

**Equity in
Pandemic
Schooling:
An Action
Guide for Families,
Educators, &
Communities**

What are the equity issues ?

White Flight and Opportunity Hoarding

With great uncertainty about the new school year, wealthier, predominantly white parents are using their resources to secure educational options for their individual children. By abandoning public schools or cornering scarce educational resources (when many less-advantaged children cannot meaningfully access school at all), they are engaging in white flight and opportunity hoarding. These actions reproduce and heighten existing inequities in US schools and make it difficult for everyone else to get an education, especially low-income children of color.

Persistent Inequality and Anti-Blackness in Schooling

Historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies in the US have contributed to persistent racial inequality in US schools. Black students, in particular, are systematically denied educational opportunities, wrongly disciplined, and shuttled out of schools and toward incarceration. Additionally, schools typically overlook the concerns of families of color, including in planning for pandemic schooling. Continuing or reinstating the status quo of schooling is neither equitable nor just.

Undermining Public Schooling

Public schools provide food, healthcare, and a safe space for many children. They also offer access and services that private schools typically do not, including education for dis/abled students and multilingual learners. When families un-enroll their children from public schools and turn to private schools, private online education, tutors, and homeschooling, they undermine the schools upon which less privileged families depend and which play a civic role in communities. This advances Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' privatization agenda.

The Disproportionate Stress and Work of Childcare

Amidst stay at home orders and school closures, working mothers have done an inordinate amount of the supervision of schooling and care work. This is an increasingly stressful situation for working class, low-income, and/or immigrant Black and Latinx families who disproportionately work in essential services. These families have always cobbled together childcare solutions and now face further risks that come with relying upon elders for childcare during the pandemic.



**We face collective and structural problems.
We need collective, structural solutions.
Families, educators, and community groups can
take the following 10 actions towards greater
equity and justice in pandemic schooling.**



10 Actions for Equity in Pandemic Schooling

- 01** Contact Congress to demand additional school funding and family supports.
- 02** Advocate for measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 and find a vaccine.
- 03** Advocate for a district remote learning option and the resources and support necessary to so that all students can access learning.
- 04** Demand all students have opportunities for learning that will stimulate their mind, and nurture their well-being.
- 05** Press for a moratorium on high-stakes testing, test-based accountability, and grades.

10 Actions, Cont. ...

- 06** Keep your child enrolled in your local public school.
- 07** Work with families and educators in your school to identify needs and share resources.
- 08** Link your school efforts to district efforts.
- 09** Support groups already doing this advocacy, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) groups.
- 10** Spread the word to others and invite them to take action with you.

Help ensure healthy and supported communities where schools are able to open safely.

1

Contact Congress to demand additional school funding and family supports.

Whether school is held in person or virtually, educating students in a time of pandemic is going to cost more money, not less. The House Democrats' HEROES Act and the Senate Republicans' recently proposed legislation both fall far short of the funding that education leaders estimate they need, and the Senate proposal ties most funding to school re-opening. In a time of massive unemployment, family supports (income, rental, utility, etc.) are also essential for children's learning and well-being. These supports should cover immigrant families, even if they include unauthorized family members.

Congress can take other steps, such as legislating for universal access to broadband to make virtual schooling more reliable and accessible. This blog post and a letter, both prepared by educational researchers, outline actions to urge policymakers to take. Many city and state leaders will be making dramatic cuts to their own budgets, so the federal government is in the best position to provide the large infusions of money needed at this moment.

Find contact information for your representatives here and here.

Help ensure healthy and supported communities where schools are able to open safely.

2

Advocate for measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to find a vaccine.

Advocate for local, state, and federal policies that limit the spread of COVID-19, such as wearing masks, keeping physical distance, limiting gatherings, and closing locales known or believed to substantially contribute to virus spread, especially those that are not essential, such as bars. More importantly, demand that state and federal leaders also provide resources for recommended public health infrastructure including adequate, rapid, and free testing, contact tracing, and vaccines.

Press schools to coordinate with local health departments or other city offices to plan and carry out necessary practices (such as testing and notification, contact tracing) for identifying and limiting virus spread once schools reopen and outbreaks occur, as will almost inevitably happen.

