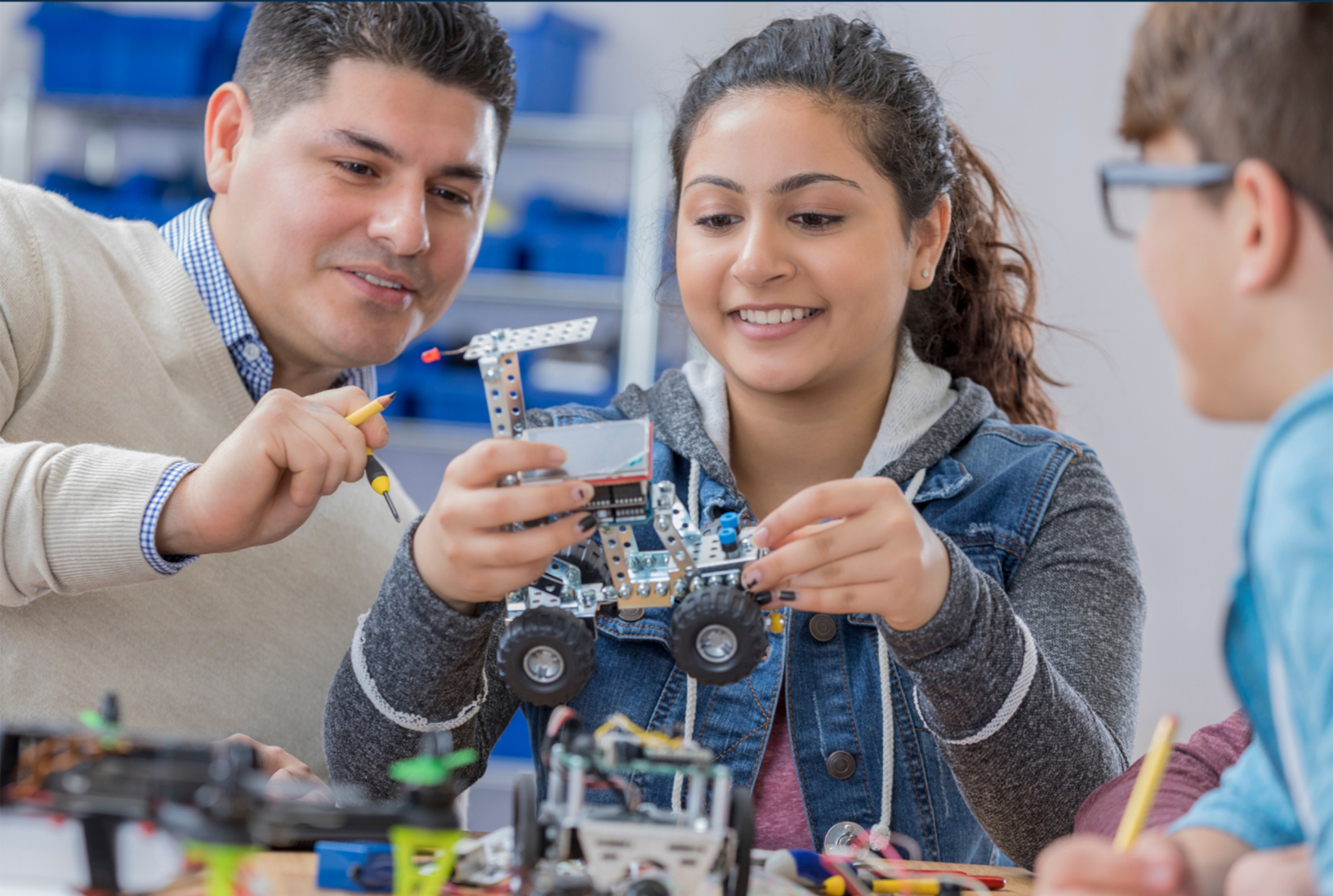


Transforming!
HIGH SCHOOL



Community Toolbox

Advocating for equity in our high schools

Great!
SCHOOLS.org

COMMUNITY TOOLBOX:

How to make our high schools more equitable

This toolbox is designed for community organizers, parent leaders and other advocates in order to raise awareness and drive for change in their community high schools.

In this toolbox you'll find:

- A collection of relevant articles and resources to share with your community
- Newsletter copy to send out to your subscribers
- Social assets for your network (on Facebook, Twitter, Thread, Instagram, etc).
- A short presentation deck for in-person or online meetings, which you're encouraged to copy and adapt for your community.

We hope these tools will equip you to build understanding and public will for transforming the high schools in your community into vibrant centers of relevant learning that support each and every student to fulfill their potential.

Many of these tools are designed to be customized to your community needs. Look for the **red ink** to find places to customize. But don't stop there, please do whatever it needs to suit your purpose!

Focus on Equity

Equity is the idea that offering an equal education to all students isn't enough, since students have vastly different needs and life experiences. Why is it important to focus on equity in our high schools? Unfortunately, 1 in 3 students don't graduate ready for high school ready for college or a career. And even worse, 1 in 5 students don't graduate at all. This is a sign that American high schools as they exist are not working for all students. Students from low-income and historically underserved communities face even worse odds.

Educators understand this all too well. Most are dedicated to fixing the problem. Unfortunately, this doesn't make the problem easy to solve. So many factors influence

whether a school is successful in addressing equity gaps: the whole school needs to be aligned to understand where they are succeeding and failing and why and then they need to take proactive steps to fix, change and oftentimes totally transform the school to realign priorities, change the curriculum and retrain teachers. It takes a lot of effort and that's why it helps if the community understands the stakes, hears success stories from other communities, and works together to keep schools focused on improving equity inside the classroom and across all programs.

