




THE LIFT EVERY VOICE AND LEAD TOOLKIT:

A Community Leader's Advocacy Resource for K-12 Education

UNCF
Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute





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Author: **Meredith B.L. Anderson, Ph.D.**



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UNCF is elevating awareness and discourse of the college readiness crisis and empowering the African American community—specifically grassroots leaders, HBCU presidents and parents—to improve educational outcomes for African American students along the P-20 pipeline.



re • form: rə'fɔrm/
verb

make changes in (something, typically a social, political, or economic institution or practice) in order to improve it. "an opportunity to reform and restructure an antiquated schooling model"

synonyms: improve, better, make better, ameliorate, refine

noun

the action or process of reforming an institution or practice.

synonyms: improvement, amelioration, refinement

Introduction

While the definition of reform is straightforward, education reform has become more political and strained over the last 25 years. Despite various policy initiatives and reforms, achievement and opportunity gaps still persist throughout the United States. Recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results show that only 17 percent of African American 12th graders were proficient in reading, compared to 46 percent for white students. African American students often have less access to rigorous coursework in school and are more underrepresented in AP and gifted and talented programs than other students. African American students are also more likely to attend schools with fewer financial resources—and less qualified and paid teachers—than white students. Because of these and other opportunity gaps, almost two out of five African American first- and second-year undergraduate students take remedial courses after high school, which often places additional financial burdens on students and families.¹

K-12 advocacy and the creation of a true P-16 pipeline is a collective effort; it takes collaboration from multiple individuals and community stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, non-profit leaders, policymakers and community leaders



This brief encourages leaders to utilize their influence to help alleviate the long-standing achievement gaps in the education system, because when students flourish, entire communities can flourish as well.

Clearly, there is a need for comprehensive advocacy and community engagement to help make a difference in the educational trajectory of African American students. K-12 advocacy and the creation of a true P-16 pipeline is a collective effort; it takes collaboration from multiple individuals and community stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, non-profit leaders, policymakers and community leaders. In an effort to gauge perspectives on education and potential for engagement in advocacy, UNCF surveyed over 600 African American community leaders (a group of clergy, local politicians, business leaders and education leaders often described as “grasstops”) throughout the country. The findings reported in *Lift Every Voice and Lead: African American Leaders’ Perceptions of K-12 Education Reform* revealed that a vast majority of grasstops felt they had a strong responsibility to help improve the education that African American students receive; however, leaders indicated that they lacked the information and tools to advocate for youth effectively.ⁱⁱ A more promising finding showed that 96 percent of leaders had an interest in learning more about ways to help them better advocate for African American students. In fact, the majority of grasstops said that advocacy “how to” guides, talking points and other tools would help them in their advocacy efforts. To that end, this toolkit, *The Lift Every Voice and Lead Toolkit: A Community Leader’s Advocacy Resource for K-12 Education*, is an answer to African American grasstops’ request.

This brief encourages leaders to utilize their influence to help alleviate the long-standing achievement gaps in the education system, because when students flourish, entire communities can flourish as well. We want to ensure that grasstops are intentional in their advocacy for black* students. The *Lift Every Voice and Lead Toolkit* provides tangible tips, strategies, talking points and resources to help grasstops who are serious about using their influence to make transformational change for all youth.

*“African American” and “black” are used interchangeably throughout this report.



Education Talking Points and Facts

In *Lift Every Voice and Lead*, grassroots told us that they would like talking points about racial disparities in education and the importance of improving education. Below are a few talking points and facts that leaders can use in various settings to help mobilize action around education reform.ⁱⁱⁱ

- 1. OPPORTUNITY GAPS:** While there is ample discussion on achievement gaps in education reform, there is less dialogue on opportunity and belief gaps, which often contribute to various educational disparities.
 - Opportunity gaps refer to the inequitable distribution of education resources and opportunities in schools and districts. Such gaps often lead to further student achievement gaps.
 - The belief gap refers to what students can actually achieve in schools versus what others (i.e., teachers, principals, guidance counselors) believe they can achieve.^{iv} Students of color are more likely to face this belief gap, as research has shown that some teachers have lower expectations of black students instead of truly believing in their potential.
 - Discussions about African American and Latino students often center on achievement gaps, as if inequities are endemic to students; yet, there are structural and economic barriers that often limit opportunities to learn and academic outcomes for students.
- 2. ADVANCED COURSES:** African American students often have less access to high-level courses.
 - According to the Office for Civil Rights Data Collection, black and Latino students are underrepresented in gifted and talented education programs (GATE) and AP courses.
 - In 2012, only 57 percent of black students had access to the full complement of math and science courses suggested to be college-ready, compared to 81 percent of Asian students and 71 percent of white students.^v
- 3. NAEP:** One commonly used measure to track educational disparities is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP is the largest nationally representative and continuing assessment of what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, such as math and reading.



