

Our Mission

In pursuit of a just, equitable and inclusive society, Identity creates opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth to realize their highest potential and thrive.

Our Vision

A just and equitable society that nurtures all youth and is enriched by their contributions.

About Identity

We assist students and opportunity youth living in high-poverty areas of Montgomery County, MD who are most at risk for poor social-emotional, academic and work-life outcomes. Identity supports their successful transition into adulthood at school, in the community, and on playing fields with bilingual and trauma-informed programs that strengthen social-emotional wellbeing, and support academic success and job readiness. And we support their ultimate support systems, their families.

Identity is honored to have supported the successful growth and development of tens of thousands of young people since 1998. Identity youth report real improvements in their ability to resolve conflict; speak up for themselves; connect to school, the workforce and the community; and avoid substance abuse and delinquent behavior. Identity youth show improved school attendance and achievement, and their families report improved communication and more involvement in their children's lives

after participating in our programs. Their personal perseverance and ability to push beyond obstacles related to trauma, poverty, language isolation and fear inspires us every day.

Our school-based programs offer social-emotional skill building and academic enrichment. Identity-run Youth Opportunity Centers, based in Takoma Park and Gaithersburg, provide older youth with the tools and supports they need to (re)connect to school and the workforce. Identity's parent education and leadership training helps parents to get involved in their children's schools, and to promote equitable opportunities for all young people. Wraparound services, available to all clients, include recreation, comprehensive family case management, and mental health and substance abuse counseling including family strengthening support for those who have experienced trauma and family separation.



Dear friends and supporters,

This year was like none other—a year upended by a prolonged pandemic and an overdue spotlight on racial injustice that was bookended by an extraordinary outpouring of care and support.

We began the year in celebration of Identity's 20th anniversary by honoring the resilience and achievements of tens of thousands of Identity youth, thanking those whose resources, advocacy and true friendship fuel their achievements, and pledging to never lose sight of the challenges and injustices confronting a growing number of our Brown and Black young people. Our honorees—Co-founder Candace Kattar, civil rights champion Cecilia Muñoz and community activists Neighbors Rising shared their awe for our community's resiliency and dreams of a future where we always rise for one another. This was followed one month later by the launch of the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence, and its first public forum.

We closed the year having been tested and supported in ways we never could have imagined. We were inspired by community members brought to the brink, who once stabilized, helped other vulnerable neighbors cope. We were inspired by staff who worked tirelessly to adapt programs and take on multiple new roles. We were inspired by the outpouring of support from donors and government and philanthropic partners who entrusted us to direct almost \$2 million in emergency aid where it was needed the most. Together, they showed up in creative ways to weave together a safety net to catch nearly 24,000 neighbors whose health, jobs and schooling were threatened by the scourge of COVID-19, racism and anti-immigrant actions.

In between and along the way, we remained laser focused on helping youth improve social-emotional skills, achieve academic success and prepare for work, and advocating for systemic changes that address disparities that leave Latino and other historically underserved youth and their families dangerously vulnerable. We did this while increasing our life-saving case management and mental health support. And, we embraced a new Strategic Plan with an updated mission statement that reasserts our focus on the Latino community while asserting our broader inclusiveness and welcoming approach with all youth from communities disadvantaged by inequities.

What follows is a deeper look at our impact through stories and numbers and our essential role in delivering life-changing services and creating a better Montgomery County.

In an exceptionally difficult year, as in better years, we thank you for trusting Identity with your most precious resource. . . your children.

Un fuerte abrazo,



Diego Uriburu, Executive Director



Stephennute

Board Chair



COVID-19

COVID-19 devastated our client community, as disproportionate numbers of parents and caregivers lost jobs, became ill or both – and many of our young people already struggling to succeed in school were suddenly thrust into the deep waters of distance learning.



Identity responded immediately, not only to keep young people engaged in their education, older youth in their work skills development and parents equipped to help them—but also with lifesaving safety net support and caring human connections to stave off hunger, homelessness and despair in our most vulnerable families. All front-line staff were cross-trained in case management and immediately began connecting current, former and walk-in clients to safety net services.

Between mid-March and September 30, 2020 Provided support and case management to nearly

19,000

different families.

