

# Our Mission

Since 1867, the mission of Southern Education Foundation has been to advance equitable education practices and policies in the South through research, advocacy, and leadership development that will result in every student regardless of background attaining a high-quality education that propels them toward the opportunity-rich life they deserve.

# Our Vision

SEF's vision is to achieve education equity in the South for all students of color and those from low-income families by ensuring all have access to a high-quality education and the opportunity to succeed.



# Our Strategies

## GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS & ADVOCACY

 The educational challenges that face historically marginalized children and their families are too great for one organization or group to tackle alone. Success requires strategic ongoing multi-sector collaboration working across various systems. For this reason, SEF engages in a range of partnerships and coalitions designed to attack the root cause of educational inequities

by strengthening the capacity of advocates and policymakers. By using research-based practices, SEF's aim is to help shape local, state, and federal policies and legislation that lead to effective systems change for Black and low-income students in the South.

## LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

 SEF subscribes to the belief that advancing education equity and social justice requires a constellation of bold leaders who are equipped with the perspective,

understanding, confidence, and skills necessary to navigate the complex landscape of public education and the inherent challenges of racial and social inequity. Leaders serve as a critical lever for advancing authentic and enduring equity-centered systems change. Therefore, SEF offers research-based, practitioner-informed professional learning opportunities for individuals across the continuum, from rising leaders to C-Level professionals, designed to grow their capacities to lead for racial equity and ensure deeper learning outcomes for every

child, regardless of background. As a core tenet of the organization, SEF's leadership development efforts span nearly 150 years.

## RESEARCH & POLICY



In order to make the best choices for students, policymakers must be equipped with information that tells them what actually works. Through our research, SEF strives to provide the field with thoughtful analysis of key issues and the timely dissemination of solutions that offer the greatest impact for students. We want to empower policymakers to use empirical research to support innovation and creativity in education that is just and equity centered. SEF is committed to delivering thought leadership that keeps race and class front-and-center in the education debate as these factors continue to result in inequities in education.

## Recent Activities

COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on and exacerbated the inequities in our education system. During this time, SEF has been more focused than ever. Our ongoing activities include:

- supporting efforts to close the digital divide
- conducting research into how school districts and leaders can support students and challenged by the digital divide

- combatting ongoing efforts to drain public education funds through vouchers and scholarships for private schools
- providing technical assistance to legislators to help them develop research-based education policies
- monitoring CARES act investments
- urging legislators to ensure the CARES Act supports public education
- connecting with district leaders and providing them with coaching on equity issues that have been amplified by the pandemic

## Initiatives

### SOUTHERN EDUCATION LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (SELI)

A continuation of SEF's legacy of educating leaders in the South, the Southern Education Leadership Initiative (SELI) is an intensive, eight-week, paid summer fellowship for emerging leaders interested in advancing racial equity and improving education across the prekindergarten to college continuum. Placed in nonprofits, school districts, higher education institutions, or state education agencies in the South, SELI Fellows spend the summer developing as leaders, engaging with valuable stakeholders, and acquiring practical job skills through direct learning experiences. Over SELI's tenure, talented and diverse young

leaders have conducted important research, policy analysis, advocacy, and organizing efforts for over 100 partner organizations. SELI alumni can be found today working as educators, policymakers, researchers, community organizers and committed civic leaders dedicated to improving the life chances of all children.

### RACIAL EQUITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK (RELN)

The Racial Equity Leadership Network is an 18-month, cohort-style fellowship program for school district leaders who are committed to addressing persistent disparities in their system and ensuring that race and class are no longer the most reliable predictors of student success. Each cohort of the Racial Equity Leadership Network (RELN) is comprised of up to twelve (12) executive leaders from school districts in the South. Over the course of their fellowship experience, RELN Fellows attend five two- and-a-half day in-person convenings focused on essential levers for equity-centered leadership and system transformation. The fellows also receive customized coaching and technical assistance to support the planning and implementation of an action plan addressing their unique equity challenge.