2022 Year End Review
A Summary of What We Have Learned
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Project Based Learning for all.
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Letter From the CEO

Dear PBLWorks Supporters and Partners,

In reflecting on 2022, there are so many wonderful milestones to celebrate at PBLWorks. We remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing racial equity through Gold Standard Project Based Learning (PBL) and our vision for all students, especially Black and Brown students, to engage in high quality PBL to deepen their learning and achieve success in college, career, and life. In 2022, we made great strides in supporting educators to implement PBL as they navigate the ongoing challenges in their classrooms, schools, and districts. There are a few key highlights in 2022 that stand out for me:

- **We reached over 280,000 educators** through our professional development services, our online platform, and our annual in-person conference.

- We made significant strides to reach educators who teach Black and Brown students. **In 2022, 54% of educators** who engaged in at least one of our professional learning services, **served 50% or more Black and Brown students.** We also partnered with 14 school districts to support them as they scale Gold Standard Project Based Learning (PBL) districtwide. Of these districts, **80% serve 50% or more Black and Brown students.**
We kicked off a partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to scale Gold Standard PBL in over 30% of schools statewide in partnership with the Kentucky Educational Cooperative leaders. This is a part of the KDE United We Learn initiative, spreading deeper learning across the state.

We have an amazing team who collaborate closely to ensure that our services are designed, facilitated, and supported with quality and care.

Through this year of transition and change in the K-12 school system, we were able to demonstrate that the power and efficacy of PBL goes far beyond the confines of a school building. We are proud to offer services and products that support educators as they use Gold Standard PBL, and make an imprint in racial equity by providing learning experiences that help all students, especially our Black and Brown students thrive!

I am so proud to lead such a dynamic group of educational leaders that have a passion for improving student outcomes and racial equity. Together, we are making a positive difference and we are using the power of PBL as the driver. Our mission and vision allows us to focus on what matters most - students! 2022 was a year of change, commitment, and passion from our PBLWorks team, allies, and districts. I send my appreciation and gratitude to this community of leaders for helping us surpass our goals and keep our commitments to our teachers, state and district leaders, and most of all, our students. Please enjoy this Annual Report as we recap 2022 at PBLWorks. I am confident you will be both inspired and informed.

Onward!

Bob Lenz
Chief Executive Officer
PBLWorks
About PBLWorks

Our Mission

At PBLWorks, we build the capacity of teachers to design and facilitate quality Project Based Learning and the capacity of school and system leaders to set the conditions for teachers to implement great projects with all students.

Our Vision

At PBLWorks, our vision is for all students, especially Black and Brown students, to engage in high quality Project Based Learning to deepen their learning and achieve success in college, career, and life.

Our Core Beliefs

Since 1999, we have offered professional development in Project Based Learning (PBL) to teachers and leaders at the school and district level. Our core beliefs about high quality PBL are based on our collective experience seeing what is possible for all students, including Black and Brown students. When done well, PBL...

- Transforms students by inspiring them to think differently about themselves as learners, collaborators, and leaders
- Prepares students for success in college, career, and life
- Leads students to master core academic content and builds success skills
- Advances educational equity and empowers youth furthest from opportunity
- Enables teachers to make a difference in their students’ lives
We are focused on advancing racial equity through high quality PBL because it enables all students, especially Black and Brown students,\textsuperscript{1} to gain the academic content knowledge and understanding, the success skills, and the sense of agency that will help them in college, career and life. Given systemic and institutionalized racism and the oppression of Black and Brown students in the educational system, we strive individually and collectively to ensure that Black and Brown students experience Gold Standard Project Based Learning at least twice a year in their school. Our focus on advancing racial equity for Black and Brown students does not preclude us from addressing any and all other issues of inequity and oppression for any other people and working for all students to experience Gold Standard PBL. Furthermore, we work towards all students experiencing Gold Standard PBL — excluding no one.

