

THE COMMUNITY IS A KEY SOLUTION TO EDUCATIONAL INEQUITIES

A SUMMARY OF THE



FOUNDATION

EDUCATE, EMPOWER, ELEVATE

CO-CREATION

PROJECT



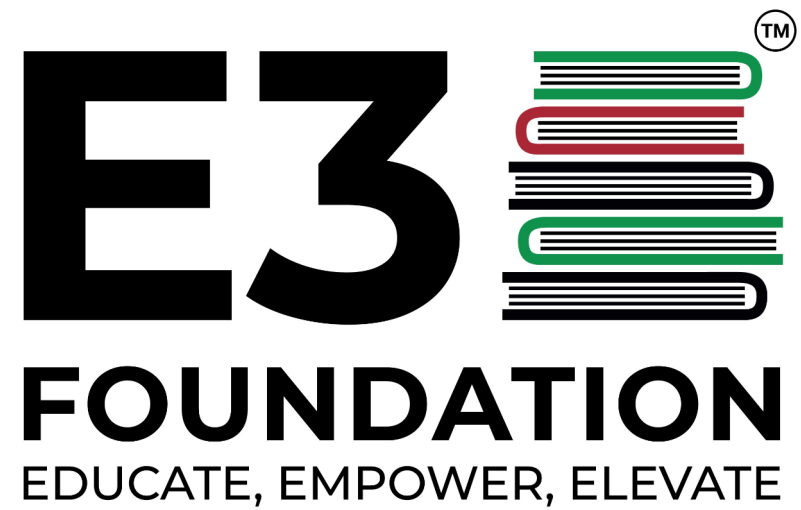
*Photo Credit - Zach Vessels*

[www.thee3group.com](http://www.thee3group.com)

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# About E3

## E3 – Educate, Empower, and Elevate

is a community-based organization that seeks to empower Black and Brown families and educators to address the systemic challenges that affect them not only in education, but all inequitable systems that exist and elevate their collective agency in the South.

### To accomplish its mission, E3 works to:

-  Educate Black and Brown families through culturally competent, relevant, and sustaining environments;
-  Empower through the coalition building of Black and Brown leaders, Black educators, Black and Brown led organizations, and Black and Brown children and families, and
-  Educate Black and Brown families through culturally competent, relevant, and sustaining environments;

E3 envisions a community that embodies a healthy ecosystem for racial and economic justice for Black and Brown people and embraces the brilliance of our people to solve their problems and co-create their future.

For more information about E3, visit [www.TheE3Group.com](http://www.TheE3Group.com) or contact Executive Director Audrey KS Lane [Audrey@TheE3Group.com](mailto:Audrey@TheE3Group.com)

# The Co-Creators

For the last 18 months, E3 worked to recruit, engage, and partner with five Black-led community-based organizations in the Charleston region. These Co-Creation partners included the following organizations:



Beyond Our Walls, Inc. (BOW) is a nonprofit dedicated to offering neighborhood students, K-12, healthy meals and academic, mental, and social activities at the Neighborhood Learning and Activity Center in North Charleston. Their services afford parents peace of mind and support at no cost. The organization equips students with the technology and resources to support schoolwork and literacy. In addition, they equip parents with consultation and materials to address the progress of their children in school.



The Carolina Teen Center is dedicated to educating and promoting healthy lifestyles for the underserved teenage population in rural communities. Founded in September 2012, it opened as a teen after-school center geared toward non-violent male and female youth who are at risk of incarceration in addition to catering to anti-bullying, childhood obesity and other prevention services. The center provides services to teenagers between the ages of 12 and 17, free and available to any teenager who is enrolled in school.



Charleston Promise Neighborhood understands children have a better chance for a bright future when they have access to quality education, health care, and community support. They believe in treating the whole child through education, health services, and supporting families and the community. Since 2010, they have collaborated with four early learning and elementary schools in under-resourced Charleston neighborhoods. They believe working together ensures children continue to progress academically and are ready to contribute to its community's workforce and economy.



Lowcountry Black Parents Association (LBPA), a nonprofit member organization. Through opportunities for continuing education and professional development provided through E3, LBPA has been able to enhance its knowledge base and develop strategies for improving parent and community engagement. It is through their vision of seeing education communities where black parents and guardians are actively engaged in closing the academic achievement gap for black students, they can achieve their mission to inform, educate, and empower black parents and guardians to successfully advocate for black student's academic achievement.



Lowcountry Youth Services, a community-based nonprofit that provides Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties youth with the tools they need to succeed in every area of their lives. The organizations aimed is to provide the support to young men in the community through mentoring programs and community workshops. Their belief is that every child can benefit from structured support, and every child can win if given the opportunity! Since its inception, LYS has served over 700 young men and women and their families through its number of mentoring programs.

The content of this report was co-created with the co-creation team of leaders throughout the time we worked together.

# Acknowledgments

## From the Founding Partners

The guiding principle and north star for E3 Foundation is that those most impacted by educational inequity in Charleston—people of color—must be at the center of all decision-making. There will be no racial and economic justice for Black and Brown families if we do not shift who leads and establishes the education agenda to the people in the community who are connected, or as we say, have established “skin in the game.”

The initial phase of creating the community-centered table requires listening and learning from the community about their desires for their children and a plan for ongoing engagement to ensure a sustained commitment to the work and not just a moment of isolated, non-strategic action. This work is visible in our first report titled, **WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN? LISTENING TO AND LEARNING FROM FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS DURING A PANDEMIC.**

The co-creation process with this group of amazing community-based organizations, represents E3’s next step in elevating the voices of the often unheard. These unheard voices are further silenced and muffled by the sorted and challenging racial history of the Charleston region. The remnants of this history leave a region where trust has to be rebuilt and the agency of those unheard activated. Rebuilding trust involves having the right leaders and messengers re-established as the dominant force to lead the community work and ongoing engagement. Therefore, throughout this process, we intentionally collaborated with grassroots organizers, community leaders, and stakeholders who are closely connected to the community to convene the intended beneficiaries of this work around their vision for education and equity-focused solutions.