From the [Transforming High School](#) series

- [How culturally responsive teaching prepares students for true success](#) – Article
- [Equitable curriculum](#) – Article
- [Equitable grading](#) – Article
- [Trauma-informed teaching](#) – Article
- [How to get support for your child's learning disabilities](#) – Article
- [Anti-racist school culture](#) – Article
- [College is possible](#) – Video
- [A radical rethink in a North Carolina high school](#) – Podcast

Additional GreatSchools resources

- [Banishing bias from school](#) – Podcast
- [Dealing with teacher bias](#) – Article
- [Practicing restorative justice](#) – Article
- [How families of color can fight for fair discipline in school](#) – Article
- [Why are advanced courses so important?](#) – Article

Additional resources from National Parents Union

- [Connecting with school administrators and elected officials](#) – Article
- [How to reach local press and media](#) – Article
- [Parent toolkits](#) – Tool
- [Join National Parents Union](#) – Tool

Recommended resources from other organizations:

- [How to institute restorative justice in your school](#) – Tool
- [Culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy \(CSRP\) framework](#) – Tool
- [Project Lead the Way](#) – Article
- [What is Project Based Learning](#) – Article

Other resources

- [How to institute restorative justice in your school](#) – Tool
- [Culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy \(CSRP\) framework](#) – Tool
- [Nine ways to promote equity in our schools](#) – Article

Newsletter on Equity

Subject Line: Why we need more equity at [your community] schools

Headline: Equity isn't a nice-to-have. It's essential.

We know that all our high school kids need – and deserve – these important things in school:

- Access to the best, most [challenging academic classes](#) they can handle.
- The opportunity to [read books and study history](#) that reflect everything America is about, including accurate representations of their community.
- Assurances that our kids won't face [unfair and unequal discipline](#) when things go wrong.
- Enough academic and social emotional support so that their [learning won't be derailed](#) by learning disabilities or challenges.

They're all a matter of basic fairness. A matter of equity.

We cannot pretend that our schools are always (or have ever been) equitable. But we won't achieve the equity we want by sidestepping the hard issues we see and throwing up our hands – and neither can our schools. We have to go through them, and we can work together to address the inequities we see and make some changes.

It can be tough to resolve issues like these. Even if the school finally figures out how to address an equity issue with an individual student, there's no guarantee that down the road another student won't have a similar problem. But we are more powerful collectively than alone – especially when we want to make changes for equity in our schools that will last. Working together we can fight for schools that:

- Institute [restorative justice programs](#) that treat all students equitably instead of doling out heavy-handed punishments for minor infractions
- Treat each and every child humanely, considering the experiences many of our students have had that [affect their learning](#)
- Ensure that students are [taught with diverse and culturally relevant materials](#)
- Encourage all students to explore [advanced classes](#) such as honors, AP, IB, academic pathways and dual enrollment.
- Make sure any teen is prepared for college or career.
- [Construct a culture that is anti-racist](#) and welcoming to everyone

We can build equitable schools where they have not existed – if we do it together. Other parents have done this in schools across the country, from Massachusetts to California. These inequities can't always be fixed in a day or a month or sometimes even in a few years. But there are models and tools that we can use, we can look to the professionals who are experts at making these changes – and most importantly, there is strength in numbers. And that strength can change the course of our children's lives for the better.

We can start by [\[Insert methods/actions relevant for your organization\]](#).

Social thread (Twitter, Thread, etc).

Some kids don't get the breaks. They go to school and see that other kids have all the best classes and aren't getting suspended for the same stuff they do.

Truth is they're NOT just whining. It's like, well, sometimes schools don't work for some kids because they really, truly are...

...not equitable! Not fair. The staff who run the school may not be consciously prejudiced. But when it seems like...

...reading lists and history books depict people of color negatively and [kids of color get the harshest discipline](#), and each AP class has...

...*maybe* a couple [Spanish-speaking kids in it](#) and [nobody with a learning disability](#), it's a system problem. Parents need to demand EQUITY for everybody! After all...

...lots of schools have done stuff to make themselves more equitable. Lots of models out there on how to do it too. Our schools, our kids. It's time for a change.

Facebook/Instagram post (with or without links)

Teens experiencing serious issues – whether it's homelessness, a jailed parent, a violent neighborhood, or just run-of-the-mill disengagement – can succeed when schools know [how to reach them despite the trauma](#).

Sometimes bias still sneaks in the schoolhouse door despite efforts by teachers and administrators to keep it out. To be fully equitable, schools need to become [transparently anti-racist](#).

Are all kids treated the same way if they screw up at school? It's a big problem if they're not. Some schools are now implementing [fairer disciplinary practices](#) in light of research that harsh discipline doesn't make for good learning or better behavior.

Rigor in Our Community presentation

This [10-slide customizable presentation](#) is available for you to copy and customize with your imagery, ideas and data about your community. It offers a deep dive case study into a small school in North Carolina that turned everything upside down in their pursuit of equity. This story will allow your community to see what equity looks like at a real high school that was on the verge of closing.

With support from our core partners, National Parents Union and Highlander Institute, we were able to create this community tool to help you advocate for better high schools in your communities. For more information about transformative practices, visit <https://transformingschool.org>.