As part of our commitment to advancing racial equity, the staff and Board continue to sharpen our focus on

- Building the capacity of our staff facilitators, including National Faculty, to effectively and productively address and interrupt implicit and explicit bias, racism, white privilege and other barriers to advancing racial equity as it surfaces in our training with system, district, and school leaders and teachers.
- Creating workshop materials and PBL resources that will explicitly address how PBL is a vehicle to advance our racial equity vision and we will contextualize the relationship between racial equity and PBL in all our resources and materials.
- Purposeful collaboration with district and school partners that serve the national average or more of students furthest from opportunity, especially Black and Brown students.
- Learning as much as we can about racial equity, practicing skills to interrupt racial inequity, and setting and implementing organizational policies in a racially equitable way, so that we model in our organization the changes we seek in school systems, schools, and classrooms.

\textsuperscript{1} Our use of the terms “Black and Brown” is meant to include students with heritage or familial association from the African diaspora, First nations, Latinx, Southeast Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islanders, Middle Eastern and many others.
Our Impact

PBLWorks has a legacy of consistent high-quality professional learning experiences. In 2022, PBLWorks staff and National Faculty facilitated 868 workshops and services with an overall Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 58, which is considered excellent for professional services.² 98% of workshop participants agreed or strongly agreed that they are “very satisfied” with their workshop experience.

Our Reach

We work to increase our impact on Black and Brown students by reaching teachers and districts who support them. In 2022, we partnered with more than 238 school, districts, or educational agencies across the globe.

- **54% of teachers** who engaged in our introductory PBL 101 workshop serve 50% or more Black and Brown students.
- **80% of our district partners** serve 50% or more Black and Brown students in their districts located across 9 states.
- **47% of the schools or organizations** who partnered with us serve 50% or more Black and Brown students.
- Offered **38 Open Online Workshops** that supported **1136 individual educators** in their PBL professional learning. We launched this direct Business to Consumer (B2C) approach in 2021 to support more equitable access to PBL workshops for individual teachers who may not have access through their schools or districts.

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We successfully hosted the 12th Annual PBL World event in person for more than 1,100 educators from across the globe.

PBL World is a one-of-a-kind, 4-day gathering of K-12 teachers, instructional coaches, and school and district leaders focused on advancing their work with Project Based Learning. The return to an in-person professional learning experience was overwhelmingly positive.

- The overall NPS for workshops delivered at PBL World was **76**, which is considered outstanding for professional services.
- **83%** of PBLWorld participants reported their overall event experience was very good or excellent.
- **100%** of the school and district leaders who participated in the Partner Summit event left feeling ready to lead PBL implementation.

The most important reasons people attend PBL World include: upgrading PBL Skills, participating in in-person professional learning, and networking with other educators in the PBL community.

- **PBL World 2023** is June 26-29 at American Canyon High School.
The recipients of the PBL Champion awards demonstrate a commitment to PBL; have done quality, lasting work; and have shown evidence of impact on students.

**Kendall Van Valkenburg**, High School English Teacher at Red Canyon Alternative High School (Gypsum, Colorado) was selected as the 2022 Individual PBL Champion. Her dedication to PBL was evident in the way she used projects to transform the lives of students who have not succeeded in traditional schools. She noticed their interest in skateboarding and created a project focused on their interest to re-engage them deeply in learning and their community. Kendall’s work was noteworthy for its focus on knowledge of students, one of the key equity levers in PBL.

“*Project Based Learning is about the power of getting to know your students to find their strengths and interests and then go from there. When it’s real to them, the learning is real too.*”

In her keynote remarks, she noted how she began, “I’m the teacher who was looking to fill two weeks of middle school learning with something that felt more like ‘not school’ after too much pandemic, and too much pretending we can all go back to normal. We all needed an outlet.” The skateboarding project Kendall designed and implemented with her students went well beyond her initial plans. Her students and their project were featured on PBS NewsHour and resulted in the town council dedicating funds for a new skate park, all driven by her students’ work.

“I’m actually doing work for my community. It’s not just a class anymore.”

*One of Kendall Van Velkenburg students*
Thomas A. Edison Career and Technical Education High School in Queens, New York was named the 2022 School PBL Champion for their unique approach to turning PBL into a school-wide strategy. Most people push academic content in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and what this school did was the reverse. They brought what was working in their CTE classrooms into their academic classrooms. Treating students as their clients, teachers listened to their students describe why and how they were engaged in their CTE courses and why they were less engaged in their typical academic courses. Their PBL journey has progressed and now students provide feedback to teachers on project quality and authenticity on a regular basis. Principal Moses Ojeda credited the staff for their vision. He recalled telling them at the beginning of their PBL journey, “You have three years to show results....and they showed me results in just one first year, and every year after that. They continue to show me results even today. They have raised the bar at our school.”

