Wallace’s 2020 Annual Report is being published in two installments. This first installment contains our look back at 2020. The second installment, to be added to the report later in 2021, will contain our list of program expenditures and commitments.

Photos:
Cover photo courtesy of District of Columbia Public Schools. Students masked up for learning in District of Columbia Public Schools, a participant in a number of Wallace Foundation efforts, including the Principal Pipeline Learning Community. Global Arts Live photo, p. 7, by Sarosh Syed

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We responded to 2020 with the two resources we have at hand: funding and credible information.

There were other major events as well—devastating wildfires and, shortly after the new year in 2021, the assault on the nation’s Capitol, to name two. But as an institution dedicated to working to help solve social problems, Wallace needed to respond to the pandemic and the calls for racial justice in particular.

The big question facing us was how. The short answer is that as a philanthropy dedicated to generating knowledge to advance policy and practice across the three areas in which we work—school leadership, learning and enrichment, and the arts—we marshalled the two resources we have at hand: money and credible information.

**Funding**

In the arena of giving, we took a number of steps. A high priority was to offer the foundation’s grantees—many of them arts, afterschool and other organizations hit especially hard by the pandemic—the
Year in Review

We relaxed our guidelines on the use of grant funds and postponed or dropped reporting requirements.

We also augmented our spending, distributing about $9.8 million for emergency assistance and pandemic-related supports. The assistance funding, much of it for grantees, was distributed across our fields of interest, with proportionately larger grants going to organizations that directly serve children, are led by a person of color, and/or work in more than one of our focus areas. In addition, we provided general operating support to five organizations dedicated to racial justice matters. We also established a program in which each of our employees could designate up to $1,500 for relief efforts in their communities. Wallace staff members supported local efforts and institutions such as food pantries; dance, theater, film and other arts organizations; and projects to support health care and other essential workers.

Ideas and information

We worked hard to keep people in our areas of interest informed in ways that could help them find a path through the crisis. Wallace’s efforts included publishing a scenario planning toolkit for arts organizations facing the uncertainties of the moment. A webinar we sponsored in June on how the then-recently enacted federal COVID relief packages applied to the education and youth development fields was our most highly attended webinar to date.

In the fall we launched Reimagining the Future of the Arts: A Conversation Series, an online forum that brings together arts researchers and professionals to share insights and strategies for the pandemic period and beyond. The Wallace Blog, meanwhile, took advantage of the expertise of researchers and others who have worked with Wallace over the years. That seemed to resonate with our followers. Seven of the 10 most viewed pieces on the blog in 2020 regarded pandemic-related issues, including one post in which the head of an organization that manages Wallace’s website for nonprofit financial management offered guidance on navigating the turbulent financial waters whipped up by the crisis. (A subsequent webinar with her also ranked among our most heavily attended.) In another popular post, a researcher discussed what the pandemic has meant for summer learning and the role that school district, state and federal policies could play in ensuring that high-quality summer programming was available to children who had faced instructional losses during the school year.
NEW DIRECTIONS, CONSISTENT APPROACH

Equity
The events of the year also affected Wallace as an institution. The social justice movement, along with the racial disparities that the pandemic laid bare, gave a new urgency to work already going on at the foundation to make more explicit our commitment to equity. This was reflected most notably in two ways.

First, we changed our mission statement. Ever since we were established as a national foundation in the early 2000s, the bulk of our work has centered on institutions serving children and teens in historically marginalized communities. Our work thus implicitly centered on equity. Our mission statement, however, did not explicitly call this out. We believe our new one, finalized in 2020, does: Our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people, and in the arts for everyone.

Second, we continued intensive work to develop two major new initiatives—one in the arts, the other in education leadership—that are focused on equity considerations. The foundation plans to unveil these initiatives later in 2021 or early 2022.

Getting on with our work
In the context of the change in mission statement and the focus of our new initiatives, Wallace held fast to its commitment to its longstanding approach of developing and carrying out initiatives that yield dual benefits—supporting efforts to benefit local communities, then using what we learn from their work to generate credible information and ideas to improve policy and practice broadly in our three areas of interest.