Emergency food assistance was up

519%

compared to the same period last year.

Emergency housing assistance was up

4,771%

compared to the same period last year.

Access to low-cost/nocost internet was up

82%

compared to the same period last year.

Vetted

983

families yielding nearly

\$900,000

in Montgomery County
Emergency Assistance
Relief Program
(EARP) payments
aimed at preventing
widespread eviction and
homelessness.

Distributed

\$356,792

in direct aid to families for food, medicine,rent, baby supplies and other emergency assistance. Reached

2,800

families directly with critical health information to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and take care of ill family members, and reached thousands more through our website.

Completed over

2,943 interventions to help students transition to remote learning.

Community Mental Health

All front-line staff and community promotoras were trained in non-clinical community mental health support techniques to help more youth and families manage the unrelenting stress of the pandemic that exacerbated existing stressors related to unaddressed trauma, the anti-immigrant climate, and fear of hunger and homelessness. Now, clients who need emotional support but not necessarily clinical therapy, have greater access to a trained, empathetic ear, and tools to help cope with stress and anxiety.

Special Projects

- **Fifty-six** Youth Opportunity Center clients made **2,200** reusable masks for distribution to low-income neighbors.
- In partnership with Manna Food Center, Identity trained **11** community promotoras to connect **500** isolated neighbors with food.
- In partnership with the Montgomery County Food Council and Business Leaders Fighting Hunger, we trained Youth Opportunity Center clients to help residents access SNAP.
- In partnership with CAPSMD, we distributed **175** Creative Learning Kits to elementary and middle school students.

Denia C. and Her Family

Denia C. came to Identity in desperation. She and her husband were the sole support for eight young people—her younger sister, her husband's five children, and their two children together. But when COVID-19 hit and her husband was laid off, their savings weren't enough. Denia was in great distress, worried he would take a more dangerous job and get infected. Nightmares of the extreme poverty she experienced as a street vendor in Honduras were overwhelming. In search of a way to save her family, Denia knocked on many doors. Then she found Identity.



An Identity case manager helped her access food and clothing, and shared information on COVID-19 care and prevention. Most importantly, Identity was able to give the family a check for one month's rent, preventing eviction and giving them financial breathing room. Now Denia is paying forward what she can to her community, spreading the word on emergency food, clothing and housing aid to the most isolated and desperate families she knows.



Denia wrote,

"I'm blessed to be able to say that there are wonderful people around me who support me in difficult times and I don't want to miss the opportunity to thank everyone in the Identity program for the support they have given me and my family. God Bless you all."



Highlights

Our unwavering vision of a just and equitable society that nurtures all youth and is enriched by their contributions guided us this year to learn more, speak out more, partner more, and help young people and families facing trauma heal more. And our founding commitment to providing the highest quality services inspired several applied research projects to fuel data driven system reforms.

IMMIGRANT-SPECIFIC ACES

We helped advance the science and body of knowledge of unique Adverse Childhood Experiences suffered during the immigrant journey. By collecting and evaluating data on these experiences with the University of Maryland's School of Public Health, we are increasing awareness and piloting and testing new ways to address these traumas.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

We uncovered a high distrust, among Latino families, of non-relatives caring for young children in a survey revealing attitudes toward early childhood education. Our data helped inform outreach to Latino families and policies in the county-wide initiative to increase kindergarten readiness. Our report, <u>Early Care and Education Needs Assessment Among Latino Families in Montgomery County</u>, also inspired our own expansion of ECE certification training for workforce clients.

EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Identity and the NAACP Parents' Council united the power of two historically disenfranchised communities to form the Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence. Its first big action was to bring together nearly 1,200 people in October 2019 to call attention to ways to remediate documented systemic inequities in Maryland's largest school system. Soon after school moved online, we initiated a study with the University of Maryland School of Public Health to document the barriers to virtual learning among underserved students and what they believe is essential to learn in a remote environment and beyond. Read more about the specific call to action from this unique coalition on page 11.

FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Client feedback and best practices research led to significant programmatic improvements and growth of our intergenerational program. The program helps teens reunite with their families after long separations due to immigration and the extreme levels of trauma caused by that separation, the journey itself, and feelings of being an outsider in their own families.