- In 2015, the average reading score for white students on both the NAEP fourth and eighth grade exams was 26 points higher than those of African American students. Similar gaps are apparent in math.
- The 12th grade assessment also shows alarming disparities as well, with only seven percent of black students performing at or above proficient on the math exam in 2015, compared to 32 percent of white students.

4. EARLY CHILDHOOD: Pre-primary education program enrollment has steadily increased over time.^{vi} However, by age five, students from low-income families are less likely to be ready for school than moderate- or high-income students.

- Black students have less access to high-quality early childhood education programs than other students.^{vii}

5. DISCIPLINE: African American students are disproportionately disciplined in school.

- According to the Office for Civil Rights Data Collection, black children constitute only 19 percent of the preschool enrollment, but represent 47 percent of those preschool children receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions.
- Black K-12 students are nearly four times as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as white students. Black students are also more likely to receive a referral to law enforcement or be subject to a school-related arrest than white students.^{viii}
- Approaches like restorative justice, implicit bias training and transparent data systems are important research-based interventions that can help alleviate discipline inequities.

6. COLLEGE READINESS: African American students are less likely to be college-ready than their peers.

- Though the number of African American ACT takers has increased over time, these students were still twice as likely to meet zero ACT college readiness benchmarks compared to other students.^{ix}
- When students leave high school unprepared for college, they must often enroll in remedial education courses, which cost U.S. students and families \$1.3 billion every year.^x In addition, African American students are often more likely to take remedial courses than other student groups.
- Although black students represented 16 percent of high school students in 2013-14, they constituted 30 percent of high school students retained or held back.^{xi}



Education Talking Points and Facts *continued*

- 7. REPRESENTATION:** There is a distinct lack of black representation in school personnel across the country.
 - According to a 2016 U.S. Department of Education educator diversity report, in 2011-12, only 10 percent of public school principals were black, compared to 80 percent who were white. Eighty-two percent of public school educators were white, compared to 17.3 percent teachers of color.
 - Black male teachers only constitute 2 percent of the teaching workforce.^{xii}
 - Because students of color now represent the majority of public school students, it is important that schools reflect these changing demographics.

- 8. UNEQUAL RESOURCES:** Students of color are often concentrated in schools with fewer resources than white students.
 - Districts serving the most students of color receive roughly 15 percent less per student than districts with fewer students of color.^{xiii}

- 9. STUDENT ASPIRATIONS:** Despite achievement gaps, African American students have a strong desire to obtain a post-secondary education.
 - Eighty-four percent of 2015 ACT-tested African American high school graduates aspire to a post-secondary credential.^{xiv} This is similar to other national findings on students.

While there is ample discussion on achievement gaps in education reform, there is less dialogue on opportunity and belief gaps, which often contribute to various educational disparities.



10 Tips for Community Engagement and Advocacy

In *Lift Every Voice and Lead*, grassroots told us they wanted action items and suggestions to help them better advocate for students. The following 10 suggestions and tips can be helpful in advocacy and community engagement endeavors.