This work would not have been possible without the first investment in our state by the Walton Foundation. With this investment, the E3 Foundation was able to leverage the genius of this group of co-creators and incentivize their organizations for their time over the last year. Thank you to Ms. Joyce Nesmith, Beyond Our Walls; ReSzaun Lewis, Lowcountry Youth Services; Sherrie Snipes-Williams, Charleston Promise Neighborhood; Lisa Hart, Carolina Teen Center; and Anjene ‘AJ’ Davis, Lowcountry Black Parents Association.

Thank you to our parents and educators in our region for the opportunity to work on your behalf each and every day. We are both humbled and honored to do this work with you and for you. To all of the inaugural ParentFest supporters, contributors, presenters, and participants, we thank you for an exciting day of celebration for our parents and families. Thank you to our back-to-school partners, the City of Charleston, Every 1 Voice Matters, Positive Vibes, Ronjanane Smith, and Acts of Kindness.

And a huge shout out to the most supportive, thoughtful, strategic board members, Michelle, Sherman, Ashley, and Crystal (former). You guys rock!!

In service to our students, families, and community,

*Audrey KS Lane*  
*Founding Partner/Executive Director*  
*E3 Educate, Empower, Elevate*

*LaTisha Vaughn*  
*Founding Partner/Chief Programs Officer*  
*E3 Educate, Empower, Elevate*

# The E3 Board

If the adage is true the thing reaped is the very thing sown, multiplied a hundred-fold. Then if you don't like what you are reaping, you had better change what you have been sowing. Thus, it is long past time to sow a new seed in public education in our community. The question Black and Brown parents, students, educators, and community members find themselves asking far too often is why we must solely depend on others to sow the seeds in education and why does no one trust us to sow our own seeds.

This report is a labor of trust building and the result of tilling the ground in preparation for a new harvest. For this we acknowledge and give thanks to our co-laborers: BOWS, Carolina Teen Center, Charleston Promise Neighborhood, Lowcountry Black Parents Association, and Lowcountry Youth Services.

This report is also the labor of community leadership and the result of watering the ground in preparation for a new harvest. For this we acknowledge and give thanks to the Walton Foundation for recognizing money is not the seed, but the water.

Most importantly, we acknowledge and give thanks to the Black and Brown parents, students, educators, and community members who are the seeds of change. We are listening and learning.

*Michelle Mapp, Esq.*  
*Board Chairperson*  
*E3 Foundation*

# Executive Summary

For decades South Carolina's students have continued to perform in the bottom quartile on all measures of academic achievement. For far too long the communities that are most impacted by systemic inequities have been left out of the conversations about how to solve their own problems, proving the current models of change to be ineffective in providing solutions to systemic problems. Beginning in February of 2022, the E3 Foundation partnered with five community-based organizations (CBOs) as critical thought partners to the barriers facing our communities' families and children. For over a year the group met: researching, brainstorming, strategizing and creating. The results of this partnership included two annual community-based events that directly impact and empower families to advocate for their children, and a long-term plan for coalition building.

However, in addition to the previously mentioned results, the group had several reflections and specific recommendations to guide future community-based work. These reflections and recommendations are relevant to not only other CBOs and educational institutions, but also to philanthropic organizations, funders, and systems that support the education of Black and Brown families. These reflections and recommendations are guideposts for the work that we do, which should always be centered on the voices of those most impacted by inequities and the people who are "doing the work."



## Build Collaborative Spaces

We Must Convene and Connect. Our strategy should be to build collaborative, cross-sector spaces where organizations and individuals can learn together and create innovative solutions that lead to an ecosystem of racial and economic justice.

There are a lot of individuals and organizations doing great work in our community.

There must be time for us to come together to learn more about how our work aligns and how our uniqueness can support the overall goal of a system that produces racial and economic justice for its participants. Impactful solutions will not be created if we continue to work in isolation and will not address the root cause issues.

Each organization uniquely fits into an ecosystem in a way that can collectively support the transformation of our community. We will never discover our unique assets if we never have the time or space to collaborate.



## Partner to Build Capacity

Capacity Building is Imperative. Partner with local, regional, and statewide organizations that are currently doing capacity building work to serve as a resource and support for coalition members.

Many times well-resourced organizations led by those outside of the community do not have a connection to the community that they are intending to serve. While CBOs have a passion for the work and the relationships to do the work they often lack the capacity and infrastructure to scale their work and impact more people.

Capacity building resources for those organizations and individuals that are already established in the community is a key component for moving to effective, scalable solutions centered with the community's voice.

### 03 Convene to Co-Create

One of the goals of our convening and collaborating should be to create solutions.

CBOs are uniquely positioned to create small tests of change within their respective community due to the proximity of their work to the problems. Established CBOs are already positioned in the community and have earned the credibility to co-create with its residents due to longstanding relationships and presence.

As it relates to equitable educational options, CBOs are uniquely positioned to co-create solutions for Black and Brown children and families that:

- Support a positive racial identity
- Close gaps in achievement
- Increase advocacy skills

Convening should serve a purpose and one of those purposes should be creating solutions.

### 04 Advocate

The inevitable work that all community-based organizations do is actually “system’s change” work and cannot be done without a focus on advocacy. Practices are influenced by policies and legislation. Therefore, systemic changes cannot be made without a focus on root cause issues. Many of the barriers that our communities face driven by policies encoded into our systems which have become common practice. Therefore, it is our role as those in the community, closest to the issues, to continue to advocate for changes in the current system, using our co-created solutions as proof point models of change. Without advocacy as a key component of our work, nothing will systematically change.

### 05 Build Coalitions

Expanding the coalition of like-minded individuals, organizations and institutions that are committed to the liberation of the community cannot be understated or undervalued. History has shown the power of grassroots movements done well. As a community we must continue to meet as a co-creation team and expand our members to build a true coalition of Black and Brown led organizations in the tri-county region. The purpose of this coalition is to learn from one another, support one another’s work, continue to collaborate to create solutions for the community by the community, increase capacity, and collectively advocate for change.

These reflections and recommendations will guide our future work. We will share these broadly to our community and community-based organizations, grassroots and grassroots leaders, philanthropic organizations and funders. We will share these because they are best practices, they are what will move our community forward, and they provide a framework for our convening, organizing and advocacy efforts that will ultimately create better educational options for Black and Brown students and their families. These reflections provide guidance not only on the work that must be done, but the way that the work must be done. They align with our organization’s north star, to ensure those most impacted by inequities are educated, empowered, and elevated to exercise their collective agency in the South.

