Post-Conference Analysis

Ed100 Student Academy 2022

The 2022 <u>Ed100 Academy for Student Leaders</u> was held June 20-22. This document is an immediate post-conference analysis to capture major insights into what happened, what worked, and what didn't. It's a Google

Doc, open to comments. Please use "Insert Comment" to contribute your thoughts and insights!

The audience for this analysis is team members, partners, speakers, and potential funders. It's a work-in-progress and feedback is welcome.

An analysis similar to this one was conducted in 2021. See 2021 analysis.

- Jeff Camp, Founder

Background and Key Stats

The Ed100 Academy for Student Leaders is a program of <u>Ed100.org</u>, which is a non-profit project under the fiscal sponsorship of Full Circle Fund, a non-profit 501c3 public charity (EIN 94-3373850). Entirely dependent on <u>donations</u> and volunteers, Ed100's mission is to support the development of informed, engaged school communities by enabling anyone to understand California's education system at a level suitable to play an informed role in it. Ed100 is used by parents, students, volunteers, donors, journalists and public servants.

2020

The Ed100 Online Academy for Student Leaders was held for the first time in 2020, as a quick response to the sudden cancellation of summer programs due to the Pandemic. With few competing options, hundreds of extraordinary students participated from schools all over the state of California. The 2020 program was developed and run by a team of six adults. It was free. There was no sponsor.

A great deal of information about the <u>2020 Academy</u> can be found in the Ed100 blog, including how the event came to be and recaps of <u>Day 1</u>, <u>Day 2</u>, <u>Day 3</u>, and <u>Day 4</u> of the conference. These recaps include video as well as survey findings with hundreds of verbatim comments from students in attendance. About 1,500 students applied for the 2020 conference, and as many as 600 participated in at least part of it. We estimate that about 450 students participated in the entire version 1 conference from several hundred schools. 243 students completed the end-of-conference survey in 2020.

2021

The 2021 conference was built with substantial <u>volunteer effort from students</u>, especially a group of selected high school students who met weekly and mainly focused on outreach. Two

STUDENT

ACADEMY

adults and a college student were key organizers. In the last 8 weeks or so, two adults participated in preparing speakers, assembling video content, and running technical production of the event. It was free. A sponsor <u>signed up</u> and was featured in the conference. We are still awaiting the promised funds, more than a year later.

A great deal about the <u>2021 program</u> can be found in posts in the weekly Ed100 blog, which featured many videos and slide presentations from the conference. We posted a quick <u>impact summary</u> soon after the conference and created a more thorough <u>2021 public post-event analysis</u> (similar to this document) soon thereafter.

About 1,000 students applied for the 2021 conference, and as many as 400 participated in at least part of it. We estimate that about 300 students participated in the entire conference from several hundred schools. 286 students completed the end-of-conference survey in 2021.

2022 conference

Version 3 of the conference was developed and run by a team of about 20 students (mostly in high school) under the leadership of a college student (Kaylee Nguyen) and with the active support of two adults (Jeff Camp and Jennifer Johnson). A college student leader (Alvin) served as the "host" of the conference and another (Dar) served as the show producer. It was free.

About 600 students applied for the 2022 conference, more than half of them in the last four weeks before the application deadline. About 300 participated in at least part of the conference, and we estimate that close to 200 students participated in most or all of it. 158 completed the end-of-conference survey.

The conference involved 43 speakers including students, researchers, educators, non-profit leaders, and elected officials. Six musicians contributed their work to provide the right energy for the moments before and after sessions.

Goals

We designed the 2022 conference program with the following goals, which were consistent with the 2021 conference:

- **Educate for credibility:** Help high school student leaders throughout California understand how the education system works at a level suitable for engaging in it as a leader.
- Connect for impact: Introduce high school student leaders to organizations and programs in a way that leads to action. Connect talent with opportunities in the "ecosystem" of California education as well as in other issue areas of concern to students.
- Reach for equity: Include student leaders from each high school in California. By making this conference free and online, this vision is not merely aspirational.
- Accelerate for wisdom: With focus on rising juniors and sophomores, this early-summer conference is an intentional "leadership talent pipeline" for school site councils, school boards, school organizations, and student organizations.