Suggestions	Examples	Things to Consider
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Understand important education reform terms, issues and facts. The education landscape is constantly evolving. Staying abreast of the current issues and terms is important for advocacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review websites like http://edglossary.org/about/ that explain key education terms. Signing up to receive education content through online newsletters is a great way to stay up to date on issues. The U.S. Department of Education and organizations such as Education Post, Education Trust and Public Private Action provide various useful newsletters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is impossible to know every detail about numerous education policies; try to obtain a broad scope. If there is a particular education policy area of interest to you, develop your knowledge-base on that issue through research and by talking to individuals working in that particular area. Investigate key issues in your area and larger national issues. Consider a few key issues, such as teacher effectiveness, high-quality assessments, high-quality educational options, teacher diversity and discipline disparities.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Make it personal. Incorporate your personal narrative and experiences in education during outreach. Personal narratives not only create transparency and authenticity in advocacy initiatives, but also add additional nuances to policy debates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may discuss experiences related to your education and/or child's experience, if applicable, during an advocacy event. Consider what worked, what did not work and how it impacted you. Consider speaking at a local school board meeting and discuss how a proposed policy may influence you, the community at large and those close to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When holding a community event for parents or students, reflect on your own preparedness for college, influential teachers, guidance counselors or community members. You should also reflect on information you wish you had known in school.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Assess the local climate and landscape. Previous research consistently shows that African American communities do not want policy done to them, but with them.^{xv} They want to be heard and included in meaningful policy discussions. Creating opportunities to hear from key stakeholders is important for advocacy work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold focus groups and forums to hear from members of the community. Partner with another organization that engages parents or other stakeholders on a regular basis. Ask to host roundtable discussions with participants. You don't have to do all the heavy lifting. Identify the key leaders that are making strides in education reform in your local area. Administer brief climate surveys on the pertinent educational issues in the area to relevant stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You do not have to be an expert to administer a quality survey for programmatic use. There are websites such as surveymonkey.com that will allow you to construct an e-mail survey for free. You may also consider administering a paper survey for increased response rates. Consider summarizing the data and sending to local decision makers. When hosting a focus group with parents, be mindful of time constraints and plan accordingly. It is important to not only hear from communities, but to utilize that information in a meaningful way to shape advocacy and policy.



10 Tips for Community Engagement and Advocacy *continued*

Suggestions	Examples	Things to Consider
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Launch a social media campaign. Advocating for change in education requires a multifaceted approach. Garnering support through social media is an effective method for mobilizing people to action and spreading awareness about your cause.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A social media campaign may revolve around a particular issue, community event, release of a report or brochure or some other initiative. The exact format may vary. • Host a Twitter chat. A Twitter chat is somewhat like a virtual panel. A moderator will pose questions using (Q1, Q2...) and participants will answer using (A1, A2...). All users will utilize a specific hashtag set forth by the moderator. Usually, the chat will last one hour. See appendix for more information. • Visit: https://nonprofits.fb.com/ for information on setting up a page on Facebook for your initiative. • Community Tool Box is a great resource for tools, tips and examples about social media engagement (see appendix). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media is a great way to share tools, research and resources with key influencers on how to advocate around an education issue. • Develop a clear objective and timeline for your campaign. • When hosting a Twitter chat, produce a few sample tweets and questions beforehand. • Consider administering a newsletter about key education events and issues if you have the capacity. • Social media is a great way to promote an event. Remember to distribute invitations to potential guests far in advance. Create reminders to send out regular e-mails and updates about your event. • Follow the #UNCFK12 hashtag on Twitter for education content.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Build partnerships with local schools. Relationships matter. Establishing partnerships with local schools is a great way to learn about school processes, help advocate on students' behalf and offer collaborative opportunities for students and staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize or join a local school visit. • Seek out mentoring and tutoring opportunities with local schools. • Establish a relationship with guidance counselors. You may be able to provide scholarship information and resources on college readiness.^{xvii} • Create a job-shadowing or summer internship program for local students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider testing schedules when planning or organizing a school visit. • Coordinate with the principal, assistant principal, administrative assistant and/or district office community partnership personnel when planning a school visit. • Consider attending or hosting a school career day. • If applicable, consider offering a professional development workshop for school staff.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Expand community networks. Networking with individuals who are passionate about making positive changes in education is an excellent way to further your advocacy efforts. There is often strength in numbers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with other organizations to issue a joint statement on education issues. Several civil rights organizations have issued letters regarding educational equity. • Partner with parent groups, churches, school districts and organizations who have an interest in closing achievement and opportunity gaps. If possible, develop a coalition of individuals working on education reform. • Schedule one-on-one meetings to facilitate dialogue with key stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider attending stakeholder events to network about potential collaboration. • Developing an advocacy strategy can be difficult given multiple competing priorities. Partnering with other organizations can be an effective way to distribute tasks. Be sure to assign tasks and develop deadlines early in the planning process.