Broward County Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Florida was selected as District PBL Champion for their commitment to increasing middle school student engagement by embedding equity across the curriculum through projects. In the past four years, they embarked on a large-scale effort to connect Social Emotional Learning to PBL and created a PBL Ambassadors Program, which consists of PBLWorks-trained teachers, leaders, and coaches supporting new teachers in their PBL journey. Their focus on sustained support also included PBL Learning Walks and revamped leadership meeting structures to embed collaborative time to focus on Project Based Learning. Broward's journey began at PBL World 2019. Dr. Jermain Fleming, Chief Academic & Strategy Officer, offered these words of wisdom to those embarking on the PBL journey:

“I encourage everyone to stay the course and grow in your journey. We are all in different places in our journey, but we are on the journey. Be aware of the needs of both your students and teachers. Create community and be responsive to the expressed needs to strengthen PBL implementation.”
Scaling PBL: KENTUCKY

In the fall of 2021, the statewide PBL initiative in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education to scale Gold Standard Project Based Learning across the state to reach 492 of the state’s 1477 public schools was launched. This translates to approximately 216,000 more students gaining access to PBL!

**Why PBL?**
Kentucky’s Commissioner of Education and Chief Learner, Jason E. Glass, said Kentuckians are “calling for bold changes to education in our state around giving our students the kinds of learning experiences that prepare them for an automated, lightning-fast, globally interconnected economy... Our best way of going about that is to change the kinds of experiences our students have in classrooms - making those experiences hands-on, authentic, meaningful and connected to the kinds of work they will need to do outside of school... *PBLWorks helps move us from just talking about these shifts to the real work of implementing them in classrooms across Kentucky.* This will give our educators the supports they need to design experiences for students that get them ready for that new future.”

**Kentucky 2022 Highlights**

- **Hosted eight PBL 101 Summer Institutes** to reach teachers in all of Kentucky’s learning cooperatives.
- **Launched 10 School Leader Networks** in 2022 and 10 more are scheduled to launch in 2023!
- Check out this [Interactive Map](#) to see the schools and districts we partnered with in 2022!
The first District Leadership Network (DLN) launched with 70 district leaders representing 38 districts across the state. The network is designed to build a strengthened sense of connection with other leaders committed to scaling and sustaining Gold Standard Project Based Learning in their districts and provide an opportunity for district leaders to reflect, adapt and grow the personal practice to achieve more equitable deeper learning outcomes through Gold Standard Project Based Learning.

The PBLWorks team focused on building relationships with educators across the state. Using social media platforms to engage a wide audience, the PBLWorks Kentucky team frequently shares project highlights from KY classroom teachers who are implementing PBL after completing PBL 101. Sharing highlights from teachers in various stages of their PBL journeys, along with relevant project resources to support implementation, and information about upcoming events has made Gold Standard PBL even more accessible and relevant to educators across the state. Twitter @PBLWorksKY Instagram @pblworksky

Here’s what educators and students in Kentucky have to say about PBL!
The Massachusetts School Leadership Network is a regional approach to professional learning and includes school leader and teacher services for participating schools. Two cohorts of Massachusetts leaders have launched: Cohort 1 in March 2021 with 10 schools; 30% of the schools serve 50% or more Black and Brown students, and Cohort 2 in March 2022 with 8 additional schools; 63% serve 50% or more Black and Brown students. Randolph Public Schools also became a PBLWorks District Partner in 2022 with leadership teams from all schools in the district collaborating together to provide all students with access to high quality PBL.

“PBL is our way to make great things happen for kids. The MA SLN has been transformative in how we continue to develop the capacity of our teachers for Gold Standard PBL. The support for the leadership team has been excellent.”