“

**THE ISSUE IS BIG;  
SO, THE SOLUTION NEEDS  
TO BE AUDACIOUS!**

”

# E3 Background

The state of South Carolina can be described as the tale of two ‘states.’ It is home to the city of Charleston, S.C., voted as one of the top three destinations in the world for over five years. International corporations like BMW, Boeing, Volvo, Mercedes Benz, and Michelin, make the state one of their major corporate homes and employ thousands of residents and pumps millions of dollars into the economy. Astronauts Dr. Ronald McNair and Major General Charles Bolden are both natives of SC and graduates of SC public schools. Major General Bolden served as the 12th Administrator of NASA appointed by President Barack Obama, and two of the nation’s top high schools reside in the Charleston County School District.

Yet for decades, SC has been ranked in the bottom percentile as it pertains to public education—especially the educational outcomes for students of color. There has been a consistent struggle pre- and post-integration for students of color to access a high-quality and equitable education. The state was also home of the landmark case of Briggs v. Elliot which was later a critical case within Brown v. Board of Education.<sup>1</sup> Despite consistent efforts aimed at school improvement during the No Child Left Behind years—new and improved curriculum and instructional strategies, single-gender classes, school closures, reconstitution of staffs, and of course an infusion of financial resources—the academic achievement of South Carolina’s children has remained persistently stagnant and the gap in achievement between black and white students has not been closed.<sup>2</sup> More specific to the Charleston region, the three years prior to the pandemic, student proficiency remained relatively stagnant. Black and Hispanic student proficiency has lagged behind their White counterparts on an average of almost 40 percentage points and 30 percentage points, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

In the wake of June 17, 2015 shooting at Charleston’s Emanuel AME church—in which the lives of nine Black parishioners were lost—a diverse group of individuals answered a call to action by a local philanthropist to put aside their differences and unite around one agenda: ensuring a great school for every child in Charleston County. After several meetings in the fall of 2015, a small group of individuals, including E3 Founding Partners, came together and facilitated a larger convening in March 2016 with national experts Kaya Henderson, Chris Barbic, Neerav Kingsland, and Dana Peterson. One would consider this event a success in that over 300+ community members attended the morning forum. However, LaTisha Vaughn and Audrey Lane recognized that the most impacted voices would not be heard on a Wednesday morning at 9 am. So they proposed that the guests be invited a day earlier to meet with parents, educators, and other community members and use this information in the morning session. Fifty educators and parents attended a community meeting where Neerav Kingsland (previously with The City Fund) noted the following: *“In education reform, a common critique is that reform is done to a community. ...when I visit cities I often give a talk, meet some political and philanthropic leaders, and then fly out. This is ...the wrong thing to do. On this trip, our hosts had us spend two hours with teachers and families at a public meeting before we opened our mouths. I got to hear what some educators and families were going through; what their struggles were; what their hopes were.”*

1 The Post and Courier. Timeline: Public education in South Carolina. See graphic “Looking back at how the state has failed to prioritize the education of black children”:

<https://data.postandcourier.com/saga/minimally-adequate/page/11>

2 NAEP Report Card 2022

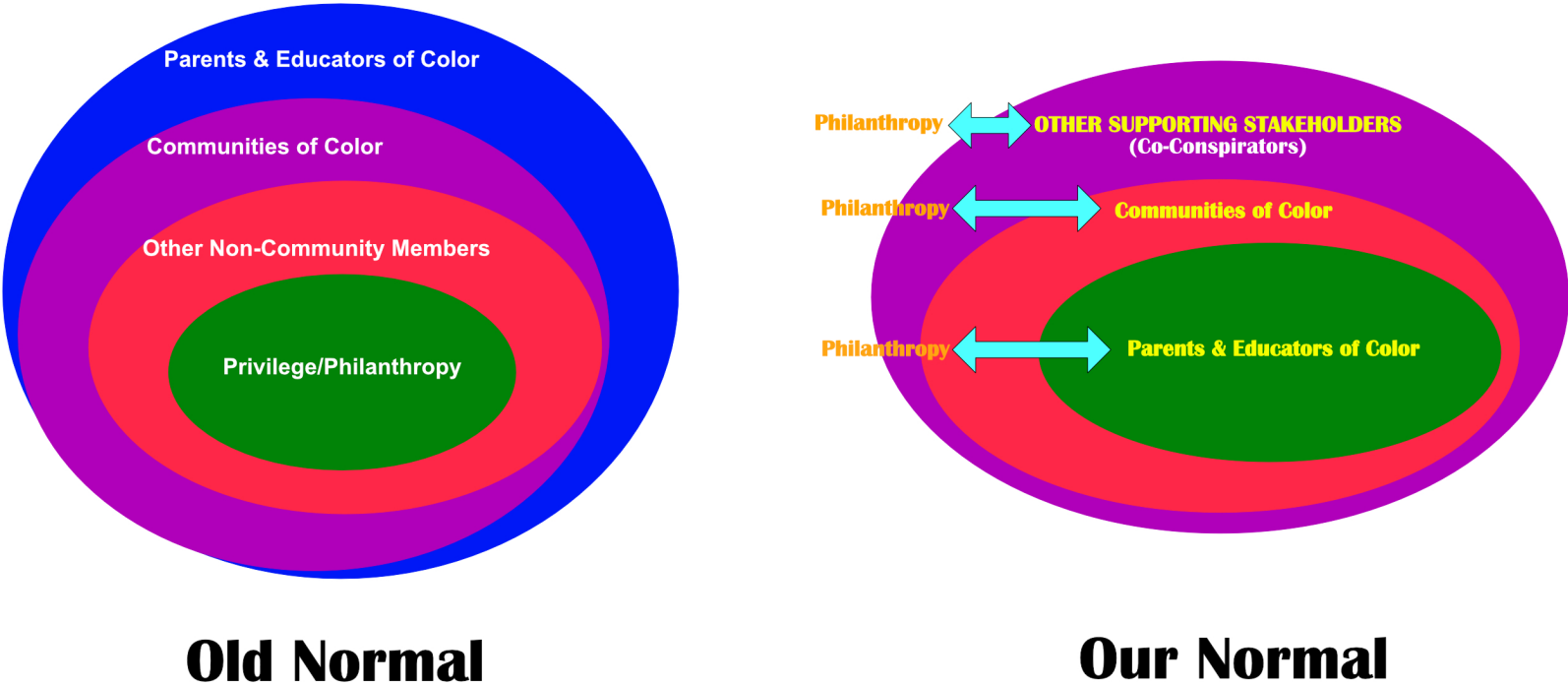
3 Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative. Regional Education Report Chapter 5: Disruption. April 2019.