CENSUS 2020/HAZTE CONTAR!

We reached nearly 20,300 traditionally reluctant or hard-to-reach Latino residents with facts about the importance of being counted in the census, and helped nearly 1,613 people complete it. Identity staff and volunteers were honored with the *Montgomery County Executive's Todos Contamos Award* for bringing in nearly 30 million dollars of state and federal funds to our county over the next ten years.

Socioeconomics

25%

of youth lacked health insurance.

65%

of students received Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS).

12%

of youth lived in a precarious housing situation (rented a room, lived in a shelter or a group home).

75%

of families had an annual income of \$39,000 or less

Family Cohesion:

34%

of youth lived in a single parent home; 14% lived in a restructured family (with stepparents); and 18% lived without either parent.

31%

of youth had been separated from one or both of their parents due to divorce.

52%

of youth had been separated from one or both of their parents due to immigration issues.

9

was the average number of years of separation from a parent because of an immigration issue.

6

was the average number of people living in each household.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES):

90%

of youth had at least one ACE.

37%

of youth had 3 or more ACES.

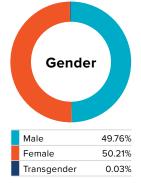
62%

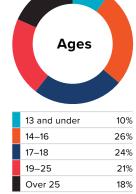
of parents had at least one ACE.

27%

of parents had 3 or more ACES.

Who We Served







US (with Latino heritage)	23%
US (without Latino heritage)	17%
El Salvador	30%
Other Central American and Caribbean Countries	19%
South American Countries	4%
Other	7%



Latino	79%
African-American/ African Origin	16%
Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)	2%
Asian/ Pacific Islander	1%
Other	2%

3975 Clients benefiting 24,000* residents



Social and Emotional Learning

Identity programs are grounded in the Positive Youth Development model and work to increase protective factors such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and conflict resolution skills. Strengthening these factors reduces young people's potential for engaging in risky and negative behaviors, and continues to show positive benefits for years, including outperforming their peers academically (Child Development, meta-analysis 2017). This approach builds on each young person's core abilities and works to increase their self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, healthy relationship skills and responsible decision-making. We bring a trauma-informed approach to all of our programs.

65% of elementary students

of elementary students increased or maintained high levels of persistence as assessed by their teachers.

Out-Of-School-Time Curricula

Our curriculum-based programs build upon youths' strengths and provide them with the social-emotional support to grow into healthy, successful adults. We tailor each curriculum to the appropriate developmental age for students in elementary, middle and high school. The programs address goal-setting, mental health, physical activity and parent-child relationships, and for older youth, reproductive health and substance abuse prevention.

61%

of middle and high school students who reported poor expectations for their future at intake, reported more positive expectations at exit.

High School Wellness Centers

Identity is the lead agency at three of the county's high school Wellness Centers. In partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, Montgomery County Public Schools, and our multicultural partners, Identity manages on–campus centers that integrate social–emotional supports and programs with access to medical care.

62%

of Wellness Center youth who reported poor conflict resolution skills, reported an increase in those skills after involvement in our programs.

Youth Opportunity Centers

The YOC programs emphasize building social–emotional skills to prepare older youth to reconnect to the educational system, prepare for work, and prevent gang involvement. These services are coupled with intensive case management and behavioral therapy, when needed. With our multicultural partners, the YOC staff is helping diverse young adults reach their highest potential.

of YOC youth who reported poor expectations for a positive future believed in a more positive future for themselves after involvement in

our programs.

Support and Reentry Services

Identity offers inmates at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility bilingual programs, pre-placement orientation, individual and family case management, interpretation services and reentry coordination.

163
Inmates were served at the Montgomery County

Correctional Facility.

Recreation

Our bilingual coaches not only provide at-risk youth access to healthy team sports without fees, they teach leadership, conflict resolution and social integration skills. This program may be the only option for our middle and high school players to be involved with competitive sports, as many don't qualify for school teams leaving them especially vulnerable to disconnection.

66%

of youth in the Rec Program who reported poor conflict resolution skills at intake reported an increase in those skills after involvement in the program.