- **Respect the moment:** This conference is being held in the context of a pandemic and a social awakening about institutionalized racism, and sessions of this conference must offer opportunities to grapple with these issues.
- Create ample opportunities for students to lead: Students, well-supported by adults, play central roles in defining and carrying out the conference.

Summary of changes in 2022

We added breakout sessions. In both 2020 and 2021, students gave the conference low marks on the goal of *connecting* them with each other. Adding interaction was a big challenge. With considerable effort, the student team expanded the conference agenda in 2022 to add virtual breakout rooms. This required recruiting and training about 20 students to serve as facilitators. We had some success and learned a lot.

We pre-recorded the speakers. In both 2020 and 2021, substantial portions of the virtual conference were "live," which required a lot of time-sensitive coordination with speakers and an experienced event team. In 2022 we recorded the speakers ahead of time, which allowed us to spread out the work and made it feasible to recruit extraordinary speakers by matching their time constraints. Pre-recording simplified the program, enabling us for the first time to run the conference without a professional show producer.

We cut costs even further. Lacking a sponsor in 2022, and in arrears from the long-delayed payment from our 2021 sponsor, we cut expenses to the bone. We abandoned thoughts of investing in a system to charge for tickets, for example, and kept the program free. (We had considered trying a system of pricing with discounts.) We didn't spend a nickel on any form of advertising. We walked away from schools and districts that insisted on using Peachjar as their exclusive platform for community communication — the company's business model requires a significant fee, even for a free program. We couldn't pay for it.

We opened the conference to California students in private schools. For the first time, in 2022 we recruited student Outreach Ambassadors to pursue participation from students in private schools. This involved some R&D and recruiting time. We hope for future collaboration with organizations that support independent schools and Catholic schools.

We invited "adult allies" to participate. Wouldn't it be great if in each school community there were one or two faculty members or parent leaders who knew about the Ed100 Academy and agreed to prompt students to participate in it? We equipped Outreach Ambassadors to pursue this idea and created a data architecture in our forms and Google Sheets to accommodate a signup process for allies. We hoped to earn a small group of enthusiastic early adopters to learn from, but the effort basically fell flat. File this under "fresh thinking needed."

Survey findings

A pre-conference survey was administered to students who registered for the conference.

Region. Presented with the following map, we asked students which region of the state they identify with. Relative to the other regions, the South Coast region (which includes Los Angeles) was dramatically underrepresented at this conference.



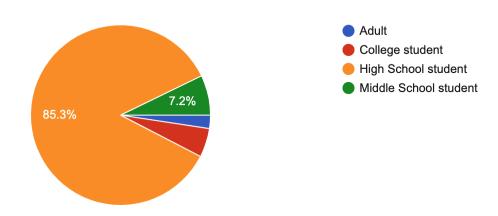
Survey Responses:

Northern California: 20.3% Greater Bay Area: 28.3% Central California: 9.2% South Coast: 21.1% Inland Empire: 8.8%

San Diego Region: 10.8%

Which best describes you?