This was the start of E3 - Educate, Empower, and Elevate.

E3 decided then to take the bold step to fill the voids in the community related to educational equity from a community-based assets approach that centers racial equity. But as the years have gone by since our inception, we recognized that we could not impact the educational system alone because our students and families were impacted by other systems with the same or greater disparities every day of their existence: housing, healthcare, workforce, transportation, criminal justice. We have grown our organization to shift who leads and establishes the agenda from grassroots leaders who likely have little to no connection to the community of students and families and their schools and communities, to the people in the community who are connected, or as we say, have established “skin in the game.”

Almost eight years post-an Emanuel Nine rallying cry for major reform for the students of this region, sadly not much progress has been made. We have discussed, convened, facilitated a convening with national leaders, and reviewed data up, down, and sideways. The region’s newspaper, Post & Courier, even published a Pulitzer prize-winning five-part series entitled “Minimally Adequate Education” detailing the great historical disparities in public education across our state<sup>4</sup>. However, of all the work that has been done in Charleston, there has not been one, singular organization that has owned the collective responsibility of engaging communities of color that are most impacted by the racial and socioeconomic disparities with the sole purpose of centering Black and Brown communities as the experts in their own liberation.

Figure 1.



*The normal way of doing things versus our way of doing things...  
community at the center versus whiteness/privilege at the center.*

E3 primarily serves Black and Brown leaders, Black educators, Black and Brown-led organizations, and Black and Brown children and families. These groups represent historically marginalized communities that have been systematically removed from the solutions to the issues in their community. Our geographic region encompasses the Charleston region across the tri-country spanning rural, urban, and suburban. However, our work has stretched statewide over the past 18 months.

Throughout the years E3 has continued to advocate for and alongside those most impacted by inequities. In 2021, at the height of the pandemic, E3 partnered with Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative and several other community based organizations to elevate the voices of children and families through their joint report **“What About the Children: Listening to and Learning from Families and Professionals During the Pandemic.”** This report helped the community to see the immediate and potentially long-term impact of the pandemic on the families and professional who were working daily to ensure impacted communities had access to resources.

E3 sits as a unique gem in the Charleston region. There is no other organization in the region led by two Black women. Very few organizations’ leadership has the depth of knowledge that is a result of working inside and outside of the traditional education and adjacent sector systems. And finally, there are no other organizations led by two women who are connected to the community and connected to systems’ leaders because of our professional and personal experiences.

The four main focus areas for E3 are:



### Co-Creation Project:

The Co-Creation Project is a facilitated process to co-create a vision for education focused on Black and Brown Children, specifically in the state of South Carolina. This project allowed E3 to partner with five Black-led community-based organizations for over one year. The purpose of the ongoing partnership was to gain critical thought partnership and strategic advice from organizations that were doing transformational work in the Charleston Region and who were in close proximity to the children and families that we intend to impact. Specifically, E3 facilitated conversations about collaborative solutions:

- For organizations that directly serve Black and Brown children with the goal of attracting more national funders to support the work of the CBOs;
- For on the ground organizers who directly connect with children and families as a way to mobilize parents around key issues that impact Black and Brown children;
- For Black and Brown educators who are uniquely connected to Black and Brown children and families through education and community-led spaces, and
- That actively engages and influences issues that support the liberation of Black and Brown families.



## Regional Talent Strategy:

Numerous reports over the last decade have chronicled that ALL students, but specifically Black students, benefit from Black teachers. But in the Charleston region, only 12% of the teaching population identifies with the representation of over 40% of Black students. These numbers have remained stagnant for over 10 years. In 2018, of Charleston County School District's 3,312 teachers, 2,336 (71%) are White women and 456 (14%) are White men compared to 383 (12%) Black women and 72 (less than one percent) black men. Further, there are more white males than teachers of color, both men and women. Therefore, E3 is working to facilitate the creation of a pipeline of community-centered, entrepreneurial focused teachers and leaders with a strong bias for teachers and leaders of color that will advocate and change the academic trajectory of students of color in Charleston. We will create this necessary pipeline by facilitating the first-ever community-recruitment team composed of retired Black educators, community members, current Black educators, and school district HR staff along with alternative pipeline organizations.



## Advocacy, Organizing and Coalition Building:

On the ground organizers are key to E3 achieving its mission. Our goal is to ensure parents, caregivers, children, and other key stakeholders are educated, informed and able to advocate for themselves and their children when issues of inequities in education, and adjacent systems arise. Too often people who are not connected to the Black and Brown community are advocating on their behalf. And although allies are important, the ability for the people who are closest to the inequities to speak for themselves is our goal. Our organizers listen, assess, create, and educate. This process allows us to address the issues with clarity, co-develop solutions, and work alongside our children and families to implement those solutions.

Advocacy is a natural extension of our organizing efforts. We believe that our advocacy efforts are directly influenced by the voices of the intended beneficiaries of our work. While our organizers are focused on listening, assessing, and co-creating solutions to the issues in the community, we have realized that we also must address the systemic barriers that our children and families face, and that advocacy is imperative and necessary.

Most recently E3's efforts include organizing, co-founding and coordinating ProTruthSC. ProTruthSC is a growing grassroots coalition of organizations and concerned citizens from across the Palmetto State and beyond. The founding members of the coalition are E3 Foundation, Lowcountry Black Parents Association, ACLU of South Carolina, and NAACP Legal Defense Fund. ProTruthSC was formed to ensure that our children learn an accurate history of our country and state so they can grow up to be informed and engaged adults. The mission is to protect and expand the teaching of diverse and inclusive history in South Carolina. For the last two legislative sessions, the coalition has engaged in the #ProTruthSC campaign which fought against several bills in the South Carolina House and Senate that could prohibit and censor the teaching of history and current events of Black, Indigenous, Jewish, and LGBTQ+ communities.



