



EdSource

# Annual Report 2023

# A Letter from Our CEO

Dear Friends,

At EdSource in 2023, we continued to transform our organization and our journalism, rooted in the belief that all children deserve an equitable education. We are excited about what lies ahead in 2024 and are eager to lead the conversation around important issues in education, both what's working and what's not.

We've been moving at a rapid clip – producing stellar journalism, creating and implementing a strategic plan, and launching a new California Education News Network with funding from the Google News Initiative. It was time for our website to catch up to our speed and boldness, so with the help of a capacity building grant, EdSource recently unveiled a new brand identity and website.

Included on these pages are highlights of the amazing work EdSource has undertaken in 2023. In the year ahead, this work will lay the foundation for exciting new projects.

Thank you for being with us every step of the way.



Anne Vasquez, CEO



## WHAT OUR READERS ARE SAYING

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**EdSource provides valuable, unbiased reporting on the critical issues in education today."**

**I trust the EdSource team to keep me informed and educated with independent reporting and analysis on California schools, colleges and universities. Thank you for being such a vital resource!"**

**I rely on accurate reporting on issues impacting California K-12 education."**

**I believe in fact-based, data-driven journalism. It's the only way to move forward together."**



# Collaborating for Impact

Despite a critical need for trustworthy, independent journalism, newsrooms have continued to shrink nationwide, with record job cuts in the news industry in 2023. As a nonprofit that is the largest education newsroom in California, we feel a responsibility to share this expertise by partnering with other organizations and media outlets in order to bring more quality reporting and analysis to a growing readership.

In 2023, EdSource collaborated with the Associated Press and Stanford University on a data-driven journalism project examining enrollment trends as the world recovers from the pandemic. This data analysis required close collaboration between newsrooms, led on EdSource's team by Investigations and Projects Editor Rose Ciotta. EdSource dove into the data and stories behind a near-doubling of chronic absences (students missing 10% or more of the year) seen since 2020. Alongside the [AP's story on the national trend](#), grounded in Stanford's nationwide dataset, EdSource's journalists dug deep into the issue in California. The result was a multi-part EdSource [special report that included interactive data resources and multiple articles](#) from Betty Márquez Rosales, Daniel J. Willis and Mallika Seshadri, examining both urban Los Angeles and rural districts where growth in chronic absenteeism has been most acute.

EdSource also produced [a podcast episode](#) on chronic absenteeism and convened a [virtual Roundtable with a panel](#) of educators, parents and nonprofit advocates discussing challenges and solutions. Out of this same collaboration with AP, EdSource reporter and podcast host Zaidee Stavely reported in December [on parents opting for children to skip kindergarten](#), with the AP again reporting on this national trend.

Google



## A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR CURATED EDUCATION NEWS

EdSource [announced a partnership with Distributed Media Lab \(DML\) to create the California Education News Network](#) with support from the Google News Initiative. EdSource's editorial team is joining forces with DML, whose platform is embedded online by news organizations nationwide. By curating a roundup of education news stories around the state and country, EdSource is both expanding the reach of its own journalism and helping important stories from other outlets to reach a bigger audience. Collaborations like this help to sustain a free press by bringing education news to a broader audience. Through this partnership, we are ensuring that students, parents and educators are making decisions informed by what is happening in local schools.

## AWARDS



### CA News Publishers Association

#### 1ST PLACE

In-Depth Reporting  
"Gig by Gig at California Community Colleges"

Podcasts  
"Should a small town library be turned into a police station?"

Coverage of Youth & Education  
"Covid challenges, bad student behavior push teachers to limit, out the door"

Informational Graphic  
"Dual Enrollment: Who's In and Who's Out?"

### Institute for Nonprofit Awards

#### 1ST PLACE

Insight Award for Explanatory Reporting  
"A Town's Library Fight Spotlights Inequities"

### Education Writer's Association

#### 1ST PLACE

Investigative & Public Service Reporting  
"Chico State Professor Disciplined for Student Affair"

# Amplifying Key Issues

EdSource makes its journalism available online for free and partners with other media outlets to republish and distribute EdSource content. Reporters and editors frequently share their work in conference and media appearances. Stories that have drawn particular attention this year include:



## COLLEGE IN CALIFORNIA PRISONS

EdSource chose to shine a light on the experiences of incarcerated students who are working to earn college degrees while in prison. The [multi-part special report](#) by reporters Ashley A. Smith and Betty Márquez Rosales included an interactive map of current programs, two podcast episodes and a first-person commentary by a currently incarcerated student. EdSource also produced [a short documentary on a student who successfully transferred](#) from a prison degree program to UC Irvine and will release a full-length documentary on this topic in 2024. This reporting was shared in the New York Times California Newsletter, leading to a kind email of appreciation from one student's former attorney (and a request to re-connect after years without contact). Smith was invited to discuss the story [on KCRW's "Press Play with Madeleine Brand"](#) and pieces from the series have been shared and republished by other outlets.