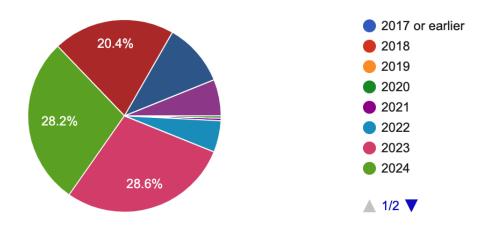
251 responses



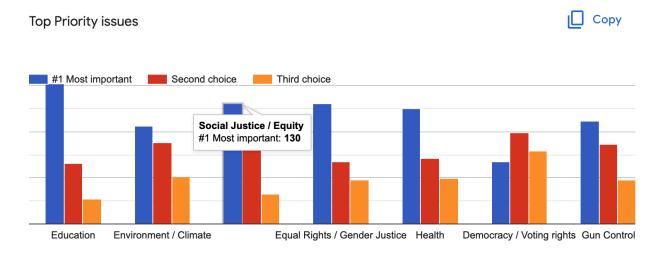
More than half of the students were rising seniors (28.6%) or rising juniors (28.2%). About a fifth were rising sophomores, and about a tenth were rising freshmen or eighth graders.

Grade level

245 responses



We asked students to identify their top priority issues. Unfortunately, the way that we implemented the question was flawed: we did not enforce that students had to choose just one issue as their #1 most important issue! Many students marked multiple issues as #1, which complicates interpretation of the findings. At minimum, it is clear that for most students education was the most important topic. "Democracy / Voting rights" was the least important.



We asked a related open-ended question in the application form: "Please tell us one issue you care about as a student leader and why." The <u>454 verbatim responses</u> in 2022 provide a fascinating peek into what rising student leaders say they care about, expressed in their own words. Common themes include diversity, equity, inclusion, and mental health, but other themes emerge, too, such as concerns about bullying and the quality of education.

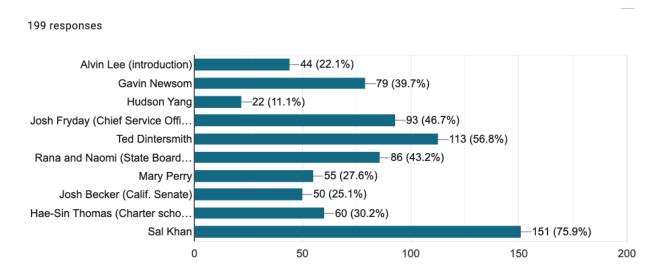
Consistent with our survey finding in 2021, concerns about the climate or environment are listed as the top concern of just 2% of student leaders at this conference.

Feedback about USEFULNESS of the Sessions

In each end-of-day survey, we asked students to select up to four sessions that were most USEFUL to them. This produced a forced ranking. The big takeaway from these surveys is that there was a lot of variation. Students found a lot of different speakers useful.

Monday

On Monday, 151 out of the 199 respondents listed Sal Khan among the four most useful out of the ten sessions. The session mentioned least frequently was the brief recording of Hudson Yang — but that doesn't mean the session was a dud. At only a minute in length, this session was one of the top picks for 11% of the respondents. Few of the students at this conference attended charter schools, so it's natural to expect that a presentation about them would be of limited relevance. Nevertheless, Hae-Sin Thomas, who spoke about charter schools, was cited by 30% of respondents as having delivered one of the four most useful presentations of the day.



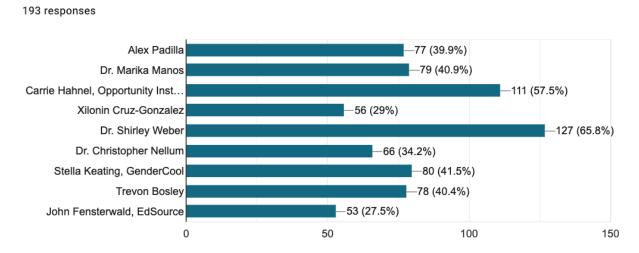
In addition to this summative assessment, students responded to the open-ended question "What are the three most important things you learned from today's sessions?" You can <u>read all</u> <u>of the responses</u> to this question. Here are three samples:

- The majority of students in California are LatinX. There is a lot of diversity that my school is sheltered from.
- Today, I learned about who is in charge of public schools, where school funding comes from, what schools spend money on, and how schools can and how schools should measure success.
- (i) learned about charter schools, LCAP plans, and most importantly, in the breakout sessions, that other student leaders are working towards the same goals I am:)

Tuesday

On Tuesday, 127 out of the 193 respondents named Dr. Shirley Weber's presentation among the four most useful of the nine they saw. Dr. Weber explained how students aged 16 and up could participate in elections and campaigns — and get paid for it.