## Partnerships and Workforce Development:

The Lowcountry Careers Collaborative (LCC) is an initiative developed by the Charleston Chamber Foundation through the Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber), in conjunction with E3. The project aims to bridge historical gaps in representation within workforce development to ignite inclusive and equitable growth that is equally beneficial to industry, the economy, and workers. LCC's initial focus is healthcare – the Lowcountry Healthcare Careers Collaborative (LHCC), and one of the region's largest employers and providers, Roper St. Francis Healthcare serves as the Backbone Organization. As a result of this work, in partnership with the Chamber Foundation, Roper St. Francis, training partners, wrap-around service providers, and employers, we are committed to developing an equity-centric, employer-led approach that builds upon our existing regional training systems to offer pathways to higher level careers by:

- Empowering underserved populations to seek opportunities in promising sectors;
- Collaborating across sectors to address skills gaps identified by employers, and
- Addressing workforce barriers that have prevented inclusive and equitable growth.



“

WE NEED TO LEAN INTO THIS TYPE  
OF DATA TO BE A GAME CHANGER  
FOR **BLACK STUDENT**  
OUTCOMES AS EARLY AS  
**KINDERGARTEN.**

”

# The Call

In February of 2022, the E3 Foundation (E3) entered into partnership with five community-based organizations to re-envision education from the perspective of students, parents, and those who are closely working with families that are typically underserved. Those organizations were the Beyond Our Walls (BOW), Carolina Teen Center, Charleston Promise Neighborhood, Lowcountry Black Parents Association, and Lowcountry Youth Services. In addition to re-envisioning education, the group agreed to work with E3 to build a collaborative for organizations that directly serve Black and Brown children with the goal of attracting more national funders to support the work of the CBOs. The group also agreed to focus on providing resources and support for on the ground organizers who directly connect with children and families as a way to mobilize parents around key issues that impact Black and Brown children. Finally, through our partnership the organizations agreed to collaborate on issues that support the liberation of Black and Brown families.

This partnership was groundbreaking in the history of the work of E3 because it allowed the organization to financially invest in those five community-based organizations for their time and critical thought partnership, eliminate silos that typically exist in the work that we do, and think together about creating a system of support focused on common goals for the families that we collectively serve.



# The Process

**February 9, 2022** was the launch meeting for the Co-Creation Project. The agenda for the meeting included setting the purpose by diving deep into the mission and vision of E3, discussion of the vision of the co-creation project and the intended project outcomes. The meeting also provided opportunities for the group to begin exploring other ideas that would support the overall goal of our work together. Finally we discussed the logistics of the partnership including the MOU, meeting schedule and next steps.

**March 29** was the group's first in person meeting. The meeting began with an activity focused on getting a better understanding of the work of each organization, the barriers to effectively doing the work and the possible alignment of the group's bodies of work in these three areas: Facilitating the Education of Students, Increasing the Agency of Parents, and Engaging Other Stakeholders. This conversation helped us to think more deeply about how we could collaborate more in some aspects of our work and the needs that we have individually and collectively.



Below are the tables with summary of the group's discussion points:

**Chart 1.**

## Current Programs of the CBOs to Facilitate the Education of Students

After School Think Tank	Summer Camps (x3) - STEM Camps	Back to School Bootcamps (Students)	Tutoring	1:1 Homework Assistance with Acprg cb Rc_of cprq
Young Men Rise	Queen's Being Mentoring	Distinguished Gentleman's Club Mentoring	Community PODS	Provide Incentives for Teacher and Student performance
Community Workshops	Field Experiences for Children	Internship/Business Programs for Children ex: artisan program		

## Barriers to Facilitating Education of Students:

- »»» Availability of certified teachers for out of school time
- »»» Lack of cohesion/collaboration
- »»» CCSD Afterschool Program offerings - Buy in
- »»» Funding
- »»» No infrastructure for out of school time
- »»» Transportation to out of school programs

Below is a table with a summary of the discussion points:

**Chart 2.**

## Current Programs of the CBOs to Increase the Agency of Parents

Parent Advocacy Committee	Advocacy Toolkit	Back to School Bootcamp (for Parents)	Empowering Young Men/Women	Space for Children to Support Work Schedules
Father 2 Father	Conditions a part of intake process - Parents sign contract Asked to be engaged	Facebook posts	The Power of Parents - Advocacy Series	Parent Advisory Council

## Barriers to Increasing Agency:

- »»» Babysitting vs program participation
- »»» District reputation/bad experiences in the past
- »»» Current programs for children fall off at age 13
- »»» Demographics of parents/families
- »»» Families lacking resources
- »»» Lack of resources/awareness for parents/accessibility
- »»» Lack of understanding/knowledge of how to advocate for children
- »»» Lack of transportation for families
- »»» Trust with establishment
- »»» Understanding the design and why of programs

Below is a table with a summary of the discussion points:

**Chart 3.**

## Current CBO Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Real Talk Sessions	Joint Literacy Project (Community Partners)	Networking and events to get stakeholders involved	Partnership with the Chamber	Community Connections - Social Gatherings
Coalition Building	Community Engagement Council	Community Workshops	Donor Engagement	Volunteer Opportunities - After school
Educator Collective	Talent Pipeline - Leaders of Color	Corporate Volunteerism		
<b>Barriers to Engagement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>»»» Civic/Municipality support - level of investment</li> <li>»»» Ego/Turf wars</li> <li>»»» Internal capacity/resources</li> <li>»»» Impact of COVID - students, donor, parents</li> <li>»»» Not willing to speak about weaknesses as an organization</li> <li>»»» Scarcity mentality</li> </ul>				

Next, we moved into a discussion which provided a foundation for the project including defining co-creation and a rationale for why E3 chose this method for a collaborative project. The participants were given a pre-read, **Healthy Ecosystem for Racial and Economic Justice** developed by Charleston McDonald, founder of Community Education Partners. As stated on the graphic below, "A healthy ecosystem for racial and economic justice is intentionally co-created to produce healthy life outcomes for current and future generations of all Black and Brown people." Further there are well-defined inputs (left-side) for the ecosystem that lead to the healthy outcomes (right-side) that we want to see for Black and Brown people. This framework for racial and economic justice spurred intense discussion and was adopted as a north star for our work together.