Vinnie Regan, Principal at Mary Walsh Elementary

The MA SLN schools represent a mix of school types including, traditional, charter, vocational, and special education program centers, and varying school levels (elementary, middle, and high), sizes, and settings (urban and suburban). The diversity in school contexts creates a rich learning environment for the school leaders who engage with colleagues from across the region in a series of professional learning workshops designed to build their capacity to create the conditions needed for teachers to adapt and facilitate high quality projects that are intellectually challenging and engaging for all students, especially Black and Brown students.
Every grade level/classroom completed 4 projects and participated in a showcase event for each project!

Parents are excited!

[Next year we will] Strive to make products public and engage with the community as much as possible.

Develop[ed] team student learning and professional practice goals for PBL 101 teachers.

Student work was powerful and authentic.

Cohort 1 Reflections:

Student access to high quality PBL experiences was consistent across all groups of students, including Black and Brown students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners, and economically disadvantaged students.

88% of students “strongly agreed” that their PBL experience was intellectually challenging.

87% used project management processes, tools, or strategies to complete work in this project.

Initial PBL outcomes for Cohort 1 demonstrate positive and promising indicators for success.

More than 300 teachers participated in the PBL 101 professional learning as their principals engaged in the SLN.

75% of those teachers implemented a project within 3 months of completing PBL 101.

74% of the 3700+ students in participating schools engaged in at least two high quality projects during the school year.

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This learning initiative is supported by funding from the One8 Foundation.
PBLWorks & The College Board

The College Board has partnered with PBLWorks to design and deliver summer AP Institutes and follow-up support sessions for AP Environmental Science teachers and AP U.S. Government and Politics teachers. The PBLWorks AP Institute experience is focused on implementing the Knowledge in Action (KIA) curriculum in either AP Environmental Science or AP Government & Politics. As a result of this one-year professional learning program, teachers implement the Knowledge in Action AP curriculum and adapt the curriculum to fit their specific classroom and school context.

Since its launch in 2021, 916 AP Environmental Science or U.S. Government and politics teachers from across the country have attended the PBLWorks AP Summer Institute. In 2022, the overall NPS was 60, which is considered excellent for professional services. Participants frequently state the most valuable elements of the institute include collaborating with other AP teachers, gaining resources to implement the curriculum, and increasing their knowledge and understanding of PBL.

“This was the most rigorous and productive workshops I have ever attended. Not a minute was wasted!”

This partnership is a result of the Knowledge in Action (KIA) study for which PBLWorks designed and facilitated the professional learning. The KIA study was a randomized controlled trial (RCT) of 3,645 students in five large urban districts engaged in both AP Environmental Science and AP U.S. Government and Politics PBL courses and traditional courses. Researchers from the University of Southern California (USC) found that students in AP PBL courses outperformed students in traditional AP courses by 8 percentage points.³

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Focus on Services

Our resources & services continue to evolve in order to meet the needs of teachers and leaders

Flexible, innovative, and culturally responsive workshops and resources

Our Design & Innovation team works tirelessly to offer the highest quality professional learning experiences for educators. This year, we increased the equity focus in all of our workshops, expanded face-to-face professional learning offerings, and launched new services for both teachers and leaders.

2022 Significant Accomplishments

- In response to partners in the field, the Professional Learning Designers refreshed all workshops in order to return to in-person professional learning.
- Teacher learning opportunities were refined and expanded. PBL Sustained Support Visit (SSV)Workshops offerings now include a total of nine workshop topics aligned with teacher learning needs. The SSV workshops are offered onsite or online, and in full-day or half-day configurations to match a range of teacher needs and school contexts.
Created two brand new workshops for launch in January 2023.

- **Project Design Consulting:** Builds the capacity of teachers who have participated in PBL 101 to develop a deeper understanding of how to design high-quality projects based on the Gold Standard Seven Essential Design Elements. In individual or team meetings, the National Faculty offer targeted expert consulting based on 1-3 specific Design Elements, using the project design rubric.

- **PBL Classroom Walkthroughs:** Builds the capacity of school leaders or instructional coaches to develop a deeper understanding of what Gold Standard Project Based Teaching Practices look like in action. In one-day walkthroughs, National Faculty offer targeted expert consulting focused on 1-3 specific PBL Teaching Practices identified in advance by the school leader or instructional coach.