Carrie Hahnel's presentation, titled "The Change-Maker's Toolkit,", was the longest session of the conference, stuffed with practical information about how to access and use education information resources. We know anecdotally that her presentations in 2020 and 2021 were very influential to students who stepped up as advocates or school board candidates.



Again, we asked students to name three things they learned from these speakers and you can <u>read all of the responses</u>. These were deep presentations and students had widely varying takeaways. Here are three samples:

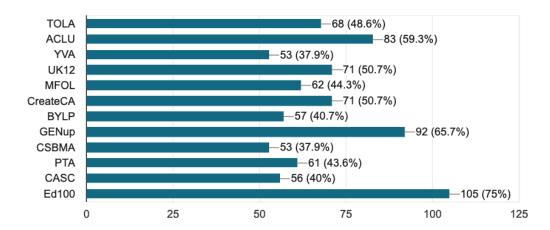
- Gildon't know about it before but I feel that I know pretty in depth about the California State Seal of Civil Engagement, data websites, and how people like Dr. Christopher Nellum are working on undoing the education inequities in California.
- for one learned more about how students can get involved with education boards and so on. I also learned about Gendercool which is really amazing i never knew that organization existed before and i also learned more about what POC face in society
- Pol learned that there are tons of different opportunities to volunteer in the community. Another thing that I learned is how school boards work. Another thing that I learned is how people are standing up against gun violence, and how we can help with that as well.

Wednesday

On the final day of the conference, the agenda was less about speakers and more about choices. Students heard pitches from a dozen Engagement Partner organizations that offer ways for students to get involved with them. Students were offered the opportunity to "opt in" to

receive communications from as many as they wanted. On Friday these connections were forwarded to all of the Engagement Partners.

140 responses



You can <u>read all of the responses</u>. In addition to opting in, students were given the chance to indicate the seriousness of their interest by ranking up to four organizations that they were most motivated about. Every organization came away with at least three students that ranked their organization as their top choice.

Opt-in contacts for each organization, by ranked choice											
	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Unranked	Total	Opt-in	Difference			
TOLA	20	13	5	14	31	83	68	15			
ACLU	22	28	10	13	25	98	83	15			
YVA	3	9	8	12	35	67	53	14			
UK12	14	7	19	14	37	91	71	20			
MFOL	12	13	13	10	32	80	62	18			
CreateCA	12	12	14	13	36	87	71	16			
BYLP	7	7	9	11	37	71	57	14			
GENup	18	28	26	21	26	119	92	27			
CSBMA	6	7	10	4	31	58	53	5			
PTA	3	5	9	10	41	68	61	7			
CASC	7	4	11	9	34	65	56	9			
Ed100	31	20	18	20	35	124	105	19			

There's power in numbers, so when we unite together under a common goal, we're able to accomplish so much. There's so many different organizations that we can get involved in to do so. Before this conference, I hadn't heard of climate justice organizations like Youth vs. Apocalypse and Undaunted K12. Climate change is a serious

issue in the United States and around the world, and we need to act now before it's too late.

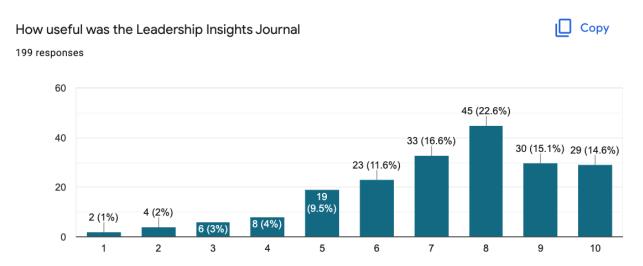
realized that there are so many more organizations than I ever knew. Also that you don't have to already be involved in something to get involved and be a leader. I also learned that there are so many opportunities for students to be heard on a high level.

place, there are numerous organizations that fight against all different kinds of issues and work hard to improve society, and that it is crucial to reach out to people, because you never know what doors may open just by contacting people in an area of interest.

