In May of 2020, the Aspen Institute Education & Society Program released *Recovery and Renewal: Principles for Advancing Public Education Post-Crisis*. These principles served as a values-based framework for education leaders to make decisions during the pandemic. It also served as a framework for the Education & Society Program. In addition to a webinar series, the principles were featured in Education Week Commentary and referenced by Zaretta Hammond in AFT’s American Educator Magazine.

**Five Principles for Advancing Public Education Post-Crisis**

- **Ensuring Equity & Engagement**
- **Using Holistic View to Set a Coherent Strategy**
- **Guided by the Science of Learning**
- **Taking a Long-Term View of Student Success**
- **Setting an Agenda for Innovation & Improvement**

In March of 2020, COVID-19 shuttered the world, unleashing torrents of change that continue to profoundly impact public schools and the children and families they serve. Education leaders pivoted to crisis response and taking care of basic human needs, only to find they would need to navigate unprecedented challenges – medical, moral, educational, and political.

Education leaders continue to confront crises every day, including public-health contingency planning and staffing shortages, while addressing unfinished academic learning. As if these immediate concerns aren’t enough, profound, existential questions are in overload: about the purpose of public education in our pluralistic democracy, the role of schools in addressing racism in our society, how to resource schools to access child and family supports amid burgeoning mental-health struggles and chronic food and housing insecurity, and more.

It is the most challenging and consequential time for education leadership in generations. The decisions we make about schools in the 2020s will reverberate for many decades to come in the citizenry and society we become. No specific priority – accountability, whole child, science of reading, culturally responsive teaching – is adequate on its own to meet this moment of peril and responsibility, and all of us need to see our specific initiatives in the context of a coherent whole. Our actions will determine if we stitch our society back together, or stitch it together in justice for the first time; public schools are the most important and contentious proving ground on which these issues will be addressed.

Leaders need space to reflect on first principles and enduring values, engage in dialogue across lines of difference, and advance courageous, visionary leadership. What follows are examples of how we helped leaders navigate this crisis by marshalling our deep knowledge of how the education sector works, our longstanding and explicit commitment to equity, our credibility with leaders across ideological divides, and our expertise as facilitators to create brave spaces for dialogue and action.

We are committed to supporting leaders to continue recovering in ways that renew the promise public education represents to society. Join us in this journey of learning, leadership, and service.
NAVIGATING THE CRISIS
Guided by Five Principles

1. Ensuring Equity & Engagement
   Facilitated student voice organizations Our Turn and Student Voice to discuss requirements and best practices for authentic student engagement with state education agency leaders in ESFP plans.
   Convened roundtable conversations with education leaders and policymakers across political lines in 40+ organizations and state offices to discuss heightened public discourse related to race and education. Developed United We Learn to help leaders enact research-based policies related to treatments of race and racism in education.
   Aspen facilitated the Albuquerque Children’s Cabinet. Albuquerque mapped city government children and family-facing service locations, including schools, libraries, and rec centers, to optimize and make learning hubs and food distribution sites for constituents.
   Aspen team briefed chief academic and talent officers in 20+ state education agencies through CCSSO Network on the research and implications of United We Learn.

2. Using Holistic View to Set a Coherent Strategy
   Released guidance for governors & mayors to make sure schools have access to resources to support the health and well-being of students and families.
   NPR moderated and C-SPAN carried our release event, which featured Wisconsin Gov. Tony Evers, Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, and Aspen Ascend parent advisor Waukeqa Wilkinson.
   “So much of what I learned along the way came from Aspen. The opportunity to dig deep and ask questions was vital as a congressional staffer... I really credit Aspen with the access to resources to support the health and well-being of students and families.”
   —State Superintendent of Public Instruction

3. Guided by the Science of Learning
   Supported practitioners, policymakers, and education leaders in districts and states to embrace and enact school climates where youth can experience safety, belonging, and meaningful learning.
   Convened a roundtable on culturally and linguistically responsive education to improve student achievement and experiences during the pandemic.
   “I had a view with SEL and academics and I came out with a very different view based on exploration on race, identity, power, and privilege... It was wildly successful for me. I wanted to come home with an action plan and came back with something greater.”
   —State Superintendent of Public Instruction

4. Taking a Long-Term View of Student Success
   Released Looking Back to Accelerate Forward: Toward a Policy Paradigm that Advances Equity and Improvement. Urged education leaders to reflect on what worked and didn’t over 40 years of education policy and define the next education policy agenda to help ensure all children receive the education they need to thrive in school and beyond.
   Created off-the-record learning forums for urban superintendents on education and the future of work with experts Camille Farrington, Zaretta Hammond, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Alfred Tatum.
   “The workforce development information was really compelling and challenged me to think more about opportunities in that area. Also, all of the problems of practice challenged my thinking and helped me to consider ways of improving our work.”
   —Urban Superintendent

5. Setting an Agenda for Innovation & Improvement
   Partnered with the National Center for Assessment to write recommendations, published in October 2020, that call for more OTL data and guidance on measurement and academic assessment.
   Several states added OTL to statewide data collection efforts and cited our recommendations as the key driver in supporting state action.
   “I have a different opinion on things like state accountability systems, testing, metrics, etc. but Aspen has helped challenge my thinking to these approaches. I may not always agree with the issues, but Aspen does a great job at providing information and space without dictating how people should think.”
   —Non-Profit Leader