We continued this approach in 2020 amid the same logistical problems confronting many workplaces in the U.S. and around the world. Wallace closed its office in early March, and staff members promptly turned dining room tables, desks in spare bedrooms and other surfaces into telework stations. We then adjusted, like millions of workers, to the idiosyncrasies of Zoom and similar meeting technologies. For the most part, we were able to get our work done. Among other things, we posted 23 new reports, videos and other resources, slightly outpacing our 2019 output.

We discovered that online meetings have their benefits, including allowing more people to take part.

We plan to continue responding with the flexibility called for at this uncertain time.

We also discovered that online meetings have their benefits. Periodic “learning community” meetings are a signature feature of Wallace work. They bring together initiative participants, who come from across the country, to trade insights with one another and hear from experts in the work they are undertaking. Typically, these meetings are intensive two- or three-day in-person gatherings. Instead of scrapping these events in 2020, we replaced them with shorter but more frequent virtual convenings. One advantage, we learned, was that without the necessity of long-distance travel, more people could participate, including school district or state education officials whose heavy schedules can preclude cross-country meeting attendance. Shorter sessions also made for less fatigue. For the future, we are likely to blend in-person and virtual meetings, incorporating what we have learned about the benefits of gathering online into our approach to learning communities without forgoing the relationship-building power of meeting people face to face.

We also devoted much of our energies to adapting our program and research work to the demands of the time, as you will read below.
LEARNING AND ENRICHMENT

Our major effort in this focus area is the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative. Launched in 2017, it revolves around the establishment of collaborations—between schools and afterschool, summer and other out-of-school-time programs—to coordinate and improve how they promote children’s social-emotional growth. At work in six communities (Boston, Dallas, Denver, Palm Beach County, Fla., Tacoma and Tulsa), the effort reaches about 30,000 elementary school students in 38 sites that pair an elementary school with one or more out-of-school-time programs.

As the pandemic closed school buildings and other gathering places, the communities shifted to virtual instruction and activities. That meant translating social-emotional materials designed for physical spaces into versions that could be used in the online world. Practices such as warm welcomes to children when they arrive at a spot and “optimistic closures” when they leave remained in place, albeit on screen rather than in person.

Adapting to virtual interaction was just one of many changes schools and out-of-school-time programs had to make to deal with the pandemic. To assist, Wallace allowed our grant funds to be repurposed so the communities could attend to their most urgent needs. One was the swift establishment of safe childcare hubs for children of healthcare and other essential service workers. Some hubs also became points for food distribution, and in one community, initiative partners distributed, in addition to food, tech equipment and materials for arts lessons.

Those working on the ground in the initiative are acutely aware that the pandemic has taken a toll on many children, who have been cut off for long periods from school, friends and the normal patterns of life and may have faced other difficulties as well. In response, the communities all have included districtwide social-emotional strategies in their school reopening plans, building on districtwide strategies they introduced during the pandemic.

Researchers from the RAND Corp. are studying the initiative, as they carry out the most comprehensive examination to date of the implementation of a social and emotional learning effort. The study’s first report, Early Lessons from Schools and Out-of-School Time Programs Implementing Social and Emotional Learning, was released in fall 2020. Owing to the pandemic, the researchers have had to make a number of adjustments to their work, including shifting to virtual data collection, making participation in some research activities voluntary for grantees, and refocusing the inquiry to document how schools and out-of-school-time programs adapted their efforts to the pandemic and used what they had learned to aid in recovery from the crisis.

This report, published in October, was the first in what will be a series from a RAND study of the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative.
School Leadership

Our work in this area centers on school principals, specifically developing and supporting them to be as effective as possible. Because of that, we could hardly ignore the realities of spring 2020. As educators needed to quickly replace actual classrooms with virtual ones, school principals confronted a myriad of pressing responsibilities—for starters, ensuring that teachers could conduct distance instruction, seeing to it that children had the needed technology and connectivity, and setting up ways to continue providing essentials like meals to those who needed them.