Suggestions	Examples	Things to Consider
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Host a community event. Organizing an event is an excellent way to engage communities around K-12 education reform. Such events provide a space for dialogue about systemic issues and potential solutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Types of events may include panels, town halls, speaker series, house meetings, video screenings, debates, forums, roundtables, brown bag sessions, luncheons and symposia. Tailor the type of event to your particular audience and budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider co-partnering an event with another organization to help with costs and logistical support. A strategic marketing plan is important for maximizing turnout (see appendix). If possible, pass out a document that includes actionable next steps at the end of the event. Keep a list of all attendees to expand your network. Consider creating a short survey to receive feedback on the event.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Engage with elected officials. A key lever to enact change is through engagement with elected officials who have the authority to influence education legislation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a local school board meeting. E-mail, call or tweet elected officials. Organize an e-mail-writing campaign among the community. Request a meeting with an elected official or staff member. Invite an elected official to an organized school visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit: https://www.usa.gov/agencies to find more information on contacting your elected official. Draft an advocacy letter about a particular education issue and disseminate to your community. When possible, include compelling data or a personal narrative in meetings and/or letters. Describe how certain issues are influencing certain members of the community.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Write an Op-ed. One way to elicit change and garner support across a broad spectrum is by writing an op-ed or letter to the editor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online submissions often get more attention than print submissions. Do your research to find the best fit for your article. Check out Harvard Kennedy School's fact sheet on writing op-eds to gain insight on the steps to writing a great op-ed. (see appendix) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timing matters. If a particular issue is popular or dominating the news, you may be more likely to have your submission accepted. Have at least one or two people review your op-ed before submission. Consider partnering with another organization or individual to write your article. Be compelling, concise and to the point.
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Share key resources. There are lots of great educational resources available. Make an effort to share with parents, students and other grassroots.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See appendix for list of resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to stay updated on education issues, as resources and data are often changing. Consider creating a virtual database of important resources and tools for advocacy.



Advocacy in Action

The following organizations have worked to promote better educational and career trajectories for black youth. These initiatives can serve as examples for leaders who want to make transformational changes in their communities.



Black Girls Code

Black Girls Code was founded in 2011 by Kimberly Bryant, an electrical engineer with more than 20 years of experience. Tired of the persistent lack of diversity in the tech industry, Bryant took action and created a platform to inspire young black girls ages 7 to 17 to pursue their passions through coding. Driven by the motto, “Imagine, Build, Create,” Black Girls Code reaches out to the community to provide cutting-edge coding experiences through workshops, hackathons, field trips, summer camps and after-school programs. The organization seeks to increase the presence of women of color in the digital space and encourage them to move from being consumers to “innovators in STEM fields, leaders in their communities, and builders of their own futures through exposure to computer science and technology.” With an increasing demand for STEM jobs, it is imperative that students of color have the skills necessary to compete for these careers.



The Memphis Lift

Guided by the mission to “make the powerless parent powerful,” The Memphis Lift (TML) empowers parents to take an active role in their child’s education. The advocacy group was established in 2015 to build awareness of inequity in Memphis schools and encourage parents to demand high-quality schools for their children. The organization provides classes to parents to better educate them about education and advocacy; engages with local officials; holds community meetings; and collects data on parent knowledge of Memphis schools during their outreaches. TML has been deeply engaged in the community and has knocked on more than 10,000 doors throughout the city of Memphis to enlist families to demand a better education for students.



Life Pieces to Masterpieces

Life Pieces to Masterpieces (LPTM) is an organization based in Washington, DC, that utilizes artistic expression to develop leadership and character in African American males to make a difference in their community. The organization was founded in 1999 by Larry Quick, Mary Brown and Ben Johnson. The Life Pieces to Masterpieces' work is driven by the LPTM's Human Development System™, which empowers the students, or "Apprentices" to have a sense of purpose, and promotes the "4 Cs:" connect, create, contribute and celebrate. LPTM serves African American males ages 3-25. Young males ages 3-14 participate in an after-school program that helps with academic and leadership skills through art. The Saturday Academy for youth ages 14-17 offers workshops on college preparation and goal setting. LPTM also provides a program for young men ages 18-25 entitled "Education Architects" that motivates African American males toward a career in education or social work through trainings, assessments and classroom engagement. As a result of these initiatives, 100 percent of high school seniors in the Saturday Academy program graduated from high school and pursued either a post-secondary education or career training programs; 66 percent of participants in the after-school program increased their grades in math and reading; and the vast majority of participants can identify positive male role models and are optimistic about their futures.



Sample Template for Writing an Elected Official

Your name

Address

Phone Number

Email

Date

The Honorable (Name of Representative or Senator)

Office (for example, U.S. or State House of Representatives or Senate)

Full Office Address

Dear (Title, Last name) _____,

First paragraph: State who you are. Briefly explain your objective, concern or support for the particular issue. Reference a specific bill number, if possible. Overall, remember to keep the letter brief.