Advocate for pandemic schooling that is safe, engaging, caring, and equitable.

3

Advocate for a district remote learning option and the resources and support necessary for each and every student to access learning.

Children cannot learn and teachers cannot teach if they and/or loved ones are sick, grieving, or traumatized. Remote learning is the safest option in many places and may be necessary to reduce the spread of the virus, which disproportionately affects people of color and low-wage, essential workers.

However, virtual learning requires technology, internet access, and tech savvy, as well as adult assistance for most early elementary school children trying to navigate and stay engaged in online learning platforms. Many, many families are struggling without these supports. Multilingual learners, homeless students, and dis/abled students often cannot fully access e-learning platforms and may also need to connect with specialized professionals, among other issues. Meeting these students' needs may require that schools open for some students or that some students go to community spaces—like the “learning hubs” being organized in San Francisco—to access the resources and support they need and to do their work in a safe, physically-distanced environment.

Demand that schools address these issues in their online learning plans and that they take an active role in coordinating and providing supports for families who need them to make virtual schooling work. Parents in Culver City, California have advocated collectively for this.

Advocate for pandemic schooling that is safe, engaging, caring and equitable.

4

Demand that every student has access to and opportunities for learning that will stimulate their minds and nurture their well-being.

Face-to-face interaction and opportunities for enrichment are important for children's well-being and learning, as well as for families' child care needs, especially amidst the pandemics of COVID-19 and racism/racial violence.

Press schools to ensure that all children receive the care and connection that can come from face-to-face interaction (as is safe) and that all students can benefit from the engagement and stimulation of enrichment activities and community-based learning. School districts can partner with community-based organizations who are already doing this work, and often doing so in ways that are creative and collective, culturally relevant and justice-minded, joyful and caring. Districts can and should help connect children to such opportunities, and help support and pay for these as needed. Some community-based organizations are providing the care and counsel, culturally affirming education, and support for youth leadership and organizing that Black youth and other students of color do not receive in schools. Connecting more BIPOC students to these organizations, in particular, should be a priority so that pandemic education does not merely further the inadequacies and injustices of the current school system.

Advocate for pandemic schooling that is safe, engaging, caring and equitable.

5

Press for a moratorium on high-stakes testing, test-based accountability, and grades.

High-stakes testing, accountability schemes, and grades are often biased in favor of white, middle-class knowledge and have always been inequitable and harmful means of labeling and evaluating students and schools, especially those who have been historically and systematically denied the resources necessary to succeed by these measures or who shine by other measures. The use of these measures for consequential decisions can end up punishing students whose families have lost jobs and are struggling to make ends meet, are suffering from the virus or other healthcare crises, or who don't receive the schooling and resources they need in order to learn. Press local, state, and national leaders to end the use of these measures during the pandemic—and beyond.



Support your public schools in providing safe, engaging, caring, and equitable learning.

6

Keep your child enrolled in your local public school.

Enrollment and attendance are central to determining funding for public schools. The loss of substantial enrollments and funding will further diminish public schools' ability to serve the most marginalized students and keep staff employed. The closure of public schools leaves children and their families afloat and reduces their opportunities to learn and to do so safely during the pandemic.

Support your public schools in providing safe, engaging, caring, and equitable learning.

7

Work with families, educators, and community members to identify needs and share resources.

Parents, educators, and community members can help schools identify and understand the particular needs of every family at their school, so that families' needs are being met, and to ensure that families have a meaningful say in school decision-making. As the ones who know them best, families can provide school staff with knowledge of their children and their children's needs.

Families can also partner with their school to facilitate communication and a needs assessment through the old-fashioned class phone tree, or other means that effectively connect with all families. Teachers and white and/or middle- and upper-middle class parents who traditionally receive greater attention from school administrators can continually advocate to ensure that schools take extra effort to learn from and work with those families most marginalized in the schools.

All families have resources to share, whether it is time, money, or knowledge of different sorts (e.g., skills, cultural lifeways, hobbies, community resources). For example, families and community members might volunteer to help students work on school assignments in a virtual class meeting, virtual breakout session, or at a different "after-school" time.

