

Equitable community engagement—an ongoing, two-way process of building relationships, working collaboratively to support all students, and sharing power—is an achievable goal for all school communities. Our Community Engagement tools and resources can help make it happen.

To make use of our tools, it's helpful to be aware of the principles they are built upon:

1. Schools and other public institutions in the U.S. often perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of oppression.
2. Individuals, communities, and institutions are able to grow and change.
3. Community engagement can lead to transformative benefits for schools and communities.
4. Equitable community engagement requires that school leaders share power with students, families, community members, and school staff at all levels.
5. All members of a community have valuable insights, experiences, and ideas to contribute.
6. Relationship-building is a worthwhile investment that requires willingness to listen, reflect, and build empathy.
7. Discussing issues of race, power, and privilege is essential in order to dismantle inequitable systems and practices.
8. Those who have been historically marginalized must be intentionally provided opportunities to participate in and lead engagement work.

Research

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation's literature review—[*How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Improve Student Achievement and Influence School Reform*](#)—provides a summary of studies that demonstrate a direct link between family or community partnership and improvements in student or school outcomes.

Foundational Reading

Equitable community engagement requires a comprehensive understanding of social, cultural, and economic barriers that marginalized communities face. It also requires those in power to examine the institutions and organizational structures that perpetuate inequity in and beyond our school systems. The reading below offers a place to start this journey of self-reflection and learning:

Online

- [*The Groundwater Approach: Building a Practical Understanding of Structural Racism.*](#) Bayar Love and Deena Hayes-Greene, 2018.
- [*Five Stereotypes about Poor Families and Education.*](#) Paul Gorski, excerpt from *Reaching and Teaching Students in Poverty: Strategies for Erasing the Opportunity Gap*, 2013.
- [*Equity Literacy for Educators: Definition and Abilities.*](#) Paul Gorski, 2007.
- [*Racism and inequity are products of design. They can be redesigned.*](#) EquityXdesign, medium.com, 2016.

Print

- McIntosh, P. (1989, July). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and Freedom Magazine*, 10-12.
- Tatum, B. D. (2003). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?: And other conversations about race.* New York: Basic Books.
- Henderson, A., Mapp, K., Johnson, V., and Davies, D. (2007). *Beyond the bake sale: The essential guide to family-schools partnerships.* New York: The New Press.
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism.* Boston, MA. Beacon Press Books.

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