I was 16 and an 11th grade honor student in Honduras. But when our family moved, I had to start over in 9th grade at Gaithersburg High School. I didn't speak much English. I was scared of this big school and big challenge. Then I met the people at the GHS Wellness Center, who immediately treated me like family. I started just going to the Wellness Center every day at lunch with my friends, sometimes after school. I felt like the Wellness Center was my second home, my second family.

Steven's Story

It took me 6 months to learn English— I used Apps, read the dictionary, practiced with my sister. And I was getting A's in all my classes. But there were tough times too, and the Wellness Center staff really helped me, like when I was in a relationship and it was disintegrating and I felt like my world was falling apart. Luckily I had people to talk to at the Wellness Center, and they got me through it.

Although COVID-19 has prevented me and my friends from celebrating the end of our senior year together, my favorite memory will be the fall semester this year when I volunteered to help with younger students in a "Be Yourself" group. I felt like a teacher and part of the staff.

In the fall I will start full-time at Montgomery College. My dream is to be a person who can help the world, like the Wellness Center helped me.



Academic Support

Identity offers engaging, culturally competent academic support to students who have interrupted education or who are falling behind grade level. In mid-March these programs continued on virtual platforms, as well as by phone and text. Our signature wraparound services including comprehensive case management and counseling became even more important as a service available to all students and their families.

Elementary Schools

Identity offered its reading + social-emotional skill-building program in four high need elementary schools: Capt. James E. Daly, Clopper Mill, Stedwick, and Whetstone.

of participants received a grade C or higher in reading.

Middle Schools

Our program at Neelsville Middle School focused on math and STEM. We worked to increase students' social-emotional skills and their connection to school. We also provided afterschool homework help and recreation to increase school connection at Gaithersburg and Montgomery Village Middle Schools.

of participants ended the year with an A or B

High School Wellness Centers

Wellness Center programs strengthened school connectedness and other protective factors that have been shown to lead to better academic outcomes. We also partnered with the schools to offer academic support programs for students who need extra help to thrive in school, such as Wheaton High School's Knight Time, Watkins Mill High School's Wolverine Time and Youth Summit, and Gaithersburg High School's Trojan Experience.

68%

of youth who began the year with a negative perception of school, had a positive perception of school after participating in Identity programs.



Youth Opportunity Centers

For clients who are no longer in school, Identity offered English and Spanish GED classes as an alternative path to a high school diploma, ESOL classes and tutoring hours. In addition, we offered industry–recognized certification classes in collaboration with Montgomery College. When possible, we advocated to re–enroll students in Montgomery County Public Schools.

83%

of youth who had dropped out of school before intake, reenrolled in school or a GED program.

Parent/ Guardian Engagement

We offered education and engagement workshops as a roadmap to deeper involvement in their child's school and education. Workshop topics included increasing parents' understanding of grade level proficiency standards, online homework systems, report cards, teacher conferences, and child and adolescent development. Bilingual parent outreach workers also served as the parents' point of contact and school advocate. Building the ability of parents to engage with the school and their child's education has been shown to directly impact student success in school and in life.

hours of Identity parent education and engagement programming.

Mia and Debbie's Story

Mia struggled to stay engaged in middle school when COVID-19 forced learning online and turned her whole world upside down. Her parents struggled to find work and relied on her to help with five younger siblings. A participant in Identity's after-school social-emotional and academic enrichment program at Neelsville Middle School, Mia was drifting away from both school and Identity's virtual sessions

But thankfully, Mia had a very determined math tutor from JCA Interages that matches older volunteers with our Neelsville students. After missing three sessions with her tutor Debbie, they made up for lost time, working extra hours together so Mia could catch up and finish three weeks of assignments. Mia passed her math class and continued to build her math skills over the summer to prepare for success in school in the fall.

At a time when our kids are desperate for it, Debbie and other volunteers are nurturing their minds while creating connections with caring adults.



Workforce Development

Identity works with youth to prepare them for sustainable, meaningful employment and a firm footing on a career pathway. Our model includes rigorous curriculum-based job-readiness training and industry-valued certification training; career navigation support; internships and paid work experience; mentoring and coaching; and financial and computer literacy training.

