



Parent Voice on Equity in Reopening Schools



Dear Education Leaders and Policy Makers,

In collaboration with the undersigned organizations representing over a million families across the country, we as Parent Leaders, are raising our collective voice for healthy, equitable, and quality education options for our children in this upcoming school year. We proclaim that our wisdom and experience is essential and must be included in conversations and decisions to reopen/restart schools in the midst of COVID-19. As national, state and local education leaders and policymakers offer plans for reopening schools it is critical that Parent Leaders, with and on behalf of their children, are at the table as co-decision makers.

Our primary concerns are for the physical, social, and emotional health of our children and all staff within school communities.

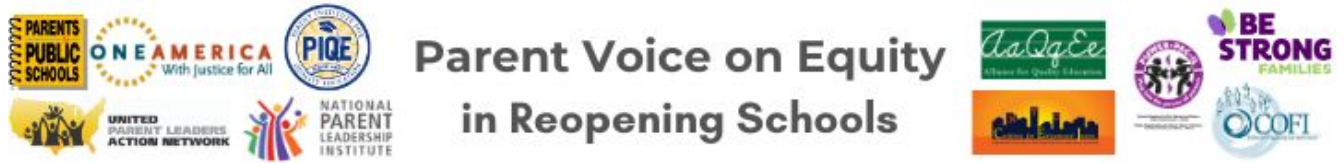
Parents need assurance from public health officials that the virus has been contained at a level that will allow children to safely return to school in their communities. Schools play many important functions but its primary function is to provide high-quality education and attend to the wellness of children.

Parents need to be certain that schools are prepared with:

- adapted space that allows for necessary social distancing,
- safe transportation options for students who would normally ride school buses or use public transportation,
- before and after care options in place for students,
- protective equipment for students and staff,
- a plan to trace infected individuals within the school community, and
- strategies to support the healing process needed to address the traumatic impact of COVID-19 on students and staff before academic learning proceeds.

This pandemic has reminded us that we are all accountable to building and sustaining a strong, equitable educational system.

We want our children across race, culture, language, socio-economics, and learning abilities to receive and be engaged in high quality learning. Whether they are in a school building or in an improved remote learning classroom, Parent Leaders want all students and families to have access to teachers, support professionals, language resources, tools,



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technology and digital connectivity that support recovery of learning loss and advancement in scholastic goals.

Parents see this reopening of schools as an opportunity for education leaders to address the inequities and learning deficits that students experienced prior to COVID-19 and during their crisis schooling in the midst of this pandemic. It also offers an opportunity to reimagine current school policies (such as attendance and student/teacher evaluation) and establish transparent pathways for accountability when problems occur.

The Bottom Line is Authentic Family Engagement is Imperative.

We recognize that in some states parents and students have been invited to participate in virtual surveys, roundtables, listening sessions and town halls, but family participation was limited due to poorly executed communication plans and lack of equitable efforts to offer discussions in languages that reflected the entire school community populations.

We also know that other Parent Leaders found a way without invitation to offer suggestions and feedback on plans; while still others created their own table and invited education leaders to hear their voices and respond. Parents want to lead in collaboration with the school community and other decision-makers.

Final decisions are being made by some state and local leaders without providing adequate time for parents to prepare and decide the best learning options for their children. This is not acceptable. These decisions could be revised to include parent voice. Parents being part of the solution-making process strengthens the parent-teacher-school partnership which is crucial for student success.

Therefore, we assert authentic family engagement demands full, equal and equitable partnerships between schools, families and community.

We recommend that plans to reopen schools be driven by equity and what is best for children and families and not simply to benefit the economy. This is not a time to cut education funding. **The health, safety and education of our children are not political issues.**

Respectfully,





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This joint letter was developed by leaders from 10 equity-centered, parent-led organizations representing families in over 100 communities and 30 plus states across the country. These organizations have come together to insist that parent voice become central in all conversations and decisions to reopen schools and advocate for equitable, high quality education in all plans offered to families.

To learn more about these signing organizations, please visit their websites linked below

[National Parent Leadership Institute](#)

[United Parent Leaders Action Network](#)

[Parent Institute for Quality Education](#)

[Parents for Public Schools](#)

[One America](#)

[Community Organizing and Family Issues](#)

[Alliance for Quality Education](#)

[Power PAC- Illinois](#)

[Be Strong Families](#)

[Coalition for Educational Justice](#)