contributes to our efforts to break the cycle of poverty, thereby improving Perry County students' lives and strengthening our community. The essential design elements of Breakthrough's model include project-based learning, service-learning, data-driven instruction, and foreign language infusion.

Through a partnership with Marion Military Institute (MMI), Breakthrough will offer students best-in-class leadership development training, one-to-one mentoring, and access to the many amenities on MMI's campus. The partnership with Judson will offer dual enrollment opportunities and a grow-your-own teacher development pipeline.

LIFE Academy

MONTGOMERY / GRADES K-8 / SERVING 810 STUDENTS

Founded by a local nonprofit organization, Ladies Influencing Freedom and Excellence (LIFE), LIFE Academy is led by its Executive Director, Kia Debnam. Kia is an alum of the School Founders Program as well as the Freedom Fellows Institute in Memphis, which prepares leaders of color to launch excellent new charter schools in under-resourced communities, specifically in the Deep South.

The goal of LIFE Academy is to prepare all students to excel in college, trades, and entrepreneurship through a focus on developing student efficacy, empowering students through a college-preparatory academic program, and embracing the whole child. The foundation of this college-preparatory academic program is grounded in LIFE Academy's Curriculum and Instruction Design, which draws upon best practices from charter schools with track records of academic excellence serving student populations similar to those in Montgomery.

While LIFE Academy takes many of its essential design elements from notable charter schools such as Achievement First in Connecticut and Freedom Preparatory Academy in Memphis, the school places enhanced emphasis on trauma-informed teaching practices to ensure that students have not only their academic needs met but also their social-emotional needs.

Magic City Acceptance Academy

BIRMINGHAM / GRADES 6-12 / SERVING 250 STUDENTS

The Magic City Acceptance Academy (MCAA) was formed by a parent organization, Birmingham Aids Outreach (BAO) in response to the many students BAO was serving who had dropped out, were homeschooling, had been bullied, or had experienced some combination thereof. Led by Dr. Mike Wilson, former Alabama Elementary Principal of the Year, MCAA facilitates a community in which all learners are empowered to embrace education, achieve individual success, and take ownership of their future in a safe, LGBTQ-affirming learning environment.

As a partner with the Magic City Acceptance Center (MCAC), the Magic City Wellness Center (MCWC), and Birmingham AIDS Outreach (BAO), MCAA will offer complete wraparound services in the areas of mental and physical health. By leveraging the robust staff of doctors, medical professionals, counselors, and social workers at the disposal of BAO, MCAA will integrate case management programs into its model to ensure the social-emotional wellness of every student. To best serve their target student demographic, MCAA will incorporate adult mentors for every student to help students set goals and direct their own education.

The underpinning of MCAA's academic model will be personalized, competency-based education, which meets each student where they are. Additionally, MCAA's model will emphasize social justice and community service through an arts-infused curriculum, leaning on its many community partners to offer additional resources.

SCHOOL FOUNDERS PROGRAM

OUR PROGRAM

The School Founders Program is a highly-selective, yearlong fellowship for aspiring charter school founders in Alabama. We recruit, select, and train high-caliber individuals as they launch new, high-quality charter schools around the state. Our goals for the program are the following:

- At least 75% of the fellows selected for our program will be leaders of color.
- 100% of fellows will produce an approved charter school application.

MEET OUR FELLOWS



KIA DEBNAM / MONTGOMERY

Kia grew up in Harlem, NY, attending struggling schools until her father made the sacrifice of relocating simply to access a better education for his daughter. She went on to attend Howard University, North Carolina Central University, and Canisius College, earning multiple degrees in Psychology and Childhood Education. She has taught in traditional and charter schools alike, and she is an alumnus of Teach For America. She is also participating in the highly selective fellowship for aspiring charter school leaders of color at the Freedom Fellows Institute in Memphis, TN. Her residency placement is with Freedom Preparatory Academy in Memphis.