Second and third paragraphs: Discuss the importance of the issue in detail. Explain how the issue or legislation impacts you, your family or community. Include any quick facts, statistics or research to support your claim, if relevant. Be persuasive here. You may also mention any previous support (i.e., monetary, volunteer work, votes) for the person you are writing.

Last paragraph: End with a specific request. What exactly do you want the representative to do and by what date? Explain any alternative action items that the representative may take. Thank the representative for his or her time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Your Name



Conclusion

Grasstop leaders play an integral role in education policy and reform, yet our research suggests that many leaders have lacked the tools needed to successfully advocate for students. This document provides helpful tips and suggestions to help make meaningful changes in education for all youth. There is certainly an educational crisis and we need strong leadership to help advocate on behalf of students and families. Meaningful improvements for black students will take a concerted effort from grasstops, parents, schools, policymakers and non-profit organizations.

UNCF, the nation's largest provider of scholarships to students of color, has more than 70 years of experience in helping students get to and through college. In an effort to ensure that students are adequately prepared to attend college, UNCF established its K-12 Advocacy Division to help give rise to a college-going culture where African American parents and communities are knowledgeable about the college-going process. In New Orleans, Memphis, Indianapolis and across the country, UNCF is elevating awareness and discourse of the college readiness crisis and empowering the African American community—specifically grasstops leaders, HBCU presidents and parents—to improve educational outcomes for African American students along the P-20 pipeline.

There is certainly an educational crisis, and we need strong leadership to help advocate on behalf of students and families.

By helping more students navigate the often complex process of getting to college, we can increase the number of those students successfully earning college degrees and obtaining fulfilling careers. If you are interested in donating to the UNCF K-12 Advocacy Division, scholarships, programs and internships for students, please visit UNCF.org to learn more. UNCF believes that “A mind is a terrible thing to waste, but a wonderful thing to invest in.”® The investments communities make—monetary or through advocacy—can have profound returns for students. It is therefore imperative that grasstops take the lead to ensure their voices are heard, and these critical investments are made because these students and future college graduates are our dividends.



Appendix

Resources and Tools

ORGANIZATIONS

UNCF: UNCF (United Negro College Fund) is the nation's largest and most effective minority education organization and the largest private scholarship provider to minority group members in the country. UNCF's K-12 Advocacy Division seeks to give rise to a college-going culture where African American parents are knowledgeable about the college-going process and more African American students are academically prepared for a post-secondary education. <http://www.uncf.org/k12advocacy>

Memphis Lift: The Memphis Lift is an organization that aims to build widespread awareness of underserved children in Memphis schools and works to build demand for high quality schools. <https://www.facebook.com/TheMemphisLift/>

Life Pieces to Masterpieces: Life Pieces to Masterpieces (LPTM) is an organization based in Washington, DC, that utilizes artistic expression to develop leadership and character in African American males to make a difference in their community. <http://www.lifepieces.org/>

Black Girls Code: Black Girls Code reaches out to the community to provide cutting-edge coding experiences through workshops, hackathons, field trips, summer camps and afterschool programs. <http://www.blackgirlscodes.com/>

Movement of Youth: Movement of Youth (MOY) prepares diverse youth to lead and succeed in the 21st century through mentoring and targeted enrichment activities led by college students. <http://movementofyouth.org/>

The Expectations Project: Based in Washington, DC, the Expectations Project helps people of faith advocate for public policy changes that will make a difference for students. <http://www.expectations.org/>

National Urban League: The National Urban League is a historic civil rights and advocacy organization dedicated to economic empowerment in African American and other underserved urban communities. <http://nlu.iamempowered.com/>

The Education Trust: The Education Trust is a national non-profit advocacy organization that promotes high academic achievement for all students, particularly for students of color and low-income students. <https://edtrust.org/>

Stand for Children: Stand for Children advocates for better and equal education standards for all children by utilizing a strong three-pillared approach: "Parents, Politics and Policy." <http://stand.org/>



The Mind Trust: The Mind Trust aims to provide every student in Indianapolis with access to a high-quality, world-class education. They do this by recruiting and developing talented, innovative educators, launching high-quality schools and engaging neighborhoods and communities to help lead education innovation. <http://www.themindtrust.org/>

The Leadership Conference Education Fund: The Education Fund provides member organizations of the civil and human rights coalition, local- and state-level, community-based organizations and direct service organizations with strategic advice and assistance in policy development, field organizing, leadership and advocacy training, material design and production, and communications outreach. <http://leadershipconferenceedfund.org/>

