



# ALL EDUCATION FUNDING, BY EDUCATION LEVEL

## RESEARCH BRIEF SERIES: TWENTY YEARS OF EDUCATION FUNDING IN THE U.S.

Grantmakers for Education routinely scans and collects data on education giving in the U.S. to understand philanthropic priorities, approaches and investments, historical and current. This research brief presents information on giving patterns in education over the past twenty years among foundations and other grantmakers, from 2003 to 2023.



Over the twenty-year period, \$267,131,994,678 was invested in education from private giving sources. Funding covers the entire learning continuum, from birth through career launch and transition. There is a notable uptick in education investments in the 2014-2018 period, a time when there was significant policy activity around curriculum and learning standards, technology access in schools, school choice, teacher evaluation, school closures, early learning, and technology access in schools. More recently, in the 2019-2023 period, increased investment in education occurred, seemingly in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. With a one-year lag in the data, it's not yet clear whether pandemic-related funding has fully tapered off, though anecdotal reports suggest it has.

### Early Learning

Over the past two decades, philanthropic support for early childhood education has tripled, with a focus on expanding access to quality childcare and increasing its overall supply. Notably, funding rose by nearly 60% from the 2009–2013 period to the 2014–2018 period, growing from \$2.9 billion to \$4 billion. More recently, from 2019 to 2023, funding increased by over 30%, rising from \$642.1 million to \$843.7 million.

### K-12 Education

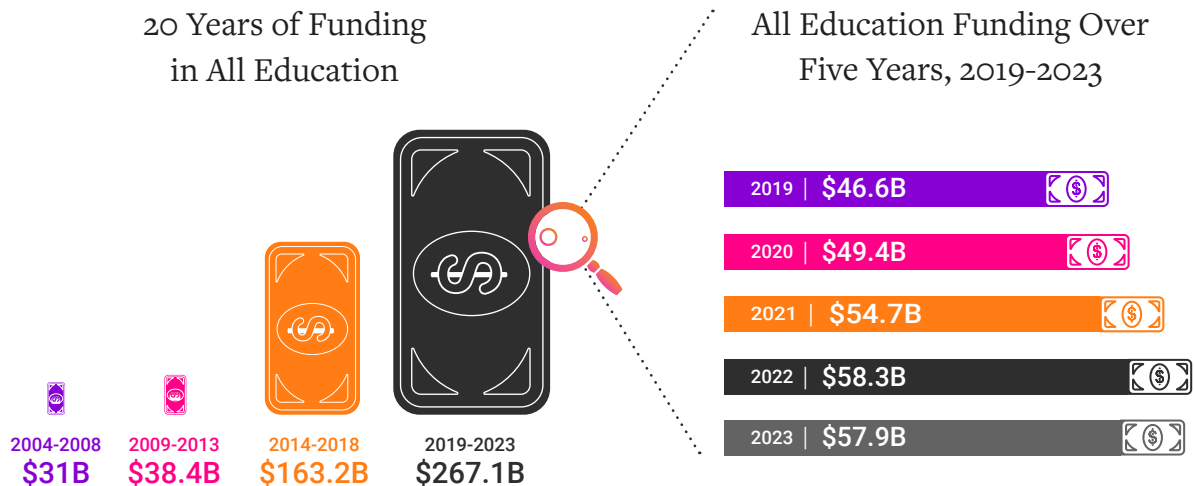
Philanthropic support for K-12 education over the past 20 years has experienced significant growth. Funding surged from \$11 billion for the 2004–2008 period to \$37 billion for the 2019–2023 period—more than tripling in 20 years. Particularly notable is the change between 2009–2013 and 2014–2018, during which funding doubled from \$13.6 billion to \$28.3 billion. During this time, philanthropy was pivotal in shaping education policy with significant investment in market-driven educational reform, including charter schools, school choice and teacher training programs. Most recently, between 2019 and 2023, funding remained relatively stable, except for 2021 and 2022, when support increased from \$7.1 billion to \$8.3 billion.

### Higher Education

Over the past 20 years, philanthropic support for higher education has been strong and positive, marking its influence on higher education policy and reform. Between the 2003–2008 period and the 2019–2023 period, funding increased nearly sevenfold, highlighting a long-term upward trend. However, despite this historic growth, a 10% decline occurred between 2022 and 2023, dropping from \$23.1 billion to \$20.8 billion. This decline followed a brief resurgence in 2020–2021, as higher education funding rebounded given recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Adult Education

Over the past 20 years, philanthropic support for adult education—including basic/remedial education, continuing education and English as a second language—has grown dramatically, from \$391.9 million in the 2004–2008 period to \$1.7 billion in the 2019–2023 period. Notably, funding more than doubled between the 2008–2013 and 2014–2019 periods, increasing from \$467 million to \$1.2 billion. A renewed focus on workforce development and economic growth drives this upward trend.



As the leading network for education philanthropy, Grantmakers for Education offers an unparalleled platform for learning, collaboration and influence – backed by front-line sector research, exclusive insights and a vibrant community of peers. We believe in the value of philanthropy as a catalytic partner in creating a just world. For more information, please contact us at [information@edfunders.org](mailto:information@edfunders.org).

Giving data was sourced from Candid’s licensed database, *Foundation Directory Online*. According to Candid, data are “compiled from IRS information returns, grantmaker web sites, annual reports, printed application guidelines, the philanthropic press and various other sources. In all, Candid’s editorial staff continually monitors more than 35 diverse information sources” and frequently updates the database. A full description of the Foundation Directory’s sources may be found here: <https://help.candid.org/s/article/Where-does-Candid-get-its-data>. The classification system Candid employs for coding grants may be found here: <https://taxonomy.candid.org/>.