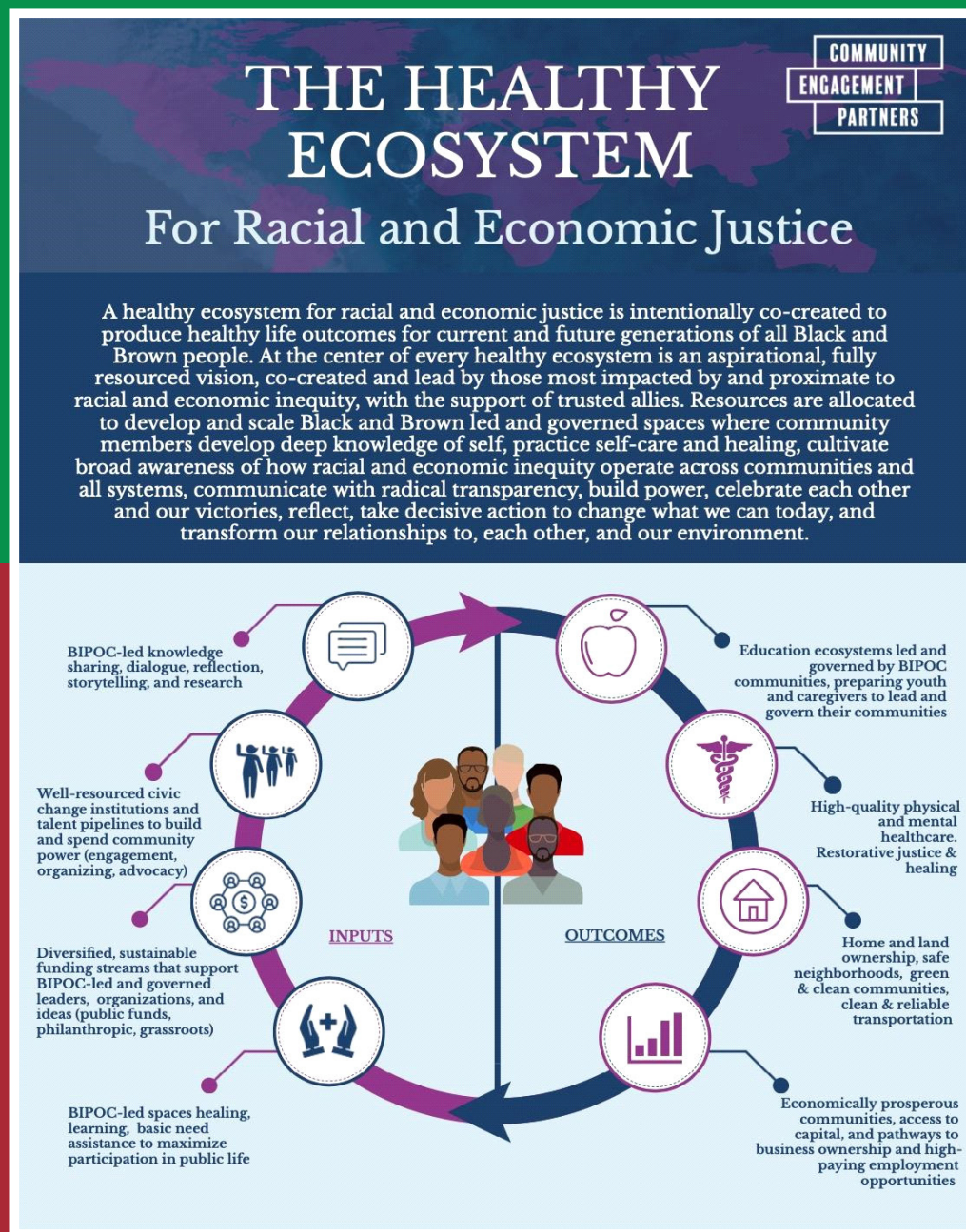


Figure 2.

<sup>4</sup>Developed by Charles McDonald, Founder of Community Educations Partners, <https://www.cepartners.io>

“

WE MUST BE  
ADVOCATES OF WHAT  
**BLACK CHILDREN'S**  
NEEDS ARE.

”

The Co-Creators brainstormed their thoughts about the future of education for Black and Brown families and discussed the following question:

## If we were to do our job, what will education in the region look like in 15 years? (2037)

- »»» A safety net for students outside of the “best” system of schools
- »»» Advocacy in the state legislature
- »»» All children ready to go wherever they want to go
- »»» Black-led homeschool opportunities
- »»» Children have more intentional exposure to experiences outside of our region/ experiential learning
- »»» Community accountability
- »»» Early learning that teaches & embeds confidence
- »»» Elimination of social promotion
- »»» Equipped parents with language & skills to affirm their children
- »»» Excellent schools regardless of zip code
  - Black-led & Brown-led schools
  - Black & Brown centric
  - Multiple proof points
  - Self-affirming space for Black & Brown Children
- »»» Institute of Higher Education graduates who are focused on Black & Brown children
- »»» Tech programs in schools that lead to family wage jobs
- »»» Roadmap for students
- »»» Schools exist that students want to attend
- »»» Schools focused on preparing students to be prepared for global citizenship and economy



During this session, we also began to brainstorm what we wanted to produce as a group. It was as follows:

## What do we want to produce:

- »»» **Connecting the Community**
  - Possible platform for grassroots organizations and funders/donors to connect
- »»» **Infrastructure for Mobility**
- »»» **Learn more and share what is working**
- »»» **Model for Building Coalition**
- »»» **Panel Discussions Centering Success in Our Community**
- »»» **Roadmap/pipeline**
  - How do we build capacity within organizations that are led by Black & Brown people
    - Non-profit bootcamp
      - Infrastructure
      - What it means to be a board member
- »»» **Toolkit-App/OR Code to Access**
- »»» **Workshops**
  - Virtual options
  - Involvement of the business community



**On May 4, 2022** we continued our discussion with more clarity and conviction, focused on what the group felt would be most impactful. We revisited our north star, a Healthy Ecosystem for Racial and Economic Justice, and began to further flesh out our proposed solutions for our community by our community that emphasized connecting, collaborating, building systems for nonprofits doing work with parents and children of color with more specific and detailed actions.

