



December 13, 2022

Mr. Will Miller, President  
Wallace Foundation  
140 Broadway, 49th Fl  
New York, NY 10005

Sent via Electronic Mail [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. Miller,

On behalf of our members, the undersigned organizations write to request that the Wallace Foundation cease its equity-focused 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 Wallace Foundation has given over \$48 million to schools to support social-emotional learning, with a focus on "equitable SEL."

Your report titled "[Navigating SEL From The Inside Out](#)" defines equitable SEL as “SEL that affirms diverse identities; incorporates student cultural values, practices, and assets; fosters positive identity development; promotes student agency and voice; and acknowledges and addresses persistent environmental stressors such as racism, transphobia, homophobia, and classism.” The report goes on to state that “all children begin absorbing and internalizing messages” about their own “racial inferiority or superiority from a very early age.” It continues: “Children who are never asked to confront their role in a racist and unjust society are at a

disadvantage; unexamined assumptions and biases undermine and limit white children's ability to develop and use SEL skills like empathy, perspective-taking, and kindness.”

Suggesting that our society is “racist and unjust” and that children play a role in creating these problems is concerning. It reflects the notion that the United States was founded on racism and oppression and perpetuates the idea that the education system is oppressive for select demographics, allegedly leading to poor academic outcomes. Moreover, it imparts to schoolchildren the sad and limiting belief that hard work and perseverance may never be sufficient for achieving success. We’d like to share two examples of “equitable SEL” being implemented in public schools: Denver Public Schools in Denver, Colorado, and Columbus City Schools in Columbus, Ohio.

Denver Public Schools is participating in your Partnership for Social and Emotional Learning and created “[Transformative Social and Emotional Academic Learning](#)” or TSEAL. They define TSEAL as a “process whereby young people and adults build strong, respectful, and lasting, relationships that facilitate co-learning to critically examine root causes of inequity” and state that TSEAL is “aimed at redistributing power to promote social justice through increased engagement in school and civic life.”

[Columbus City Schools](#) received a multi-year \$8.2 million grant from your foundation to implement an [Equity-Centered Pipeline Initiative](#) to “explore how to build pipelines that can produce school leaders capable of advancing their own district's vision of equity.” The district states, “In order to achieve educational equity, we must make the necessary system changes (policies, processes, and practices) to reduce and eliminate outcome predictability.”

Parents Defending Education and our coalition partners are concerned that focusing on equal outcomes irrespective of academic performance and activism rather than education may be detrimental to students’ academic results.

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 Wallace 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 Wallace 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