The Personal Insights Journal

Following precedents from 2020 and 2021, we urged students to take notes for their own benefit in a Google Doc we named the Leadership Insights Journal. From comments we received in the Zoom chat, we know that some students never quite got the message that the notes were for them, not for us. We received several messages asking about where they were supposed to "turn in" their notes!

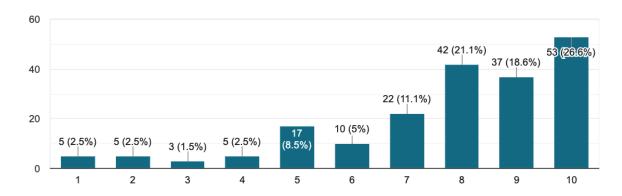
What we didn't disclose to students is that our interns were taking notes, too. We intend to share their notes with students when we send their conference certificates.



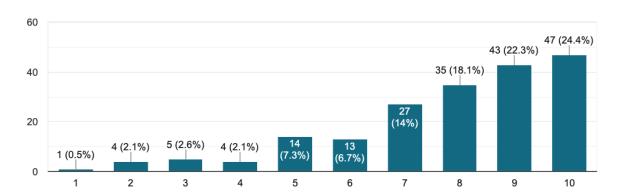
Breakouts

This was the first time we included breakouts as part of the program, so we focused on learning what worked and what didn't. The charts below are from each day's answer to the question "How useful was today's Breakout session?" The first day was rough. By Wednesday relationships were forming and we were hitting our stride.

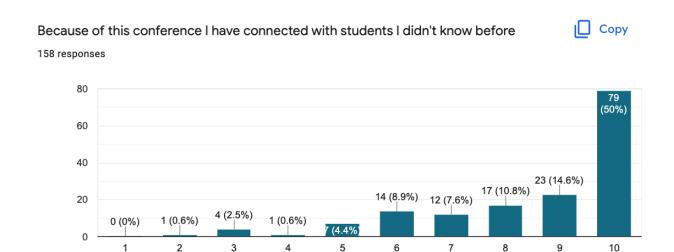
199 responses



193 responses

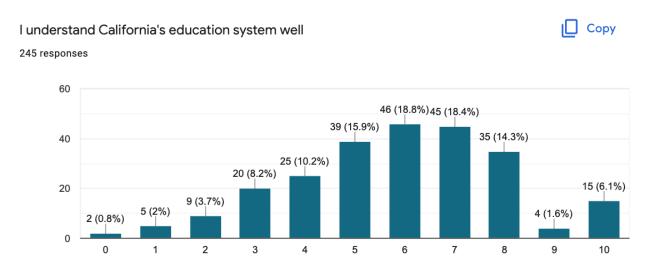


In the final analysis, on Wednesday more than 100 students strongly agreed (level 9 or 10) that they connected with students they didn't know before. We did not explore exactly what students meant by this. We know that we have seen some continued activity on the Ed100 Discord, for example, and we hear anecdotally that some students connected on other social media platforms.



Learning about the Education System

Part of the motivation for holding this conference is to boost students' interest in learning about the education system in a deeper way. In the pre-conference survey, we asked students how they felt about their baseline level of understanding.

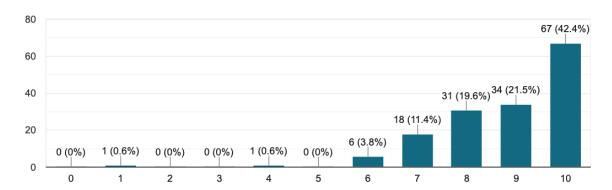


At the end of the conference we checked for progress:

Because of this conference I better understand how the California education system works

🔲 Сору

158 responses



What did we get right?