We continued our relationship with Montgomery College, which resulted in more clients getting scholarships for professional certifications in Early Childhood Education and as Certified Medical Assistants and Automotive Technicians. We offer other basic certifications such as HIPAA, OSHA, CPR, SafeServ, and Flagger. Our partnership continues with MCPS and Literacy Lab to promote career pathways in education.

When COVID-19 caused the cancellation of spring Internships as well as widespread job losses, we reimagined what work experiences could look like. The YOCs launched innovative projects that helped the community and provided work experience and stipends at the same time.

53

youth passed at least one GED test.

156

youth enrolled in Job Readiness Programs.

35 youth acquired jobs.

124

certifications were awarded.

86

youth acquired internships or work experiences.

56

youth built and sewed 2,200 reusable masks for distribution to low income neighbors.



Nicolas's Story

One of the biggest challenges to fighting hunger during the pandemic has been reaching families in sudden financial distress who are not only isolated by language, but fear accepting benefits no matter how dire their circumstances. YOC participant Nicolas U. completed a paid internship with the Montgomery County Food Council to help them with this challenge. Nicolas says his internship was life changing. He not only gained the confidence to talk to strangers in a professional setting, but also found a passion to help others. For Nicolas, the best reward was helping a desperate mother put food on the table for her three children. When her four-year old got on the phone to thank him, Nicolas says he could barely keep the tears from flowing.

"The best reward was knowing I could change someone's life when I had a chance. This was huge for me."

NICOLAS U.

Identity Youth Opportunity Center Participant, Workforce Development



Wraparound Services

The whole person—the whole family. From our soccer coaches to youth development specialists to parent outreach workers, frontline Identity staff are all involved in identifying the wraparound services each youth and their family members need to transition youth into successful adulthood. This holistic approach has never been more important to our youths' wellbeing than during the pandemic, when so many families were plunged into sudden financial and health crises.

Case Management

Our case management effort went into high gear to serve current and past clients, their families, and walk-in clients from across the county, connecting youth and their families to food, housing, emergency assistance, internet, computers, clothing, legal assistance, healthcare and other nonprofit, and government benefits. Identity's efforts to help the community during the pandemic are detailed on page 3.

5,701
referrals made for emergency food, clothing or housing
—a 323% increase.

Mental Health

Because of the prevalence of trauma among our client population, we routinely assess their ACEs, as well as their parents'. Clinical mental health services are available to all program participants. Also, all non-clinical staff are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma and to help young people and families manage the tremendous emotional impacts of trauma, including COVID-19 and immigration-related traumas.

200 individual clients were treated by Identity mental health courselors

Family Reunification and Strengthening These multi-session healing programs help reconnect youth and their families who have experienced extreme levels of intergenerational trauma and, in many cases, long periods of separation due to immigration.

of the youth who reported a poor relationship with their parents/caregivers reported improvement at exit.

of the adults who reported a poor relationship with their children reported improvement at exit.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention In addition to the prevention skill building woven into our curricula across programs, Identity offers individual and group substance abuse counseling.

of youth who initially reported risky drug or alcohol behavior, reported improved ability to refuse drugs or alcohol at exit.



Community Engagement

Identity champions equitable and sufficient resources, supports and opportunities for Latino and other historically underserved youth as an organization, and in coalition, to bring about systemic changes that would interrupt patterns of underachievement, lost hope and disconnection.

Ensuring Critical Services Reach the Most At-Risk Community

Drawing on deep relationships with the community, local elected officials and policymakers, Identity was at the table as a trusted advisor as the schools and county government responded to the pandemic. Together we raced to break down barriers to virtual education and to safety net, healthcare, and employment assistance. For example, Identity worked to ensure emergency rent assistance and eviction protection was available to people without a traditional lease. We advocated for culturally appropriate and equitable access to MCPS' online learning systems as well as food distribution. When the number of new cases of Covid–19 jumped in the Latino community, we helped the county design and stand up Por Nuestra Salud y Bienestar, an aggressive effort to contain and mitigate the impacts with increased testing, education, treatment, case management and emergency assistance.

Youth and Adult Leadership Academies

Forty parents and youth completed Identity's leadership development program, and we supported another 57 previously trained parent–leaders in their goal to create a more responsive, equitable education system for their children.

Census - Hazte Contar!