Wallace tried to assist in a number of ways, supporting, for example, the preparation of pandemic guidance for school leaders by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Then, there were the constraints facing each of our individual initiatives. Wallace's education leadership efforts encompass four main bodies of work. Three were drawing to a close in 2020: the University Principal Preparation Initiative (supporting seven universities to upgrade their principal pre-service training programs); the ESSA Leadership Learning Community (assisting teams from 11 states in developing and implementing plans for use of federal dollars to support effective school leadership efforts); and the Principal Pipeline Learning Community (helping 90 school districts assess the strengths of their efforts to develop and support school principals and then draw up plans to address weaknesses they find). Shortly before the crisis began, we launched the fourth effort, work in 13 school districts to gather information and insights to help us develop a new equity-centered school leadership initiative. The pandemic affected each of these efforts in various ways.

In the Principal Pipeline Learning Community, districts were instituting many changes at once, including shifting from in-person to virtual hiring and training of new principals. We commissioned Digital Promise, a nonprofit established by Congress to promote technology use, to produce a webinar series for the districts on how to ensure quality and equity in the move to distance learning and work. We also provided for the continued services from consultants, who had already been working with the initiative participants, so the districts could tap their expertise as they adjusted their efforts and planning to pandemic realities. In the end, 86 of the 90 districts were able, with slight delays, to complete their plans for shoring up how they prepare and support principals.

Meanwhile, the universities in the principal preparation effort moved their programming online, including aspects of it such as mentoring for aspiring principals. For that initiative, we extended the deadline for completion of grant activities by a year, from 2020 until 2021. We did the same for the ESSA Leadership Learning Community teams, which continued their endeavors during the pandemic. Wallace supported those efforts with additional grants of up to $75,000 to each team for projects that linked the work they had been doing to school reopening.
Finally, we were grateful for the work of the 13 districts helping us design an equity-centered leadership initiative. Despite the obstacles created by the pandemic, they were all able to provide us with a timely, from-the-trenches set of considerations that have been instrumental to the design our new effort.

The year 2020 also saw the release of a number of major reports in school leadership, including a trio of publications examining our now-concluded Principal Supervisor Initiative, in which six school districts worked to refocus the principal supervisor job from administration to principal support. Among the publications was Changing the Principal Supervisor Role to Better Support Principals: Evidence from the Principal Supervisor Initiative, the final report in a study of the effort by researchers from Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College and Mathematica Policy Research. In Taking Stock of Principal Pipelines: What Public School Districts Report Doing and What They Want to Do to Improve School Leadership, meanwhile, the RAND Corp. provided a national snapshot of how large and medium-size school districts develop and support principals in districts throughout the country and what superintendents think of the approaches.

**ARTS**

Scarcely four months before the pandemic brought in-person cultural life as we know it to a standstill, Wallace’s initiative supporting the audience-building endeavors of 25 performing arts organizations drew to a close with a conference in New York City that celebrated their years of work. Planning for a successor to the Building Audiences for Sustainability effort stepped up and was well under way in late spring 2020, by which time two things had become clear. The first was that the pandemic’s effect on the arts, beginning with the shutdown of performance spaces and other venues, was so severe that the sector needed immediate philanthropic aid. The second was that our planning for a future initiative required more time, so it could take into account both the fallout from the pandemic and reflection on the arts in light of the racial justice movement.

For the first, Wallace responded in a number of ways. The foundation provided new funding to all 25 arts organizations to help them weather the crisis, and later in the year made a second round of grants to five of the organizations that had particular needs. We also offered all the organizations—which include theaters, orchestras, opera companies and dance companies—consulting on financial planning and crisis management. In addition, we made grants to support the field as a whole: to the arts and culture fund within the NYC Coronavirus Response & Impact Fund, which has provided financial support to a range of nonprofits, and to the Artists Relief Fund, which has assisted individual artists facing financial emergencies.

*Global Arts Live was one of the 25 organizations that took part in the Building Audiences for Sustainability initiative, whose participants celebrated the conclusion of the effort just months before the pandemic shutdowns.*
Finally, we provided funding to eight arts service organizations, which represent areas ranging from chamber music to education in arts administration, to help them continue sharing crucial information, advocating for their fields and connecting peers with one another.

