Advocating for Equity Across All Levels of Government
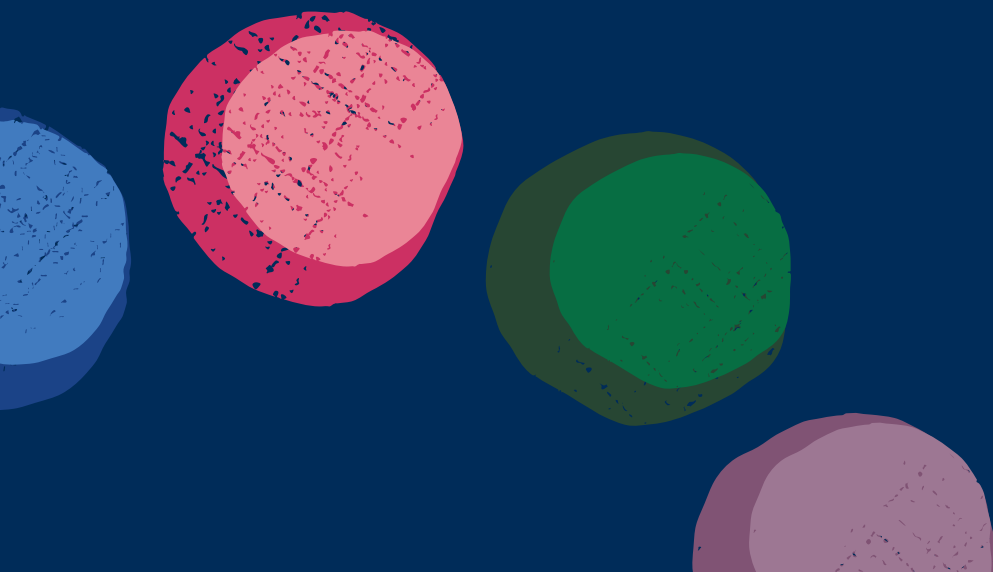
USER'S GUIDE

ALLIANCE FOR RESOURCE EQUITY

Uniting advocates and education leaders
to unlock excellence for every student

USER'S GUIDE

As schools continue to address longstanding inequities that were exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic, it's more important than ever that districts' limited resources — including remaining ESSER funds — are being used to equitably address student needs. Yet it's not always clear who has the power to influence or make the specific decisions that impact the various dimensions of resource equity. Even with many funding and policy decisions centered within districts, considering which players — at which level — can make key spending and implementation decisions will ensure that advocacy efforts are targeting those with the right levels of influence to make these efforts impactful. This guide is designed to help advocates use the **Levels of Governance tool** to influence decisions related to addressing educational inequities by providing a few specific examples.

Student Mental Health Supports

All students were <u>impacted by the pandemic</u> in various ways — and as a result, many students may require additional <u>mental health supports</u>. As such, schools and districts should be targeting mental health resources to the students who need them the most, using data to identify students including through multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).

Who are the right people to be engaging to ensure students are being targeted for the mental health supports they need?

STEP 1: **Determine the aligned Dimension of Resource Equity using the Education Combination.**

Student Supports and Interventions (Key Question 7.2)

STEP 2: **Consult the Levels of Governance tool and find aligned dimension and references.**

Where are there references to MTSS or identifying students for supports?

School leaders ultimately decide how and when to connect students with mental health supports. But state legislatures can provide funding and requirements around student support, while departments of education and districts can provide guidance and professional development for educators and school leaders and how to identify students for support.

STEP 3: **Determine action steps.**

Given that school staff are the ultimate decision-makers closest to students, it makes sense to first engage school leaders or school counselors to better understand how they are identifying students for supports.

If resources are a problem, advocates could engage district leaders or state legislators who have the power to allocate funding for student supports and relevant data systems to identify students in need of these services.

But if schools need data support, it could also be worth engaging state leaders, at both the department of education and in the legislature, who can provide funding and/or set requirements for districts. Both state departments and district offices can also provide professional developments to support school leaders to better use existing MTSS.

For additional resources and ideas on how districts can support student mental health supports check out the <u>Student Supports and Intervention guidebook</u>, as well as the guidebook for the <u>Positive and Inviting School Climate</u> dimension.

Targeted, Intensive Tutoring

Research shows that targeted, intensive tutoring should happen during the school day, because it ensures all students have equitable access to these important learning opportunities. Despite this data, schools in your district may only be offering tutoring online or after school, which could create barriers to access for some students.

