

ADVANCING EDUCATION EQUITY THROUGH ESSA:

A CIVIL RIGHTS IMPERATIVE



Educational Equity in the 21st Century requires intentional and sustained engagement by our schools, local and state business and community leaders, teachers, parents and students.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law in December of 2015 and represents the most recent version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), our nation's federal civil rights law in education.

The National Urban League, UnidosUS and The Education Trust have come together to help move the nation forward in its efforts to close the long-standing gaps in opportunity and achievement separating students of color, students from low-income communities, and English learners from their peers.

Together we have developed shared principles and guidelines for achieving equity through ESSA, and stand ready to help our communities achieve this goal.

USING ESSA TO ADVANCE EQUITY

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) builds on the civil rights legacy of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, which helped establish the expectation that a child's ZIP code, race, family income, background, home language, or disability should never be a barrier to a quality education.

ESSA contains a number of meaningful levers that can be used to advance equity, by providing historically underserved students the educational opportunities needed to close achievement gaps.

The law was designed to give states more flexibility to craft state education plans that would both advance equity and improve student achievement.

If ESSA's promises of equity are going to translate into meaningful action, we submit that these six key principles must guide the implementation of the law.



KEY PRINCIPLE #1

Our education system must prepare historically underserved students—including students of color, low-income students, English learners, and students with disabilities—for postsecondary success in college and careers.

41%

41% of Black college freshmen and 54% of Latino college freshmen end up graduating from 4-year institutions, compared to 63% of White freshmen.

National Center for Education Statistics

1/2

Half of Black parents and 1 in 5 Latino parents do not believe that US schools do a good job in preparing Black and Latino students for success in the future.

*New Education Majority National Poll,
The Leadership Conference Education Fund*

KEY PRINCIPLE #2

Nationally, school districts serving the largest populations of Black, Latino, or American Indian students receive roughly \$1,800, or 13%, less per student in state and local funding than those serving the fewest students of color.

The Education Trust, Funding Gaps 2018

Research shows that resources like access to great teaching, academic rigor, personalized time and attention, and quality instructional materials are all essential for students.

Hidden School Resources: What Students Deserve In School, The Education Trust



KEY PRINCIPLE #2

Underfunded schools must receive the financial resources needed to effectively serve their students, and all schools must allocate resources to advance the academic progress of vulnerable student populations.



KEY PRINCIPLE #3

School systems must identify, attract and support a strong and diverse teacher workforce.



Data across states show that low-income and minority students are saddled with disproportionate numbers of inexperienced teachers that have taught for three or fewer years.

The Education Trust



Research has shown that low-income students and students of color are more likely than their higher income and white counterparts to be taught by an ineffective teacher.

The Education Trust

15%

Nationally, over half of students are students of color, but just 15% of our nation's teachers are Black or Latino.

The Education Trust

KEY PRINCIPLE #4



Parents are a potent community force, feel a sense of responsibility and want to be involved. However, schools need to be more responsive and receptive to accommodating their suggestions and involvement. “We want to be involved, but the schools don’t welcome us.”

The absence of access to information about educational services (tutoring, counseling) was also cited as a barrier to improving student achievement. “Parents need resources and help too, where do we turn to?”

National Urban League 2017 Equity and Excellence In Education Parent Focus Groups



KEY PRINCIPLE #4

Parents, families, communities and stakeholders must be welcomed and encouraged to offer input and support in strengthening and improving schools.



KEY PRINCIPLE #5

Schools must be safe, nurturing environments that protect the physical, emotional and intellectual wellbeing of students, inside and outside school walls.

39%

Black students represent 16% of public K-12 enrollment but 39% of out of school suspensions.

*Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)
US Department of Education*

Students with mentors earn better grades, are less likely to skip school and are more likely to go to college.

In 2017 in 8th Grade NAEP Reading

45%
■ 45% of White students were at or above proficient

18%
■ 18% of Black students were at or above proficient

44%
■ 44% of White students were at or above proficient

23%

■ 23% of Hispanic students were at or above proficient



KEY PRINCIPLE #6

Schools, districts and states must take prompt, and thoughtful action when schools underprepare students—especially those who have been historically underserved.

In 2017 in 8th Grade NAEP Math

13%

■ 13% of Black students were at or above proficient

20%

■ 20% of Hispanic students were at or above proficient



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