For the second—planning for a new initiative—we commissioned a series of studies to provide a picture of the new lay of the land for the arts and insights into what the future might hold. One report, *Arts Organizations’ Early Response to COVID-19 Uncertainty: Insights from the Field*, by the international arts consulting firm AEA Consulting, described findings from interviews with and a survey of arts leaders in the early days of the pandemic shutdown. Among the key findings from the survey: 73 percent of respondents agreed that the socioeconomic divide may widen between those who participate in the arts in person and those who do not; 54 percent expected a decrease in ticket sales five years out from the pandemic; and 35 percent expected an increase in profits from online sales. Other studies included *The Alchemy of High-Performing Arts Organizations*, which suggested that financial success for arts organizations begins with artistic excellence and relevance.

In arts education, our major effort is the Youth Arts Initiative, which has been working with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America since 2014 to support high-quality arts programming for young people in communities where such programs are scarce. The second phase of that effort, at work in Austin, Atlanta, Knoxville, Orlando/Central Florida and New York City, launched in 2019. The cohort had to move quickly to maintain youth participation and engagement during the pandemic. All clubs were able to retain their professional teaching artists during the shutdowns, and they were highly engaged in the development and delivery of virtual programming.

Before the pandemic closures, we published a report that grew out of *Building Audience for Sustainability* that addresses a topic much on the minds of those in the arts and many other fields, for that matter: data use. *Data and Deliberation: How Some Arts Organizations are Using Data to Understand Their Audiences*, from the University of Texas at Austin, examines the rewards and challenges of using data and market research to help buck the trend of declining arts audiences.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS**

As we approach mid-2021, we know that tough work awaits schools and out-of-school-time programs as they seek to make up for the loss of instructional time millions of children have experienced during the pandemic. An equally daunting task faces arts institutions as performance spaces, museums and other venues reopen while audiences decide what they want and need from the arts post-COVID. We plan to continue responding with the flexibility called for at this uncertain time.

We end by noting that one way in which we believe Wallace can contribute to recovery—and national healing—is through our continued dedication to knowledge generation in our fields of interest. By providing credible information and ideas about everything from developing high-quality principals to fostering participation in the arts and nurturing children’s social-emotional development, our work aims to help shape effective policy and practice adapted to the local context. Along the way, we hope that our efforts can also solidify respect for the facts and the need for common understanding.
NEW PUBLICATIONS AND MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES FROM WALLACE
Downloadable for free at www.wallacefoundation.org

BUILDING AUDIENCES FOR THE ARTS

PUBLICATIONS

The Alchemy of High-Performing Arts Organizations
Interviews with leaders of 20 high-performing organizations suggest that financial success for arts organizations begins with high-quality art that resonates with an organization’s community.

Arts Organizations’ Early Response to COVID-19 Uncertainty: Insights from the Field
More virtual content, more experimentation and more emphasis on social impact could be features of the arts during the early 2020s in response to the pandemic and other uncertainties.

Data and Deliberation: How Some Arts Organizations are Using Data to Understand Their Audiences
An evaluation from Wallace’s Building Audiences for Sustainability initiative examines the rewards and challenges of using data and market research to help counter the trend of declining arts audiences.

Global Arts Live Tests New Format, New Name to Draw New Audiences: A Discussion Guide
This tool, which is based on a 2019 journalistic account of an arts presenter’s rebranding efforts, seeks to help arts administrators draw lessons from the piece that they can use in their own audience-building efforts.

Navigating Uncertain Times: A Scenario Planning Toolkit for the Arts and Culture Sector
This set of worksheets and other materials is designed to help arts organizations think through how to respond to various possible future conditions.

VIDEOS

Reimagining the Future of the Arts: A Conversation Series
In the wake of the pandemic and movement for racial justice, arts researchers and practitioners convene online in a series of recorded discussions where they share insights and strategies to help inform the response of arts organizations to the months (and years) ahead. In 2020, the episodes were:

Video Replay: What Audiences Want From the Arts as the Pandemic Rages On
Panelists in the first installment of the series examine how COVID-19 and urgent conversations about racial justice are transforming the arts.

Video Replay: What Can Organizations Learn from High-Performing and Turnaround Arts Organizations?
Panelists explore how organizations can maintain relevance and resilience through COVID-19, economic pressures and the national reckoning with racial justice.