Who should advocates be asking to adjust the school schedule next year to accommodate tutoring during the school day?

STEP 1: **Determine the aligned Dimension of Resource Equity using the Education Combination.**

Instructional Time and Attention (Key Question 5.1)

STEP 2: **Consult the Levels of Governance tool and find aligned dimension and references.**

Where do we see references to scheduling?

State and district leaders both can provide guidance, but school leaders generally establish school schedules — including incorporating tutoring.

STEP 3: **Determine action steps.**

Since school leaders are generally the ones with the power to make this decision, advocates could connect with their school's principal and encourage other parents and advocates in their school to do the same, particularly families of children who can't attend tutoring session when they are currently scheduled. If school leaders indicate that the district actually controls scheduling, refocus advocacy efforts toward district staff, including the superintendent.

Given that states and districts can offer guidance, advocates should look for any on district or state websites that they could use when engaging their school principal.

Another concern with a school's tutoring program could be that students are simply receiving basic homework help or are getting remedial instruction, rather than additional opportunities to access grade level content. In this case, consult the tool related to the dimension Empowering and Rigorous Content. Additional information about how districts can address these needs can be found via the Instructional Time and Attention guidebook.
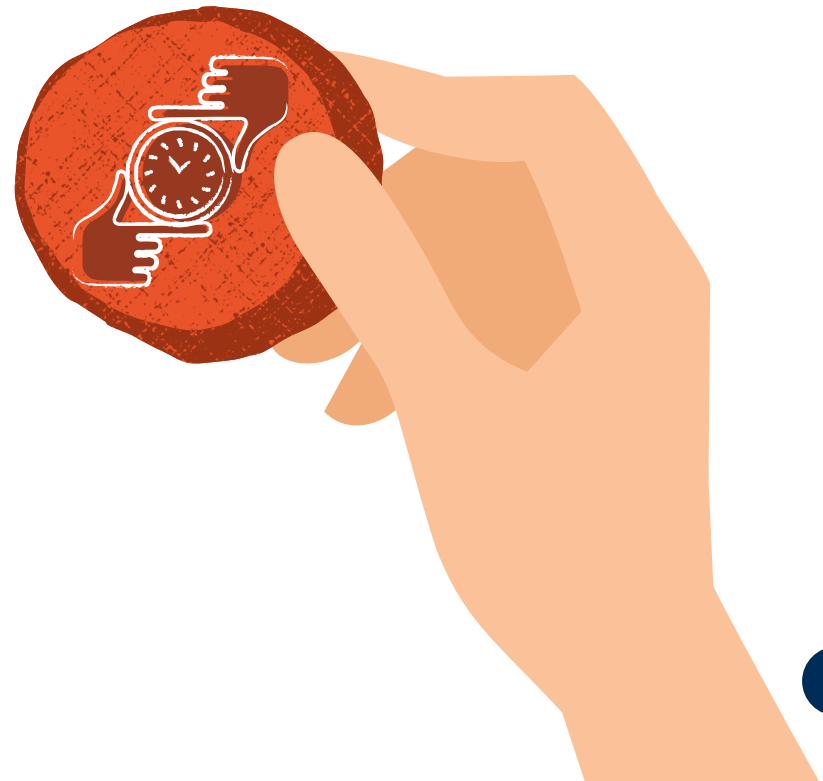
Retaining Teachers of Color

Having a diverse teacher workforce has been consistently linked to positive student academic and non-academic outcomes , particularly for students of color. Yet districts around the country often report having trouble both recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers of color.

How can advocates ensure their district is providing the structures and supports needed to retain teachers of color?

STEP 1: **Determine the aligned Dimension of Resource Equity using the Education Combination.**

Teacher Quality and Diversity (Key Question 2.3)

STEP 2: **Consult the Levels of Governance tool and find aligned dimension and references.**

Where are there references to levers that could support retention among teachers of color?

While state and federal leaders have many key roles to play in building a strong pipeline of teachers of color, implementing practices to retain teachers of color are largely in control of district and school leaders. However, state leaders can also support districts and schools with probing data to better understand if programs and resulting in better retention among teachers of color.

STEP 3: **Determine action steps.**

Given that school leaders play such a prominent role in creating welcoming and supportive school environments for educators, it makes sense to focus advocacy efforts on principals. Advocates can urge them to require professional development and create school affinity groups — or even encourage them to create affinity

groups across schools, with the help of district officials. When reaching out to district leaders, other potential policies and practices that could help address the retention of teachers of color can be found in the ARE Guidebook related to this same dimension of resource equity, as well as the guidebook related to School Leadership Quality and Diversity.