In the closing survey, we asked students for their feedback in order to help us think about how future programs could improve. We started by asking what we got right. It was an open-ended question — here are <u>all 159 responses</u>. In total, the word "breakout" is mentioned 64 times, "speaker" is mentioned 51 times and "poll" is mentioned 20 times. Here are three representative comments:

- Given loved how this conference brought in young guest speakers as well as adults. Bringing in students speaking from a few of these different organizations was truly inspiring, as I myself am still a student looking to grow and make change.
- in my path of student leadership. Specifically, it is resources that not all student leaders previously had access to. I feel confident in knowing that I have so many amazing resources to use this coming school year!!!
- The speakers were wonderful, the host was amazing, the staff/facilitators were awesome, I liked the fun polls, especially. :)

How could we improve?

We also asked for feedback about how to improve. ("What should we change or do less of next time?") Again, this was an open-ended question — here are <u>all 159 responses</u>.

One clear theme is that many participants strained to remain interested in all of a conference that consisted of 12 hours of speakers and about 3½ hours of discussion over three days. There were no calls to make the conference longer, for example, or to add more speakers — though some suggested spreading the content across more days. The word "boring" came up only

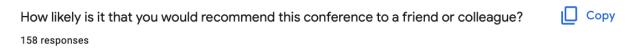
twice, but "long" appeared in comments 22 times, and "break" was mentioned 23 times. (This feedback about the lack of breaks was expected, by the way. We didn't schedule breaks because they are a well-established recipe for losing your audience. People go on break and don't come back!)

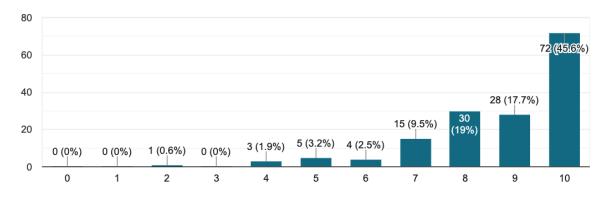
Here are some representative comments that capture important themes, some conflicting:

- wit was very long causing me to be drained. I found myself losing interest by the end. also a greater force on participation in the breakout rooms!
- if it is still fully online, I think all day sessions are too long. I would have rather had 5 half-days rather than the 3 full days
- Maybe go a little faster since I felt that the speed was slow.
- Maybe slow down a bit more for taking notes, and if possible, subtitles.

Net assessment

Our last question checked the bottom line. Would they recommend the conference? More than $\frac{2}{3}$ of respondents said they definitely would (with a rating of 10 or 9).





This gave us pause. It's a very strong result, and it also leaves room for improvement. We have more to learn.

Of course, the true measure of impact can't be assessed immediately. Will these students go on to serve as wise, inquisitive change leaders in their school community and beyond? Will they inspire others to learn, and listen? Will they influence others? Will organizations that participated in this conference find themselves better able to advance their mission because of talent they

found through it? Will funders see these results and feel inspired to support more future leaders in coming years? Time will tell.

Key insights and questions

This is a working document and contributions to it are welcome!

Insights

We need new strategies to reach more schools and students

This conference could have helped hundreds more students, or thousands. The design is scalable. Students who come to the conference have a good experience and can become important voices in their school community. We have reached only a small fraction of the school communities in the state. We need new ideas to help reach more student leadership in more communities.

The agenda was compelling

Students found a lot of value in this conference, especially in terms of its *content*. Which is good, because we worked hard at it! The variety of topics and presenters worked well. No one asked for the conference to be multi-track.

Short is sweet

Less is more. Students appreciated well-prepared speakers that delivered real value efficiently. Sessions should be only as long as they need to be.

Interaction is fun

The students longed to feel present and connected with other students. Adding Kavya as co-host helped build a sense of interaction, and students appreciated opportunities to contribute via polls.