The Design & Innovation team maintains a focus on continuous improvement. In 2022, the team did a deep dive into all aspects of the PBL 101 learning experience. PBL 101 is the foundational three-day workshop in Project Based Learning and reaches thousands of educators each year. The Professional Learning Designers made revisions and updates to this signature learning experience that are both research-informed and practitioner-informed. The updated version of PBL 101 will be piloted in early 2023 and is planned for launch in June 2023.
Expanding Learning Opportunities for School Leaders: PBL School Leader Networks

Learning through networks is a powerful way to scale and deepen innovation in service of ensuring equitable outcomes for all students. PBLWorks School Leader Networks (SLN) are designed to build the capacity of the participating network principals and assistant principals to create the conditions needed for teachers to adapt and facilitate high quality projects that are intellectually challenging and engaging for all students, especially Black and Brown students.

PBLWorks has extensive experience with School Leader Networks through the Hawaii Innovative Leadership Network (HILN), thriving in Hawaii for six years, and the Massachusetts SLN (MA SLN), in its third year. These two successful PBLWorks PBL School Leader Networks have reached a total of 86 school leaders who reach over 182,000 students. Based on these successful experiences, we have expanded our PBL SLN offerings. In the state of Kentucky, 10 SLNs launched with 97 educators from across the state. In the late fall of 2022, leaders applied to join the first New York City SLN launching in January 2023 with leaders representing 21 schools in the NYC area.

We also launched our first District Leader Network (DLN) in Kentucky. The DLN The PBL District Leader Network connects past, current, and potential PBLWorks District Partners who share a vision and commitment to growing Gold Standard PBL in their districts. The focus of the DLN is accelerating and strengthening systemic implementation of PBL toward the ultimate goal of ensuring that all students—especially Black and Brown students—experience at least two Gold Standard projects a year.
Providing continuous support to educators through free resources

PBLWorks continues to offer free and open resources to support educators in the field. Currently, there are more than 281,000 educators who have created a free my.pblworks account which offers access to project ideas, PBL resources, and strategy guides to support teachers who are designing and implementing projects. The PBLWorks team consistently refreshes these resources and adds new items to meet the needs of teachers in the field.

- **PBL Spotlights** were added to PBL 101 learning resources to address commonly asked questions about PBL in various content areas. Our expert National Faculty offered their best tips, insights, and ideas based on their experience PBL experience.

PBL Spotlights include:
- Visual and Performing Arts
- Special Education
- Science

- Physical Education
- Math
- History
- English Language Arts
- English Language Learners
- Early Childhood
- Career Technical Education

- **PBLWorks Product Toolkits:** A new set of free resources available to support teachers in developing commonly-found project products. The Toolkits are organized according to the Project Path and offer strategies and processes that can be used flexibly to support students throughout the project.

- **Creativity Rubric:** This new research-based success skill rubric was added in 2022, as a continuation of the collaboration with the National Center for Improvement of Educational Assessment (Center for Assessment) completed comprehensive literature reviews for each of the five success skills most common in PBL.
PBLNow

**The Why.** In 2020, we completed a strategic planning process to define our path for the next three years which included a new line of work focused on creating K-12 student-centered Open Educational Resource (OER) Gold Standard PBL social studies and science/STEM units. The decision to move in this direction was based on results from a comprehensive year-long inquiry that included a review of the research on high-quality instruction materials (HQIM), research on Project Based Learning, market analyses, case studies, and consultation with leading curriculum experts. The addition of Lucas Education Research (LER) studies, including the Knowledge in Action (KIA) study, for which we designed and facilitated the professional development, ensured we were poised for this new opportunity.

**The Launch.** In June 2021, we entered into a partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education to scale project-based learning across the state of Kentucky. In addition to the core work of providing professional learning services, PBLWorks agreed to provide the Kentucky DOE with a set of digital OER K-12 project-based units aligned to the NGSS science standards, therefore launching a new BIE division called **PBLNow.**

In August of 2022, we received a grant from the Bezos Family Foundation for the development of supplemental digital OER Gold Standard PBL social studies/civics units for grades 4-12.

