



**Ben Austin**  
**Founding Director**  
**Education Civil Rights Now**

Ben is a Founding Partner of Education Civil Rights Now, a national non-profit with the mission of establishing a constitutional right to a high-quality public education for children in multiple states across the nation. Between 2017-2021, Ben ran Kids Coalition with a similar mission for the children of Los Angeles. Ben served as the advocacy and policy director for the non-profit Students Matter from 2014-2016 (where he earlier and later served on the board), coordinating the policy and legislative politics of California's Vergara civil rights litigation.

Ben came to Students Matter from Parent Revolution, a non-profit focused on transforming underperforming public schools through community organizing, which Ben both founded and led from 2008-2014. Ben invented, passed into law, and implemented California's landmark parent trigger law -- which has empowered thousands of parents to transform their failing neighborhood schools, resulting in the most improved elementary school in the LAUSD prior to the pandemic. Ben's work was the subject of two feature films: the documentary *We the Parents* and the fictional account *Won't Back Down*. Over the course of his tenure, Ben raised \$22 million, managed a staff of 35 employees, while organizing with low-income parents to turn-around their failing schools in the face of powerful opposition.

Over the past two decades, Ben has worked to achieve a high quality public education for all children in California in a number of other capacities: serving as a Deputy Mayor of Los Angeles under Mayor Richard Riordan where he coordinated communications and helped craft the city's education policy from 2000-2001; working for Rob Reiner and First Five California from 2002-2006 where he helped build a low income universal preschool system in Los Angeles and ran an unsuccessful universal preschool statewide ballot initiative in 2006; and serving on the California State Board of Education from 2010-2011 where he cast the vote to approve California's Common Core standards.

Ben came to the education space through a career in national Democratic politics, during which he worked on four presidential campaigns and served as communications director for the 2000 Democratic National Convention host committee. Ben worked in the White House Office of Political Affairs, coordinating politics for the President and First Lady in western states, and the Office of Presidential Advance where he travelled internationally to coordinate events for the President and First Lady from 1993-1999. Ben has also practiced law at Irell & Manella from 1998-1999 and served as criminal prosecutor in the Los Angeles City Attorney's office from 2006-2008.

Ben graduated with honors from UC Berkeley in 1991 and cum laude from Georgetown Law School in 1998. Ben is a Fellow of the 10th class of the Aspen-Pahara Education Fellowship and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife Tracy and two daughters, both of whom he coaches as an AYSO soccer coach. Ben is an old, mediocre, and avid surfer.