Students loved Alvin and Kavya

Having a well-supported student host is critical to this conference. Alvin built on a tradition started by Brenna Pangelinan in 2020 and extended by Zaid Fattah in 2021. Adding interaction with Kavya was helpful. If chemistry is good, co-hosts can add fun to the program.

The personal insights journal was worth the trouble

The existence of the journal grounded students in the idea that they *should* take notes, even if they didn't. By pre-recording the speakers, it was practical for an intern to create a model journal in the space of about a week.

Discord is good, but can be distracting.

Consistent moderation of the server is a must. It can support the conference and provides a window into how students are experiencing it, but should be on "slow mode" to make it less apt to distract.

Well-prepared presentations worked best

Students appreciated presentations that conveyed information clearly and quickly. After the 2020 conference, we eliminated panel conversations because they are often dull.

Music added fun

Students appreciated the music we included. Many stuck around on Zoom to listen to the music after the speakers finished.

High school email accounts blocked participation, again

Many high schools provide students with email addresses that are designed only for use within the school community. These email accounts effectively block students from participating in the outside world, including this conference. In 2021 we learned that mobile phone contact information was vital.

Students who aren't interested shouldn't be there!

Some students were forced to attend the conference against their wishes. A few of them expressed their resentment by sending inappropriate, offensive messages that the hosts and moderators had to deal with. It was invisible to the conference participants, but annoying and distracting to the panelists and hosts. This is the reason why there was no open chat channel in the conference.

Questions

How can we include more schools and more students next year?

Now that we know the program can work even when students have other options, how do we grow it?

Is there another time of year that would work any better?

The conference in 2021 and 2022 was held immediately after the end of the school year, in early June. The equivalent dates in 2023 would be June 19-21. This time of year faces some competition from other summer programs and family holidays...but so do other times.

How can we add deeper interactivity?

For example, could PTA councils, PTA districts or school districts host in-person viewing of this conference with additional interactive sessions? (This might be an opportunity to engage parent leaders in the substance of the conference.)

How can we make the conference sustainable?

Volunteers have demonstrated that this conference can be executed and have an impact. How can it be funded and sustained?

Should there be a fee to attend?

We have never yet charged for tickets to this conference. In 2021 we signaled that we might charge, and that early registration was a way to lock in free access. This ruse was effective at driving early signups; perhaps it is a game worth playing in the future.

Profit is not the motive for this conference, but we cannot sustain it without money from somewhere. We asked for donations consistently, especially in 2021, but received a mere handful. Perhaps this should not be a surprise; students don't have money! Charging a price would present an obstacle for many students, but it is clear that a ticket price is far from the only relevant barrier to creating an inclusive conference design. A ticket price of zero risks pegging this conference as low-value, reducing students' commitment to show up.

It would be possible to differentiate pricing, charging families and schools that can afford it, but the logistics of doing this would create new costs (accounting, processing, returns, customer service, legal support, etc.). We would need to get the strategy just right to make it work out.

Should this conference be national?

The difficult work of outreach to schools required direct contact with people in schools. Going national would be a roughly ten-fold expansion in the scope of the potential audience. It would be relatively easy to reach a national conference of student leaders from privileged schools, but we know from experience that it is very difficult to build deep connections in any school. Advertising and an effective, well-funded PR effort would help, but these would be new activities for us. Meanwhile, some topics truly are unique to California.

Should this conference also be targeted to middle schools?

We have never actively promoted this conference to middle schools, but there is some evidence that it could be effective. Some students in grades 7 and 8 (rising to grades 8 and 9) are interested in leadership, and students who start early can have extraordinary opportunities in

high school. Adding two more grade levels would expand the potential audience for the conference by about 50%. It would introduce many complexities including outreach design, new data requirements, a larger role for adult allies, and new messaging requirements.

What could be the role of elected legislators in 2023?