Families and community members can extend learning and childcare by offering “clubs” or other activities to all students at their school. Students can participate virtually, or at a safe distance, depending on local health advisories and conditions.

Rather than give money to online services and consultants that are popping up to profit from the situation, wealthier families can use their resources in ways that help make remote learning safe and enriching for all students, but especially those most marginalized by remote learning. Parents and educators can work together to garner and distribute resources so that students can access more meaningful education. For example, families can help to buy, organize, and distribute school supplies and additional learning materials that teachers might need in order to organize lessons for deeper learning at home (e.g., math manipulables, materials for home science projects, art supplies, etc.).

Support your public schools in providing safe, engaging, caring, and equitable learning.

8

Link your school efforts to school district efforts.

We are stronger when we work together. Share coordinate, and ideas and resources with teachers and families at other schools, and your school district central office, so that the work you do will lift other boats and reverberate beyond your own child's school. Moreover, because of the highly segregated nature of many schools and districts, efforts at your own child's school may not help those most in need.

For families who have extra money to spend, donating to a school district foundation or coordinating the sharing of resources across schools or school districts might be a more equitable move than donating to your own child's school. Broader structures of resource inequity will still remain in place, but money is more likely to go to those most in need at this time.

Increase your impact.

9

Support groups already doing this advocacy, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color groups.

Support grassroots organizations such as [Dignity in Schools Campaign California](#) which has already established a campaign called "Stop the Pandemic's School Pushout." They have established [a list of demands](#) that links concerns about school discipline and the school-to-prison pipeline with the push out of youth from schools that has come from the closing of so many schools, particularly those serving low-income children of color, during the pandemic. Another group that has formed is the [Demand Safe Schools Collective](#), which has outlined similar demands in relation to educational justice and a broad understanding of safe schools. They organized a [National Day of Resistance](#) on August 3rd which others could join. If you are able, contribute to these groups or others working in your community.

Increase your impact.

10

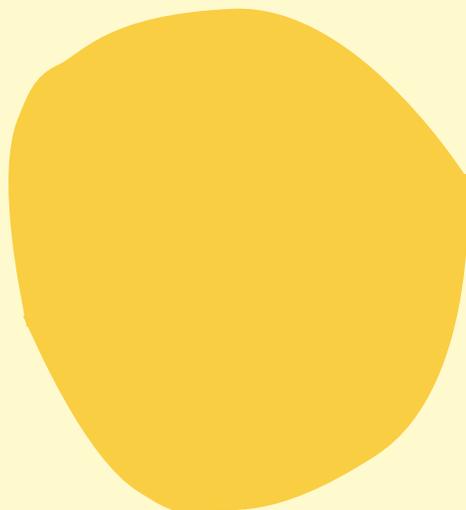
Spread the word to others and invite them to take action with you.

Stop passing around the “podding” articles and Facebook posts. Pause your efforts to expand your pod to less privileged families. (The intention may be charitable, but the results are unlikely to be equitable or just). Now is the time to act individually and collectively for greater equity and justice in schools and communities. Beyond arranging for the care and schooling of your own child, start spreading the word about equity issues and how they can be addressed, both in your immediate school community and school district, and at a structural level. Then invite others to join you in taking action.

A final word.

Many of the above actions will take less than an hour and require less additional work than organizing a pod. Nonetheless, this might feel like too much to take on. Think carefully about what you are capable of giving. A global pandemic calls for taking unusual measures, and sacrifices and adjustments to the lives we have lived, especially for those who are relatively privileged to be economically secure, able to work from home, and living without the compounding stresses and fears of racial violence and punitive immigration practices. Moreover, racism and injustice continue unless they are disrupted, and disruption requires those who are privileged to give up something, such as their time and resources. To do nothing is a choice, too. But we think the rewards of taking action will be substantial, for the educational opportunities our children will reap, for the joy and sustenance that comes from working collaboratively and in solidarity with others, and for building the kind of society we want all children to grow up in.

This is a living document, intended to help families, educators and community members make decisions in a complex and constantly changing environment. It reflects our current thinking as of August 4, 2020. Find this guide or the most recent version at <https://tinyurl.com/EquityGuidePandemicSchooling>.



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Thank you for reading and acting.