## NEW FUNDING FOR ARTS EDUCATION

Reporter Karen D'Souza assumed a [dedicated arts education beat](#) for EdSource following the passage of Proposition 28, a state voter initiative that provides historic new funding for K-12 arts education. Karen appeared [on KQED's "Morning Edition"](#) to discuss the implementation challenges around the new law, and her stories and interviews with leading arts education practitioners and stakeholders have been widely shared and republished, including by the Mercury News, San Francisco Chronicle and LAist.



## SUPERINTENDENT TURNOVER

Districts are facing a growing challenge in recruiting and retaining superintendents, particularly since the pandemic began in 2020. EdSource launched a [multi-part special series](#) by reporter Diana Lambert to examine how both retirement trends and political threats are driving the exodus. Given its relevance in California and across the nation, Diana's reporting has been widely republished. EdSource produced a December podcast featuring former Natomas Unified Superintendent Chris Evans and facilitated a live virtual Roundtable with Evans and several other former superintendents.





# Millions of kids are missing weeks of school as attendance tanks across the US

With decades of experience covering complex issues across California's large and diverse state system, EdSource journalists also follow and report on federal policies that touch the lives of all students. Moving forward, EdSource is looking to [expand this coverage](#), retaining its core mission around equity for California students while building partnerships to explore the intersection between state and national stories with more depth.

EdSource has secured new funding that can allow staff reporters to travel and enable collaboration with freelancers and other newsrooms. This reporting will provide examples of education challenges and innovations in other parts of the United States that are of particular relevance and interest to a California audience. It also will put more statewide stories into a nuanced, national context.

EdSource's new partnership with Distributed Media Lab (DML) to create the California Education News Network through the Google News Initiative also ties into this work and will include articles from around the U.S. relevant to California readers.

These types of partnerships are particularly important as newsrooms face unprecedented cutbacks. EdSource has remained consistent in playing its part in the sustainability of a free, independent press. We have developed longstanding partnerships with other news organizations, including the Associated Press, the Los Angeles Times and Bay Area News Group and plan to continue to report together.

Through such collaborations and our own expanded storytelling, EdSource looks forward to producing the same in-depth journalism around California education that we have published for decades while also bringing nuanced understanding of the links between state and national education stories to a wider audience.



# Our Impact

## INFORMING POLICY AT THE STATE LEVEL

- ▶ After EdSource successfully pressed the state in 2022 to release delayed achievement data that could inform post-pandemic interventions, the state in 2023 enacted a bipartisan transparency measure to set an annual deadline for this data.
- ▶ EdSource learned that the California Department of Education [revoked a Stanford researcher's access to data](#) because he provided an expert brief in a lawsuit against the state. The measure barred the researcher from accessing state data entirely unrelated to the suit. After EdSource reported on this, the state reversed its decision.
- ▶ The state enacted [a new law to pilot a streamlined transfer pathway from community colleges to the UC system](#), modeled on existing pathways to CSU. EdSource has helped keep the two-to-four-year transfer issue at the forefront of education discussion for years, publishing more than a dozen pieces on this topic in 2023 alone. Reporter Ashley A. Smith's presentation on the topic was the highest rated session at the Education Writers Association conference, with many attendees planning to write their own stories.

71

media partners in 2023

7,767

Roundtable registrations in 2023

96%

of readers say EdSource is  
“good” or “excellent” quality

## CONNECTING THROUGH STORIES

EdSource loves to hear from readers about what they want to learn more about or what stories they appreciated. For example, EdSource heard that its coverage of Fresno's teacher strike was the most comprehensive account of the district's history that one reader had encountered. Another reader reached out about EdSource's reporting on the superintendent crisis and stated that it represented their experiences as an administrator. One reader told us they are using our work to inform their Harvard Law School course. You can share your feedback with us at [development@edsource.org](mailto:development@edsource.org).





# Journalism Transforming Education Landscapes

## SERVING FAMILIES IN A “MEDIA DESERT”

Home to a large proportion of California’s low-income students of color, the Central Valley lacks robust local news outlets. This year, EdSource continued its proactive approach to address this challenge thanks to the support of the James B. McClatchy Foundation, which is investing in the creation of a sustainable model to restore Central Valley journalism through a collaboration of investors, supporters and media partners.