Identity led a large-scale effort to encourage residents in traditionally hard-to-reach communities to be counted by filling out the census. We reached nearly 20,300 people at gathering places such as grocery stores, and by canvassing door to door. We helped 1,613 households complete the census, bringing nearly 30 million dollars in federal aid to our county over the next ten years. Our Census team was honored by the County.



The Black and Brown Coalition for Educational Equity and Excellence

The Coalition gathered 1200 parents, activists, and County education and government leaders to reveal the data behind three systemic inequities in the state's largest school system and to push for concrete changes. County government and school leaders publicly committed to move aggressively towards ensuring Black, Brown and low-income students have access to effective and diverse teachers, effective and diverse school leaders, and the rigorous coursework necessary to succeed in college and careers.

Despite the disruption of school in mid–March, the 25 member Coalition kept the focus on key levers of progress, while also working to ensure that students suffering the greatest learning losses due to COVID–19 are not left behind in the recovery. School leaders have reported good progress on access to rigorous coursework, now making acceptance to higher math classes automatic by score instead of by teacher recommendation.



Thank you to each and every funder and donor on behalf of the youth and families whose lives you have touched.

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Celebración20: We marked our 20th Anniversary with over 400 sponsors and supporters, honoring retiring Co-Founder Candace Katter, community group Neighbors Rising, and civil rights activist Cecilia Muñoz. Celebración 20 raised almost \$200,000 for our work, helping move vulnerable youth closer to reaching their highest potential in school, in work and in life. At that time, we also launched the LIFT Fund to provide short-term financial relief to clients facing truly extraordinary crises or hardship. No one imagined how quickly and dramatically the LIFT Fund would be activated as so many lives were upended by COVID-19.

** Our Celebración 20 Sponsors

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Universities at Shady Grove

Financials

Revenue

Local Government Grants and Contracts			
\$4,775,441.00	63%		
Federal Grants and Contracts			
\$458,877.00	6%		
Foundation Grants			
\$1,638,821.00	22%		
In-Kind Donations			
\$191,612.00	3%		
Individual Contributions			
\$258,525.00	3%		
Other Revenue			
\$250,425.00	3%		

\$7,573,701.00



Support of Youth and Families			
\$5,204,088.00	81%		
Management and General			
\$851,325.00	13%		
Fundraising			
\$337,460.00	6%		

\$6,392,873.00

Revenue includes funds promised in FY20 restricted to spending in FY21 or beyond.

Where We Served

After school. In the community. On the playing fields.

We help youth, and the families who love them, improve social-emotional learning skills, achieve academic success and prepare for work. All programs are supported by case management, recreation, parent engagement and education, and mental health and substance abuse counseling.

High School Wellness Centers

- Gaithersburg High School
- Watkins Mill High School
- Wheaton High School

Youth Opportunity Centers

- Crossroads Youth Opportunity Center
- Up-County Youth Opportunity Center

Out-of-School-Time Programs and Family Programs

- Capt. James E. Daly Elementary School
- Clopper Mill Elementary School
- Stedwick Elementary School
- Whetstone Elementary School
- Gaithersburg Middle School
- Montgomery Village Middle School
- Neelsville Middle School
- Redland Middle School
- Montgomery Blair High School
- Seneca Valley High School
- Northwood High School
- Albert Einstein High School

Correctional Facility Reentry Program

■ Montgomery County Correctional Facility

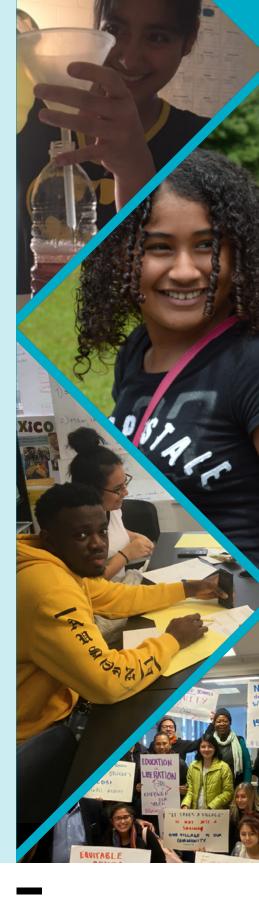
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