



December 13, 2022

Mr. Mark Suzman, CEO
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
PO Box 23350
Seattle, WA 98102

Sent via Electronic Mail [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Suzman,

On behalf of our members, the undersigned organizations write to request that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation cease its equity-centered funding of America's public schools, as we believe that the initiatives that are being promoted in districts are negatively impacting student performance. While these donations may be well-intentioned, the impact of this programming on student achievement and well-being is creating unintended consequences that will negatively impact not only individual students but the educational system as a whole – and accordingly, we ask that these efforts be ended.

The Gates Foundation provided Denver Public Schools with a \$10 million grant that was used to create "College Ready On Track Network for School Improvement." The initiative's webpage states that its vision is to "enable educators, students, and communities, through intentional design and networked improvement, to dismantle systems of oppression and prepare all Black and Latinx students."

A project that specifically purports to "dismantle systems of oppression" is concerning because it operates under the premise that the United States was founded on white supremacy and racism. It perpetuates the idea that the education system, as well as the United States, is oppressive for select demographics, allegedly leading to poor academic outcomes. This places the blame squarely on Western Civilization as opposed to the time-honored belief of individual choices and actions of those involved.

For your edification, a 2021 Gallup poll found that only 4% of Hispanic Americans surveyed preferred “Latinx” as the label of choice to describe their ethnic group; in January 2022, Axios reported that “Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-Ariz.), head of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus’ campaign arm, announced last month his congressional staff is not allowed to use “Latinx” in official communications, tweeting “When Latino politicians use the term it is largely to appease white rich progressives who think that is the term we use. It is a vicious circle of confirmation bias.” And in December 2021, NBC News reported that Domingo García, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, instructed staff and board members to drop the word “Latinx” from the group’s official communications.

As part of the improvement vision related to the Gates Foundation’s grants, Denver Public Schools also implemented “Grading for Equity,” as have Baltimore City Public Schools’ Fund for Educational Excellence (\$11,160,252/ \$12,263,277), the New York City Department of Education’s Fund for Public Schools Inc (\$13,009,619) and the Tulare County Office of Education (\$6,111,920)

Accordingly, “equitable grading” is detrimental because it presupposes that a merit-based grading system is biased and built on racist structures that need to be dismantled to improve learning among minority groups. Equitable grading operates on the assumption that a merit-based system rewards students deemed to have “privilege,” while punishing those “without.” Equitable grading dispenses with traditional educational values such as deadlines, work ethic, and mastery of content – all skills that students need to succeed not only in school, but also in the real world. To downplay these virtues is to put these students at a disadvantage to their peers as adults, negatively impacting them for the rest of their lives.

Our members are America’s parents, grandparents, and concerned citizens – and we do not want standards or expectations lowered in our nation’s public schools in the name of equity. Our organizations find it deeply troubling that grants from the Gates Foundation are being used to advance these patronizing policies – particularly at a time when students are working to remediate the learning loss incurred during Covid-related school closures. Students deserve to be treated as individuals and not members of identity groups.

We know that the Gates Foundation cares about American schools – as do we. Please consider reevaluating your foundation’s grant priorities so that we might work together to address and improve the quality of America’s public education system for all children.

Sincerely,

Parents Defending Education
American Education Advocates
Army of Parents
Awake Illinois
Bellingham Parents CSC
CA Foundation for Educational Rights (CFER)
CACAGNY
CAPA Nova
Colorado Parent Advocacy Network
Concerned Parents of Round Rock ISD
Courage is a Habit
Fight for Schools
For Kids & Country
Good Trouble Parents

Louisiana Save Our Schools
Moms for Liberty
No Left Turn in Education
Olentangy for Educational Integrity
Parents Unite
Parents United RI
Poudre School District Parents for Change
Power2Parent
Purple for Parents
Push Back Idaho
Truth in Education
United Against Racism in Education
West Valley Parents Uniting