In addition to this conversation, we also introduced two collaborative community-based projects that could jump start our goal of creating a coalition and ensuring our children and families had readily accessible resources.

The first project, Community Wide Assessments, would provide multiple testing sites across the region to test pre-K-5 students in reading and math before school begins. The goal of this event would be to arm parents with information about their child's academic strengths and weaknesses and allow them to speak with a teacher about how to support their child at home, leading into the school year. The second, a regional parent conference, which would focus on empowering parents with the skills and information they need to advocate for their children throughout the school year, connect to other parents, connect to resources, and provide parents access to experts.

We also clarified our agreed upon next steps and actions to build a coalition of Black-led organizations who can continue to build upon this work. These next steps for the purpose of building coalition and capacity for Black-Led organizations that do work in education include:

#### »»» Asset Mapping - Who Are the Organizations Currently Doing Work in this Space

#### »»» Clarity on Five Areas of Building Capacity for Non-Profit Organizations

- Assessing progress
- Connecting to statewide orgs and services
- Creating a roadmap/toolkit to sustain the organization
- Ensuring Equity is centered in all aspects of the organization's work
- Experienced coaching for leaders and nonprofit teams

#### »»» Regional Talent Strategy

- Creating a sense of community among Black-led & Brown-led organizations - social and professional
- Identifying Black & Brown talent for K-12 education and non-profit sectors
  - Learning and growing together
    - Honor tradition
    - Engaging with innovation
- Succession Planning in the non-profit sector



We also discussed the current partners that could serve as resources or allies to the overall project work.

### »»» Resources that were discussed

- Affinity Groups
- CEO support Group
- Fundraising Support
- HR Support
- Together SC

### »»» Executive Leadership Council

### »»» American Express – Developing Leaders

### »»» VIP – Effective Board members

**In June of 2022** we continued to discuss possible solutions to issues within the community with an emphasis on who else needed to be at the table to further our discussions. Using a tool/framework centering on the results we seek, we began to brainstorm sectors, organizations, and people who were adjacent to the work we aim to accomplish. Additionally, we scheduled our first planning meeting for two events which were co-created solutions to many of the barriers that our children and families face:

### »»» ParentFest

### »»» Community Assessment Days

Both events were community solutions to ensuring parents are equipped with the tools they need to actively support their children's education.

**From July 2022 – September 2022**, the group devoted their time to co-planning the two co-created solutions, Community Wide Assessment Days which took place August 7 and 13 in conjunction with two back to school community events and ParentFest, which took place September 17, 2022.

**March 14, 2023**, during our final meeting we reviewed our work together, discussed and received feedback on the draft of the final report and committed to continuing our work together.

Things I struggle  
with as a parent...

Consistency between children (2<sup>nd</sup> that)

Patience / Telling child the same thing Repeating

Taking care of Self And Both Kids

Not knowing myself when I  
don't get it right

\*Judgement\* / Positive Solutions!

“  
**TARGETED INTERVENTIONS** is  
**WHAT WE HAVE TO DO**  
**TO CLOSE DISPARITIES**  
”

# Co-Created Community Solutions

## Community Wide Assessment Days

According to the Brookings Institute “the cumulative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students’ academic achievement had been large.”<sup>5</sup> The Brookings Institute tracked data from immediately before the pandemic, the fall of the onset of the pandemic and one year into the pandemic. The results showed a sizable decrease in scores, significantly more than after a major disruption like Hurricane Katrina and even more concerning was the growth in gaps of achievement between high poverty students and low poverty students.

In addition to the achievement data, during the pandemic families and children were isolated from their communities. Many families were responsible for schooling their children at home without proper support or resources.

Although several community-based organizations stepped-in to fill the gap by creating “hub learning locations for their communities’ children. There were many children who were not served and solely relied on online instruction, which may or may not have been beneficial to them.

Community Wide Assessment Days is a co-created solution to address these issues. Through the community-wide assessment days, we partnered with two local back-to-school events to serve as a resource for families; on August 7, 2022, the City of Charleston First Day Festival Event and August 13, 2022, with Every 1 Voice Matters, Positive Vibes Ronjanane Smith and Acts of Kindness, in North Charleston. E3 hired experienced educators and partnered with Fundamentals of Learning founded by Isis Spann, to train educators on the assessment and the assessment process for the events. During the back-to-school events, the educators:

- Assessed K4 – 5th grade students in reading and math,
- Conferenced with the families of assessed students to review their child’s scores, clarifying where their children were performing academically, and
- Advised families how they could support their children during the upcoming school year, educating them on where their child should be by the end of their upcoming school year and provided strategies on how to partner with their child’s teacher for optimal success.

Through this effort we were able to touch over 50 families with multiple children in the K-5 school system. This was a pilot project that we plan to replicate in more sites this year.

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5 Kuhfeld, Megan, James Soland, and Karyn Lewis. (2022). Test Score Patterns Across Three COVID-19-impacted School Years. (EdWorkingPaper: 22-521). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/ga82-6v47>

## ParentFest

The tri-county region comprises three counties and four school districts. Each school district has their own strategy and approach to general parent education and engagement, however there was no event that 1) brought parents from all four districts together and 2) centered the experience of being a Black parent and/or the Black child experience in education. As a way to fill a tremendous need in our community, the regional ParentFest conference was created.

The purpose of ParentFest is:

- To empower parents with the skills and information they need to advocate for their children throughout the school year;
- To provide a safe space for parents to connect to other parents;
- To connect parents to resources and provide them access to experts;
- To provide mentorship for parents, support beyond the event of the day;
- To celebrate parents and validate their experiences; and
- To center the experience of Black and Brown parents and children.

September 17, 2022, launched the co-creators first regional parent conference. The ParentFest Conference was attended by over 80 total participants including 17 presenters, vendors, and food trucks. During the event, parents and children were celebrated, beginning the day with a Harambee Circle led by Woma Womala and a morning keynote speech from William Jackson of the Village of Wisdom. Parents then transitioned to workshops presented by local and regional experts on topics that they self-selected. Parents were able to choose sessions from topics such as Financial Literacy, Navigating Special Education, What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick, Mindfulness and Self Care During Difficult Times, and Fostering Strong Partnerships with Your Child's School. After morning sessions, the historic Burke High School drumline performed for the crowd during community lunch. The day ended with a live community conversation led by the 8 Black Hands podcasters.