Kia is the founder of LIFE Academy, which was approved in January 2020 to open in Montgomery at the historic St. Jude Educational Institution. LIFE Academy will be a K-8 school emphasizing trauma-informed education within a culturally-responsive curriculum. The school will instill civic awareness and social-emotional health in a rigorous academic setting.



DARREN RAMALHO / PERRY COUNTY

A resident of Marion, AL, Darren is an alumnus of UCLA and the Master's program for Public School Leadership at Columbia Teacher's College. Darren is an alumnus of Teach For America, having taught for 6 years at R.C. Hatch High School in the Perry County School District and for 4 years as an adjunct professor at Marion Military Institute. Darren has also been a fellow in TFA's Rural School Leadership Academy and a member of the State Superintendent Teacher Cabinet with the Alabama State Department of Education.

Darren will be the founding leader of Breakthrough Charter School, located in Perry County. Breakthrough will be a diverse-by-design K-8 school envisioned after (and in consultation with) University Charter School in Livingston. The school will emphasize project-based and experiential learning rooted in a rigorous, aligned curriculum. Breakthrough will also capitalize on its partnership with Marion Military Institute to ensure that students have access to best-in-class leadership training and resources and to establish clear postsecondary pathways for students to thrive in the community. For his administrative residency, Darren will be placed with Citizens of the World in Los Angeles.



ANTHONY OLIVER / BESSEMER

Born and raised in Birmingham, AL and an alumnus of Birmingham City Schools, Anthony plans to start a diverse-by-design charter school in his hometown. He holds a M.Ed. from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Vanderbilt University, and two bachelor's degrees from UAB and Virginia Military Institute, respectively. Anthony is also the former Executive Director of Breakthrough Collaborative in Birmingham, which is a nonprofit offering summer programming for underprivileged students by pairing aspiring teachers with experienced educators in a teacher residency program.

Anthony envisions an intentionally diverse 5-8 middle school in the heart of Bessemer, wherein students are equipped to become reflective, self-advocates empowered with the social, emotional, and academic skills to impact their communities while being prepared for college, career, and beyond. For his administrative residency, Anthony will work with Citizens of the World in Los Angeles.



RUBEN MORRIS / BIRMINGHAM

Ruben was born and raised in Birmingham, AL, and his mother was a public school teacher in Birmingham for over 40 years. After attending Morehouse College for his undergraduate degree, Ruben became a teacher in Atlanta and eventually Director of District Strategy with Teach For America. He has served as principal in charter schools, traditional public schools, and private schools alike, working in Atlanta and Denver before returning home to Birmingham. Ruben has also served at the executive level for multiple nonprofits, most recently as Program Director for the esteemed BuildUP school in Birmingham.

Ruben has been chosen to spearhead the creation of the Alabama Aerospace and Aviation High School (AAHS), which is a collaboration of the Southern Museum of Flight, Birmingham City Councilman John Hilliard, the Birmingham Urban League, and others. Offering a unique curriculum, a multidisciplinary project-based approach, dual credit, and built-in apprenticeships, the AAHS will prepare Birmingham students with the STEM skills and experiences they need to access the lucrative and expanding aviation and aerospace industries. Ruben will complete his residency at Freedom Preparatory Academy.

TEAM WORK. DREAM WORK.

At New Schools for Alabama, we are proud to be making significant progress towards delivering on our mission and achieving our goals. But we are not there yet. To build an organization that will have a lasting impact on improving educational opportunities for kids in Alabama, we fully recognize that we need the help of our partners. Without you, none of this is possible.



OUR PARTNERS

Adams & Reese

Lumen Impact Group

Black Alabamians for Education

SchoolWorks

CenterPoint Education

EdBoard Partners

LBMC

Hope Credit Union

BlueHub Capital

Louis Calder Foundation

Tech Lab

K12, Inc.

NWEA

Freedom Fellows Institute

Citizens of the World Charter Schools

The Daniel Foundation of Alabama

The Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation

Protective Life Foundation

EBSCO Industries

National Charter Schools Institute

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools

Alabama State Department of Education

United States Department of Education



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