

Lifting All Children Up

Policy decisions create opportunity gaps — both inside and outside our public school systems — that cause some schools to rise while others are weighed down.



Harmful educational policies are starving schools and communities of the resources needed to create fair and equal opportunities. These include policies that:

- base funding on local income and real estate values;
- ration learning opportunities through policies like tracking;
- fail to ensure a stable, expert, experienced teaching force;
- create narrow, unengaging, test-driven instruction;
- produce instability, waste, and churn through privatization and turnaround approaches;
- fail to build on the first language of emerging bilingual students; and
- use discipline policies that push students out of school and into the prison pipeline.

Harmful policies impacting children outside of school are frequently linked to a long and ongoing history of discrimination. These policies affect areas such as housing, employment, environment, safety, health care, food security, and civil rights; they often result in segregated communities of concentrated poverty, with a poor tax base and resource-poor neighborhoods.

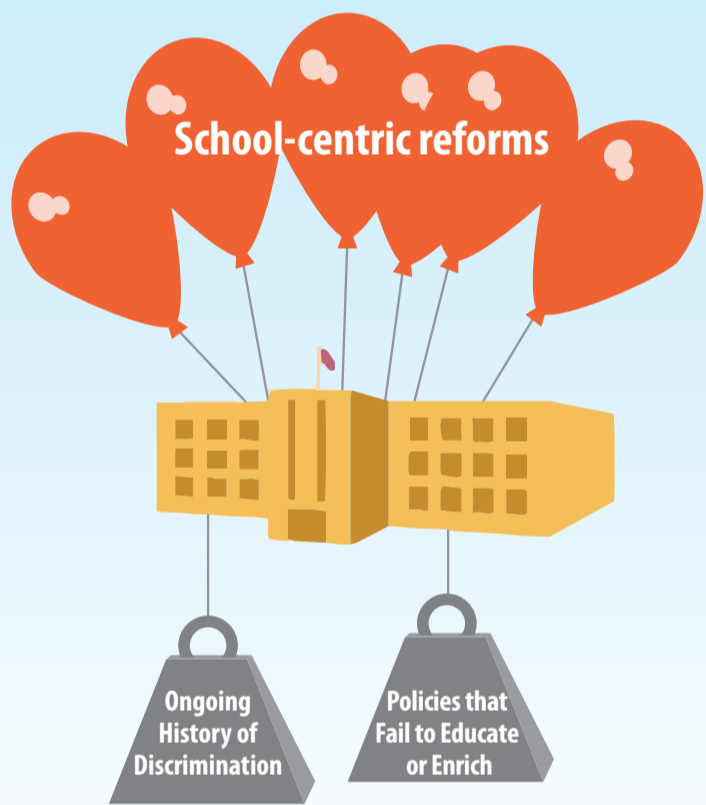


Finding Solutions

School-centric reforms

One way to help compensate for problems of inequity is to implement evidence-based policy changes* at the school level:

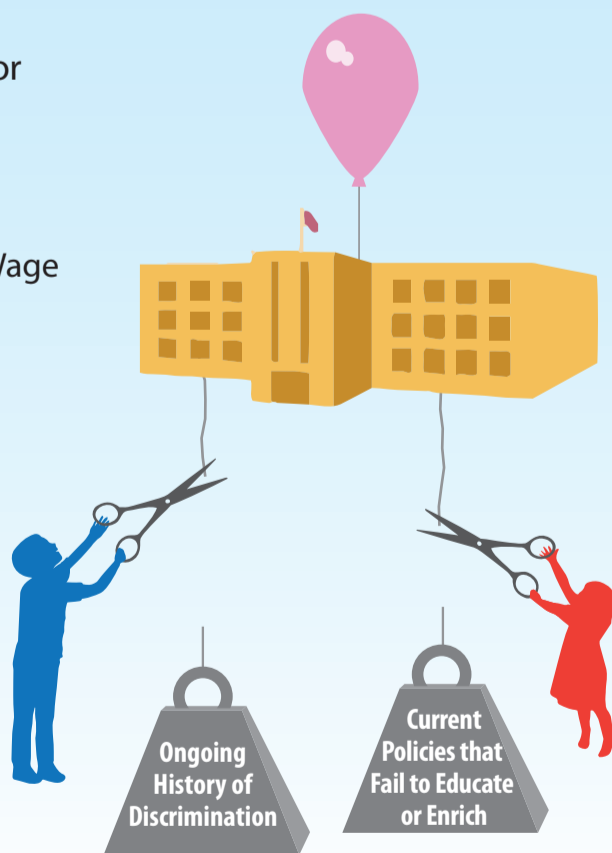
- Strong Supports for Experienced, Expert Teachers
- High-Quality Pre-K
- Wrap-around Services for Students and Families
- After-school Enrichment and Support
- Adequate, Equitable and Stable Funding
- Small Class Size
- Culturally Responsive Instruction
- Early & Intensive Reading and Math Interventions
- Elimination of Tracking
- Personalized Instruction based on Relationships with Caring Adults



Systemic reforms

Because many of the problems that poor and underserved children face are systemic in nature, we can also solve them by changing those systems:

- Employment Policies, Such as a Living Wage
- Building Communities with Racial and Socioeconomic Diversity
- Fair and Affordable Housing Policies
- Creating Communities with Accessible Learning Resources
- Access to the Best Learning Opportunities Decoupled from Parents' Social Capital
- Ensuring Access to Nutrition and Health Care



The evidence is clear: when obstacles are removed and students are given—students are given the resources to thrive, and when families and neighbors are meaningfully included in school communities, all students learn more.

*For research explaining system-based and school-based change, see:

Carter, P. L. & Welner, K. G. (Eds) (2013). *Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America Must Do to Give All Children an Even Chance*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rice, J. K. (2015). *Investing in Equal Opportunity: What Would it Take to Build the Balance Wheel?* Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Available online at <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/balance-wheel>