

EDUCATION JUSTICE IS RACIAL JUSTICE

WE WANT THE SCHOOLS ALL STUDENTS DESERVE

THE ALLIANCE
TO RECLAIM OUR SCHOOLS

The United States promises our children equal access to a free public elementary and high school education. But too many Black and Brown children have been denied schools good enough to make this promise meaningful. Instead of honestly acknowledging the root causes of struggling schools and investing in real equity in public education, today's policymakers and deep-pocketed corporate education "reformers" offer misguided strategies that fail to address the central problem: a failure to invest in Black, Brown and poor children, the educators who teach them and the communities in which they live. This is a crisis in values, in what we believe and who we believe in. It is a crisis of civil rights — and of human rights.



HERE'S WHAT WE NEED:

BILLIONS OF DOLLARS FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BLACK AND BROWN COMMUNITIES – RESOURCES THAT HAVE FOR SO LONG BEEN DENIED

WHAT'S WRONG: Too many of our leaders claim that we can't afford to pay for a public education system that serves all our children. Yet they always find the money for new prisons, new defense spending and continued tax breaks that benefit corporations and the super-wealthy.

THE WAY FORWARD: Close the billionaires' ("carried interest") tax loophole, tax the very wealthy and corporations so they pay their fair share. Fix school funding formulas to ensure equity. Invest in strong schools and strong communities.

QUALIFIED TEACHERS, RELEVANT CURRICULUM, SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE SERVICES

WHAT'S WRONG: Far too many of our schools lack the comprehensive programs and services that would guarantee our students a bright future. The opportunity gap between affluent schools and those in low-income communities — particularly communities of color — sets children up for failure.

THE WAY FORWARD: We know what our children need: experienced teachers with appropriate educational resources; rich, challenging, culturally-relevant curricula; a welcoming school environment that doesn't operate as if students are criminals; and schools that provide social and health services that help to overcome the challenges kids bring with them to the schoolhouse door. We need to invest in 10,000 sustainable community schools. The federal education law — the Every Student Succeeds Act — should be utilized to fund and support sustainable community schools.

STOP FLOODING OUR COMMUNITIES WITH UNDER-PERFORMING AND UNACCOUNTABLE CHARTER SCHOOLS

WHAT'S WRONG: Few charter schools have produced the academic gains they promised, nor do they accept the responsibility for educating the most disadvantaged students. Yet their presence is diverting already-scarce resources from the public schools that 95% of students still attend.

THE WAY FORWARD: We promise all our children universal access to a free, public education. We can do that through a unified, well-funded system of public schools. It is time to stop opening new charter schools until stronger laws are passed to ensure transparency and accountability for charters and the companies that manage them.

STOP TREATING BLACK AND BROWN CHILDREN LIKE CRIMINALS

WHAT'S WRONG: Armed police officers in schools, high rates of suspension, zero tolerance discipline practices and push-out continue to be everyday experiences for students — particularly Black and Brown children.

THE WAY FORWARD: We demand schools that are rooted in a culture of mutual respect and a commitment to educate young people, not frighten and control them into submission. We must embrace and invest in positive discipline practices and restorative justice as critical components for building that culture.

END HIGH STAKES TESTS. MAKE TIME FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

WHAT'S WRONG: Taking a test is not an educational activity. Children are now incessantly measured, but rarely provided with the learning opportunities they need to succeed. Rather than helping children and parents and informing teachers, tests are being used to justify academic tracking, over-representation of Black and Brown kids in special education, push outs and school closings.

THE WAY FORWARD: End the use of high stakes tests that rank and punish students, teachers and schools. Give educators the space to teach and assess students in ways that support learning, and allow for an expansion, rather than the narrowing of their educational experience.

PARENTS, COMMUNITY & EDUCATORS MUST BE DECISION MAKERS

WHAT'S WRONG: Too many “reforms” remove schools from local control, muting the voices and decision-making power of parents and local communities. The recent wave of state takeovers are not about educational improvement; they are aimed at paving the way for more unregulated charter schools, and new profits for textbook, testing and IT companies.

THE WAY FORWARD: End state takeovers and the privatization of public schools. Restore elected school boards that allow those closest to communities to make decisions.

We know that strong schools depend on strong communities. We tie our fight for education justice to fights for economic justice, racial justice and all those who struggle for a more just and fair America and world.

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