Additionally, if districts are struggling or resistant to tracking and sharing information on the diversity of their teacher workforce, it could be useful to engage with your state's department of education, who may be able to provide advocates and districts with relevant data.
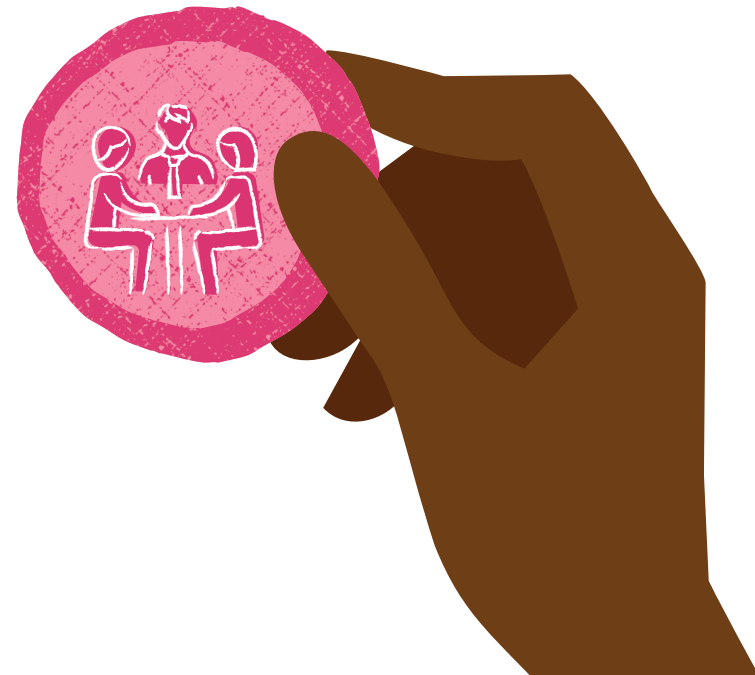
Family and Community Engagement

For family underline engagement to be underline effective, it needs to be grounded in an asset-based mindset and be supported by professional development and training for educators.

How can advocates ensure their district is supporting educators and school leaders with the necessary training to effectively engage families?

STEP 1: **Determine the aligned Dimension of Resource Equity using the Education Combination.**

Positive and Inviting School Climate (Key Question 6.4)

STEP 2: **Consult the Levels of Governance tool and find aligned dimension and references.**

Where are there references to professional development?

Both state and district leaders can provide professional development to districts and schools, respectively.

STEP 3: **Determine action steps.**

Since district administrators are the people who can provide professional development — as well as other tools and supports — on family engagement, advocates should consider engaging their local superintendent's office, or even a specific office of professional development or family engagement.

Ahead of time, consult your state department of education's website to see if they have any guidance or professional development resources to share with people in your district. To explore what else districts can do to improve family engagement, check out the

Positive and Inviting School Climate guidebook as well as the guidebook for Teaching Quality and Diversity, which includes content around culturally relevant practices for educators.

Maintaining Safe, Learning Ready School Buildings

It can be difficult for students to focus on learning in buildings that don't have adequate heating or air conditioning or proper ventilation — problems that disproportionately affect schools with high populations of students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

Who should advocates be engaging to be sure funding for building maintenance and upgrades are getting to the schools that need it most?

STEP 1: **Determine the aligned Dimension of Resource Equity using the Education Combination.**

Learning Ready Facilities (Key Question 9.1)

STEP 2: **Consult the Levels of Governance tool and find aligned dimension and references.**

Where are there references to the distribution of facilities funding?

State education agencies play a big role in ensuring that facilities funding is provided and equitably distributed, as well as collecting data on the conditions of school facilities.

At the local level, school boards, rather than district administrators, hold significant power in terms of budgeting, but also are responsible for soliciting input on community needs.

STEP 3: **Determine action steps.**

Since school boards can and should be engaging with community members to ensure facilities are meeting student, family, and community needs, advocates can be reaching out to their school board members to ensure

that needs that advocates have identified are being addressed in upcoming budgets and facilities proposals.

Prior to this engagement, consider engaging with officials at your district office or state department of education. Agency and district staff could provide you with useful, official information about the state of district buildings — including based on student demographics — that can support what community members are saying. They can also provide information state requirements and/or funding opportunities that you can present to school board members — including the potential to get funding from federal grants. And be sure to reference the related guidebook for additional recommendations.