Ultimately, we want to increase the opportunity for Black and Brown students to experience high quality project based learning, and believe that providing open access Gold Standard PBL units to teachers who support Black and Brown students will help achieve that goal.
The PBLNow team has grown to four full-time staff who are devoted to the development of the OER Gold Standard Project Based Learning Units. The team has engaged with PBL experts, subject area experts, education organizations, community-based organizations, and teachers in the field to inform unit design, core features, and necessary supports that will facilitate classroom implementation. Teachers are engaged in every stage of unit development, from ideation to piloting. As a result, the final supplemental curriculum units will be based on research, vetted by content area experts, informed by user experience, and refined by pilot testing.

At the heart of this work is the PBLWorks framework for Gold Standard Project Based Learning, which includes 7 Essential Project Design Elements and 7 Essential Project Based Teaching Practices. Gold Standard PBL also incorporates four equity levers, which amplify the power of the Essential Project Design Elements and Project Based Teaching Practices and ensure they are used in ways that reach all learners.

PBLNow Design Tenets

Alignment with Standards and Existing Adopted Curriculum: Discipline-specific standards (e.g. Common Core, NGSS) will drive the development of our units. Additionally, our units will be designed with substitution in mind. That is, they will focus on select clusters of standards that generally mirror the scope and sequence, and therefore can be substituted for units from existing year-long science curriculum adopted in a particular state.

Student Centered Deeper Learning: Students and student agency will be at the center of every PBL unit. The units will be designed in consideration of the student experience, using the Gold Standard PBL Design Elements and Teaching Practices as a guide. The units and the teacher resources will put students and their voices at the center.
**Integrated Curriculum with a Spotlight on Literacy:** While every PBL unit will be clearly driven by the content standards in a discipline, units will take an integrated approach. Literacy standards will be explicitly called out, taught, and assessed.

**High Quality Performance Assessments; Know, Do, Reflect:** Every PBL unit, K-12, will include assessments driven by discipline-specific standards and a set of success skills. These assessments will provide feedback to teachers and students of progress on mastery of content knowledge and skills, or what students know; an opportunity for students to demonstrate or apply that knowledge, or what they do; and finally, opportunities for students to reflect on their learning process and growth. This know-do-reflect assessment model includes tests, quizzes, performance tasks with rubrics, and reflection tools.

**Engaging and Relevant Themes Anchored in Social Justice:** Themes will serve as a framework for organizing standards and skills and provide relevance and meaning that promotes student engagement. Themes are a way to hook students and propel them to take action towards racial, social and environmental justice.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:** PBL Units will be aligned with the dimensions of equity drawn from Zaretta Hammond’s Culturally Responsive Teaching and Brain (2014). This will include the use of literacy strategies to make the content accessible to all students. Units will be contextualized and adapted to students’ unique backgrounds and skills.

**Gold Standard PBL Units**
- Open Education Resource (OER)
- Digital Download
- 4-6 week long units
- Embedded Summative & Formative Performance Assessments
- Suggestions for customization
- Teacher guides, lesson plans, data sets, and student materials
Team & Financials

Our Team

PBLWorks has a team of 47 full-time and 72 part-time staff members. Our professional services team includes a team of experienced teachers, school leaders, and district leaders with deep PBL expertise and experience using PBL to transform classrooms and schools. As an organization, we have continued to focus on recruiting and retaining diverse staff utilizing equity-centered strategies. In 2022, our full-time professional staff consisted of 45% people of color (POC), up from 38% in 2017. Our part-time staff (National Faculty) are PBL experts who frequently facilitate workshops in the field. In 2022, 42% of the part-time National Faculty are POC, up from 33% in 2021.

Together we create exceptional Project Based Learning services and resources for educators. Every team member is committed to making a positive impact on students.

Financials

PBLWorks has a sustainable non-profit model

PBLWorks maintains a successful non-profit model that is not dependent on philanthropy. In 2022, 83% of the organization’s revenue was from services and products provided to educators.

2022 BIE REVENUE

- Services & Products: 87%
- Grants: 5.0%
- Buck Trust: 7.0%
2022 PBLWorks Leadership Team

Bob Lenz, CEO
Sally Kingston, Ph.D., Chief Impact Officer
Cris Waldfogel, Senior Director of Professional Learning & Leadership
Lisa Mireles, Ed.D., Senior Director of Design & Innovation
Perry Gold, Senior Director of Operations
David Badillo, Senior Director of Business Development