Based on our survey results, the overall experience was rated at 4.9/5 and the team was immediately asked when we were hosting the next ParentFest.



“

ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD  
SUPPORT EACH OTHER.  
AS STUDENTS GET OLDER,  
WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO REFER  
THEM TO PROGRAMS TO KEEP  
THE **SUCCESS** THEY HAVE  
HAD GOING.”

”

# Reflections

## We Must Convene and Connect

- There are a lot of individuals and organizations doing great work in our community.

There must be time for us to come together to learn more about how our work aligns and how our uniqueness can support the overall goal of a system that produces racial and economic justice for its participants. Solutions will not be created if we continue to work in isolation. Each organization uniquely fits into the ecosystem in a way that can collectively support the transformation of our community.

## Collaborating to Create

- The main goal our collaborations should be to create solutions.

Community-based organizations are uniquely positioned to create small tests of change within their respective community due to the proximity of the work to the problem. Established community-based organizations are already positioned in the community and have permission to co-create with its residents due to longstanding relationships and presence.

## Capacity Building is Imperative

- Community-based organizations often have the relationships but not the capacity.

Many times well-resourced organizations led by those outside of the community do not have a connection to the community that they are intending to serve. While community-based organizations have a passion for the work and the relationships to do the work but lack the capacity and infrastructure to scale their work and impact more people. Capacity building resources for those who are already established in the communities that need serving is a key component for moving to effective, scalable solutions centered with the community's voice.



# Recommendations

## »» Build Collaborative Spaces

- Build collaborative, cross sector spaces where organizations and individuals can learn together and create innovative solutions that lead to an ecosystem of racial justice. economic to read racial and economic justice.

## »» Expand membership to build a true coalition of Black-led and Brow-led organizations

- Continue to meet as a co-creation team and expand members to build a true coalition of black and brown led organizations in the tri-county region. The purpose of this coalition is to learn from one another, support one another's work, continue to collaborate to create solutions for the community by the community, and increase capacity.

## »» Partner to Build Capacity

- Partner with local, regional and statewide organizations that are currently doing capacity building work to serve as a resource and support for coalition members.

## »» Convene to Co-Create

- Co-create solutions including equitable educational options for Black and Brown children and families that:
  - Support a positive racial identity
  - Close gaps in achievement
  - Increase advocacy skills

## »» Advocate

- Continue to advocate for changes in the current system, using co-created solutions as proof point models of change.

“

**WE UNDERSTAND OPPOSITION  
WILL COME, AND FUNDERS NEED  
TO STAND STRONG IN SUPPORTING  
WHAT THEY HAVE FUNDED.**

”

# Resources

## **FOOTNOTES**

Page 9

1 The Post and Courier. Timeline: Public education in South Carolina. See graphic “Looking back at how the state has failed to prioritize the education of black children”:

<https://data.postandcourier.com/saga/minimally-adequate/page/11>

2 NAEP Report Card 2022

3 Tri-County Cradle to Career Collaborative. Regional Education Report Chapter 5: Disruption. April 2019.

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4 Developed by Charles McDonald, Founder of Community Education Partners <https://www.cephpartners.io>

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5 Kuhfeld, Megan, James Soland, and Karyn Lewis. (2022). Test Score Patterns Across Three COVID-19-impacted School Years. (EdWorkingPaper: 22-521). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/ga82-6v47>

## **FIGURES/CHARTS**

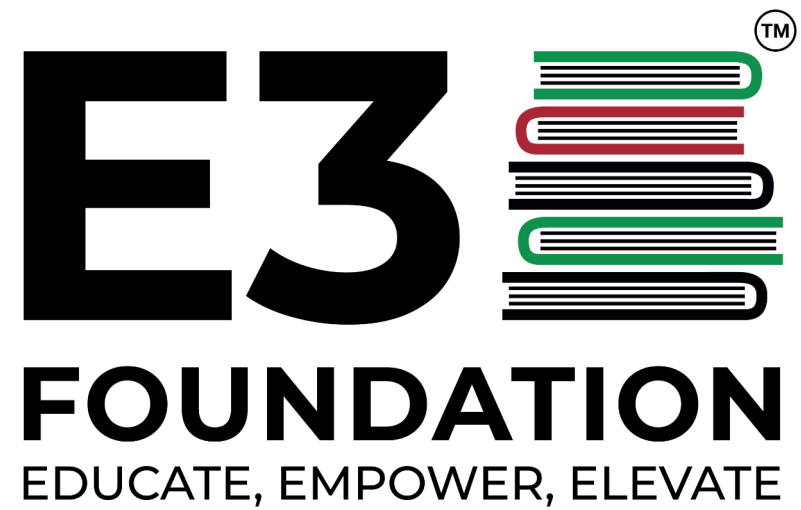
Page 10 – Figure 1. Our Normal v New Normal

Page 17 – Chart 1. Current Programs of the CBOs to Facilitate the Education of Students

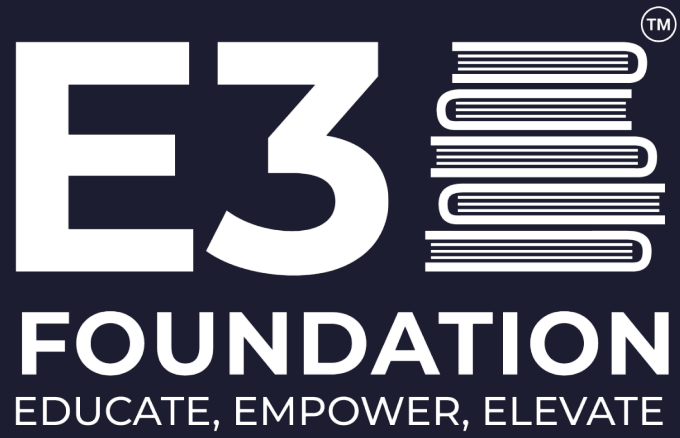
Page 18 – Chart 2. Current Programs of the CBOs to Increase the Agency of Parents

Page 19 – Chart 3. Current CBO Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Page 20 – Figure 2. THE HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM: For Racial and Economic Justice







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