Video Replay: How Can Nonprofit Arts Organizations Plan for the Future with So Many Unknowns?
Panelists examine how organizations can approach scenario planning in light of COVID-19, the reckoning with racial justice, and other pressing factors.
**SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

**PUBLICATIONS**

*Changing the Principal Supervisor Role to Better Support Principals: Evidence from the Principal Supervisor Initiative*
After six school districts worked intensively to change the principal supervisor job to focus on helping principals support high-quality instruction, principals reported that their supervisors were more effective. Teachers’ perceptions of their principal’s performance remained largely the same.

*Leading the Change: A Comparison of the Principal Supervisor Role in Principal Supervisor Initiative Districts and Other Urban Districts*
Six districts in an initiative to refocus the principal supervisor job from administration to principal support had more structures to buttress the reconceived job than other districts, a survey finds, although supervisor practices across all the districts were similar—perhaps suggesting districts nationwide are taking steps to change the job.

*Taking Stock of Principal Pipelines: What Public School Districts Report Doing and What They Want to Do to Improve School Leadership*
School district chiefs believe effective school leadership is key to improving education, but only about half of them are satisfied with the pool of candidates in their principal pipelines, according to this first-of-its-kind national survey.

*Trends in Principal Supervisor Leadership and Support*
Findings from two surveys, fielded six years apart, provide indications that large school districts nationwide are redesigning the principal supervisor job to focus more on principal support.

*Using State-level Policy Levers to Promote Principal Quality*
To try to improve leadership of their schools, seven states have pulled a number of policy levers, from updating principal job standards to changing administrator licensing.

**SLIDE PRESENTATIONS**

*Effectively Communicating About Principal Pipelines: Key Findings From Qualitative Research With Superintendents, School Board Members and State Education Officials*
Education officials agree that principals are critical to school success and have a “resoundingly positive” reaction to the idea of principal pipelines, but market research suggests a need to build understanding of what a comprehensive principal pipeline looks like.

**VIDEOS**

*Unpacking the Federal Response to COVID-19 in Education*

**SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

**PUBLICATIONS**

*Early Lessons from Schools and Out-of-School Time Programs Implementing Social and Emotional Learning*
The most comprehensive study of social and emotional learning implementation to date offers early lessons for schools and out-of-school-time programs on how to carry out high-quality social and emotional learning instruction.
**SEL + OST = Perfect Together: A Conference Report**
Afterschool, summer and other out-of-school-time programs can be ideal settings for children to learn and build social and emotional well-being—when skilled and trusted adults are there to guide them, according to this conference report.

**Supports for Social and Emotional Learning in American Schools and Classrooms: Findings from the American Teacher Panel**
Teachers are confident they can help build students’ social-emotional skills, but say they could use more support to do so, according to a survey.

**VIDEOS**

**Early Findings and Lessons from the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning**
In this recorded webinar, researchers, Wallace staff members and others share initial insights from a Wallace initiative in which schools and out-of-school programs in six communities have built partnerships to foster children’s social and emotional learning.

**Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning**
See early findings and lessons from research about a Wallace-sponsored initiative in which 38 sites in six communities are providing social and emotional learning support for students across schools and out-of-school-time programs.

**SUMMER LEARNING**

**PUBLICATIONS**

**Every Summer Counts: A Longitudinal Analysis of Outcomes from the National Summer Learning Project**
The largest and longest study of its kind on summer learning programs reveals short- and long-term benefits among students who consistently attended voluntary, five- to six-week summer learning programs.

**Getting Support for Summer Learning: How Federal, State, City, and District Policies Affect Summer Learning Programs**
This report provides guidance to summer learning program leaders on navigating public policies that support, or constrain, summer learning efforts.
FIND OUT MORE

Would you like to find out more about The Wallace Foundation? Please visit our website at www.wallacefoundation.org, where you can learn about the foundation’s:

- How We Work With Grantees: http://www.wallacefoundation.org/how-we-work/how-we-work-with-grantees/Pages/default.aspx
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Our mission is to foster equity and improvements in learning and enrichment for young people, and in the arts for everyone.