It's an intriguing angle: each school is represented by multiple elected officials, each with local staff, a small budget and a mission to connect with constituents. Each school is represented, at least in theory, by at least one school board member as well as a representative in the Assembly, a representative in the state Senate, and a representative in the US Congress. We built a good tool for this kind of outreach in 2021 but came to the idea late. In 2022 the census redistricting made the whole thing even more difficult to contemplate, and we didn't attempt it.

Legislativ	STUDENT ACADEMY Ed 100					
Legislative District (click for actionable list of high schools)	This many applications have been received	from this number of high schools	out of this many high schools in the legislative district	% of high schools represented by at least one applicant	Rank by % represented (Separate for Assembly, Senate, Congress)	
AD01 - Dahle	4	2	42	5%	78	
AD02 - Wood	7	5	31	16%	51	
AD03 - Gallagher	2	2	35	6%	76	
AD04 - Aguiar-Curry	36	14	45	31%	20	
AD05 - Bigelow	14	7	33	21%	34	
AD06 - Kiley	46	12	33	36%	10	
AD07 - McCarty	36	17	51	33%	17	
AD08 - Cooley	67	16	44	36%	10	
AD09 - Cooper	42	15	31	48%	4	
AD10 - Levine	3	3	20	15%	54	
AD11 - Frazier	22	9	25	36%	12	
AD12 - Flora	7	4	43	9%	63	
AD13 - Villapudua	13	7	40	18%	45	
AD14 - Grayson	31	13	33	39%	7	
AD15 - Wicks	12	7	22	32%	19	
AD16 - Bauer-Kahan	37	14	21	67%	1	

Should fewer sessions be pre-recorded?

In 2022 all speakers were pre-recorded, most of them in conversation with Alvin, the student host of the event. This was a big change from 2021, when just four speakers were pre-recorded: Hudson Yang, Ted Dintersmith, John Fensterwald and Alex Padilla.

It is easy to assume that live speakers are more engaging than recorded ones, but this is not automatically true. Live TV shows moved to live-on-tape for good reasons! Compelling speakers are compelling speakers, but logistical problems are always bad TV. The 2022 format of recording most speakers in conversation with a student host worked quite well.

What comes next?

Find funding

This conference cannot be done again without funding. Jeff and Jennifer have led and defined the conference for three years; it is time for them to transition to roles as advisors.

We have excellent how-to documentation of how to execute this conference. It requires one executive director who can recruit and wrangle speakers, partners, and funders on a flexible schedule that becomes more intensive in the four months leading up to the event. Another leader (preferably a student) can recruit and coordinate student leaders part-time for about nine months. An assistant media producer is needed for one or two months to make the recordings happen; with more time and investment they could be made great. It would be wise for the executive director to be supported by a board of advisors consisting of representatives from engagement partners, large school districts, funders, and students. Data management is a significant area of work to support outreach and event processes.

Set dates

We have not announced dates for the 2023 conference.

Blog posts from Ed100.org

Each week or two over the coming months we will release a post to feature one or more speakers or organizations from the conference. This will create a predictable cadence of well-prepared content that partners and Ed100 can work together to promote.

Recruiting for student leaders

A great conference requires a great team. We will have an outstanding group of student candidates among those who attended the conference and want to be involved in making it happen again.

Strategic Review

Big strategic questions loom.

What's our sustainability strategy? Sponsorship strategy? Free or fee with a scholarship program? Application-based or open to all? California or national? Education focused or multi-issue? Key metrics? Single event or multi-event? Virtual only or add live elements?

Selection of 2023 tech/content platforms

We executed the conference in 2022 on a combination of Zoom Webinar, Zoom Meeting, Google Sheets, Google Forms, MailMeteor, Slack, and ActiveCampaign. We tried to set up the Zoom Events platform but it was too difficult and we could not afford consulting support to use it.

Advisory board

Do we need to form one? Who would do the work to create it? What would be the goals? Who would lead it? When would it meet?