DATA RESOURCES

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): <http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>
- U.S. Department of Education school district and school information portal: <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>
- Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education: <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>
- ACT: <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/research.html>
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation-Leaders and Laggards Report: <http://www.leadersandlaggards.org/>
- U.S. Department of Education, Condition of Education annual reports: <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/>

ADVOCACY AND PARENT TOOLS

- U.S. Department of Education Parent Checklist: <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/parent-checklist.pdf>
- Be A Learning Hero, "The Super 5 Back to School Power Moves": <http://bealearninghero.org/super5/>
- The National Council on Educating Black Children, Blueprint for Action: <http://ncebc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Blueprint-All.pdf>
- The National Urban League of Greater New Orleans, Parent Information Center: <http://ulgno.com/>
- STAND for Children (Stand University for Parents): <http://stand.org/national/action/stand-up/about>
- The National PTA, Parents' Guide to Student Success: <http://www.pta.org/parents/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2583>
- The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans, Teach-In Tool-Kit: <http://sites.ed.gov/whieeaa/files/2013/03/WHIEEAA-toolkit.pdf>
- The College Board, Big Future College Planning Tool: <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/?affiliateId=cblhomeblk&bannerId=cp>
- National Urban League's Project Ready: <http://iamempowered.com/programs/project-ready>
- Buffer Social Twitter Chat 101: <https://blog.bufferapp.com/twitter-chat-101>
- Community Toolbox: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/electronic-advocacy/main>
- Marketing Campaign Information: <https://blogs.constantcontact.com/create-a-campaign/>
- Harvard Kennedy School "How to Write an Op-Ed or Column": https://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/HO_NEW_HOW-TO-WRITE-AN-OPED-OR-COLUMN.pdf



Quick Guide: K-12 Advocacy Checklist

- Understand important education reform terms, issues and facts.** The education landscape is constantly evolving; staying abreast of the current issues and terms is important for advocacy.
- Make it personal.** Including personal narratives in outreach not only creates transparency and authenticity in advocacy initiatives, but also adds additional nuances to policy debates.
- Assess the local climate and landscape.** Creating opportunities to hear from key stakeholders is important for advocacy work. Communities should not feel like education reform is being done to them, but with them.
- Launch a social media campaign.** Garnering support through social media is an effective tool for mobilizing people to action and spreading awareness about your cause.
- Build partnerships with local schools.** Relationships matter. Establishing partnerships with local schools is a great way to learn about school processes, help advocate on students' behalf and offer collaborative opportunities for students and staff.
- Expand community networks.** Networking and collaborating with individuals who are passionate about making positive changes in education is an excellent way to further your advocacy efforts.
- Host a community event.** Such events provide a space for dialogue about systemic K-12 issues and potential solutions.
- Engage with elected officials.** A key lever to enact change is through engagement with elected officials who have the authority to influence education legislation.
- Write an op-ed.** One way to elicit change and garner support across a broad spectrum is by writing an op-ed or letter to the editor.
- Share key resources.** There are lots of great educational resources available. Make an effort to share with parents, students and other community leaders.



Endnotes

ⁱ U.S. Department of Education, Web Tables, Profile of Undergraduate Students: 2011-12. (2014). NCES 2015-167

ⁱⁱ Anderson, M.B.L., Harper, C., and Bridges, B K. (2017). *Lift Every Voice and Lead: African American Leaders' Perceptions of K-12 Education Reform*. Washington, DC: Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute, UNCF.

ⁱⁱⁱ While many of these statistics are disheartening, some cities across the country have been trying to grapple with these issues. In Washington, DC, for example, the creation of "School Equity Reports" helped illuminate various inequities related to discipline and other important indicators. Some districts across the country, such as the District of Columbia Public Schools, have increased access to rigorous courses by mandating AP course offerings in schools and other states, such as Arkansas, Indiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, require all high schools to offer one or more AP courses. The U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse provides various research-based interventions in schools and programs across the country. See <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FWW>

^{iv} Research has shown evidence of systematic bias in teacher expectations for African American students. Teachers who were not African American were found to have lower expectations of African American students than African American teachers. Gershenson, S., Holt, S. and Papageorge, N. (2015). "Who believes in me? The effect of student-teacher demographic match on teacher expectations." Discussion Paper No. 9202. Institute for the Study of Labor.

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^{vi} U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). "The Condition of Education. Preschool and Kindergarten Enrollment." Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cfa.asp

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