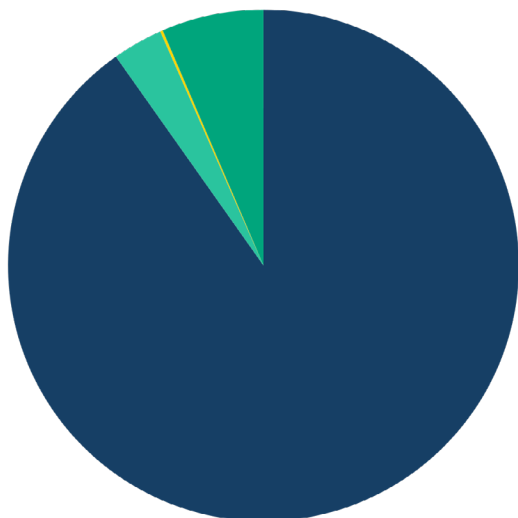
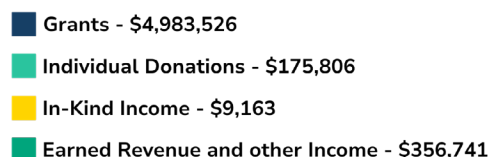
As a record snowpack began to melt, EdSource provided in-depth coverage of Central Valley flood risks informed by data-driven graphics to help schools and families anticipate local challenges and to stay safe. On the heels of this coverage, [Gov. Gavin Newsom announced major new state funds for flood prevention and mitigation](#). While many factors brought about this funding, EdSource is confident the governor’s office was aware of our data-driven reports; within a month [the governor had submitted a guest commentary](#) to EdSource on the value of public libraries, another issue EdSource has spotlighted in the Central Valley.

In the fall, Central Valley-based Journalism Resident Lasherica Thornton reported on a narrowly averted Fresno teachers strike that would have impacted 74,000 students. The series of stories drew praise for its detail, nuance and historical context. Fresno’s NPR station requested an interview with Lasherica, and she received comments from teachers, community members, the superintendent, retired educators and other reporters about the value of in-depth, on-the-ground reporting on Fresno schools.

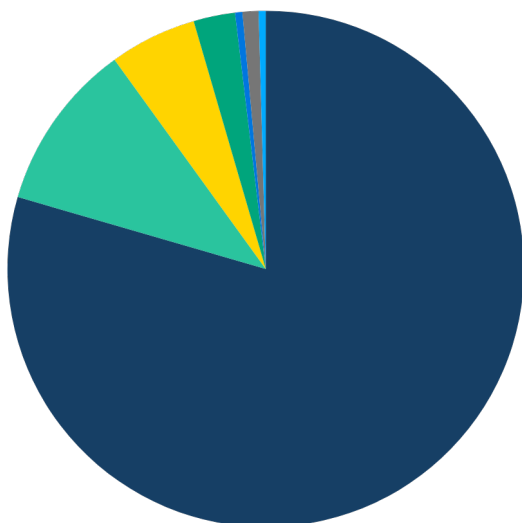
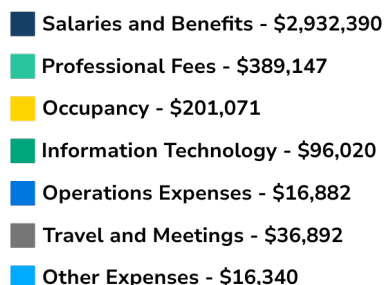
EdSource now has three staff journalists physically based in the Central Valley, including Lasherica, reporter Emma Gallegos and [K-12 Editor Dympna Ugwu-Oju](#). EdSource also is a partner in the Central Valley Journalism Collaborative and will develop an “Education Reporting Bootcamp” program to help increase local media capacity in the region.

# Sustainability and Donors

## 2023 REVENUE



## 2023 EXPENSES



[YOU CAN FIND OUR MOST RECENT 990 HERE.](#)

## DONORS

These foundations and individuals generously gave at least \$20,000 during 2023. EdSource publishes a list of all donors over \$1,000 on its website.

Arthur & Toni Rembe Rock  
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation  
Chamberlin Education Foundation  
Clarence E. Heller Charitable Foundation  
Crimsonbridge Foundation  
College Futures Foundation  
Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation  
ECMC Foundation  
Heising-Simons Foundation  
Lumina Foundation  
S.H. Cowell Foundation  
Silver Giving Foundation  
Sobrato Family Foundation  
Stuart Foundation  
Stupski Foundation  
The California Endowment  
The California Wellness Foundation  
The James B. McClatchy Foundation  
The Kresge Foundation  
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Thank you to these donors and hundreds of other donors who generously support independent education journalism.

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