



JOURNEY FOR JUSTICE ALLIANCE

The Journey for Justice Alliance Education Platform

An Equitable and Just School System Now!

The Journey for Justice Alliance (J4J) is a national network of intergenerational, grassroots community organizations led primarily by Black and Brown people in 24 U.S. cities. We assert that the lack of equity is one of the major failures of the American education system. It is a particular failure of the Obama administration, as a wholesale commitment to school privatization through school closings and charter school expansion has energized school segregation, the school to prison pipeline and subjected children to mediocre education interventions that over the past 15 years, have not resulted in sustained, improved education outcomes but have contributed to the destabilizing of the quality of life in urban communities.

J4J believes that we do not have failing schools. We have in fact been failed by a system that has ignored savage inequities in public education, using civil rights rhetoric while violating the human rights of Black and Brown families through privatization schemes like state takeovers, school closings, for profit charter and alternative schools. The great author Alice Walker says, “No one is your friend who demands your silence or denies your right to grow.” We will not be silent. Our education platform is based on peer reviewed, evidence based education practice and the lived experience of our over 40,000 members; Black and Brown parents and students across the United States.

4242 S. Cottage Grove, Chicago, IL 60653
(773) 548-7500 www.j4jalliance.com



1. A Moratorium on School Privatization.

The evidence is clear and aligns with the lived experience of parents, students and community residents in America's cities: school privatization has failed in improving the education outcomes for young people. There is no such thing as "school choice" in Black and Brown communities in this country. We want the *choice* of a world class neighborhood school within safe walking distance of our homes. We want an end to school closings, turnarounds, phase-outs, and charter expansion. We have an evidence-based solution for America's struggling, neglected schools.

2. Federal funding for 10,000 Sustainable Community Schools.

We know what works. America ranks 19th in the world in education, but 2nd when poverty is not a factor. Schools that are successful in this country are grounded in 5 pillars: relevant, rigorous and engaging curriculum, supports for quality teaching and not punitive standardized tests, appropriate wrap-around supports for every child, student-centered school climate and transformative parent and community engagement. Sustainable, high quality community schools that embody the 5 pillars and serve as community hubs for parents, students and neighborhood residents are working in America. This includes investment in early childhood education in America's schools. Strong, sustainable community schools help to create high quality Pre-K-12th grade *systems* of education in our communities. These are the interventions we recommend for struggling, underserved schools — NOT school closures or privatization.

3. End Zero Tolerance Policies in Public Education NOW.

Zero tolerance is an education policy rooted in racism and the criminalization of Black and Brown youth. It has not made our schools safer. It has ruined the lives of tens of thousands of America's Black and Brown children who were seen through a lens of hate as opposed to care and concern. We want an immediate end to zero tolerance policies expressed by out of control suspensions and expulsions and the over-policing of our schools. We want resources dedicated to the expansion of full restorative justice initiatives in every school and leadership development programs for youth and federal penalties for school districts that continue to use this harmful policy.

4. National Equity Assessment.

America does everything but equity. Closes schools. Online charter schools. Zero tolerance policies to push out students. Creates a charter industry. Puts a positive media spin on mediocre corporate education interventions. Anything but equity. Equitable schools are spaces where inspiration happens. We call for a national equity assessment for public schools in the United States. Inequity goes far beyond the funding of public schools. We are clear that inequity expresses itself in curriculum, teacher supports, wraparound supports, student climate and community engagement. We are proposing that America moves policy and resources to respond to the results of this assessment, which should be completed by June, 2017.

5. Stop the Attack on Black Teachers.

J4J is deeply concerned that across the United States, the number of Black teachers is in sharp decline. We know that students do better overall academically when they are taught from someone in their own racial group. A study of 9 American cities, Boston, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, New Orleans, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington DC, all noted a decline in the number of Black teachers. All of these cities curiously are places where school privatization has taken root. We are teaching our children a very immoral and dangerous lesson: that Black people are not fit to lead. America's colleges of education are not producing Black and Brown teaching candidates. J4J is calling for federal support for the Grow Your Own Teachers Initiative to create a pipeline of Black and Brown teachers in school districts that serve children of color. We are also calling for the ending of *biased basic skills* exams which eliminate Black and Brown teaching candidates, when we know the basic skills exam has no bearing on teacher quality.

6. End State Takeovers, Appointed School Boards and Mayoral Control.

We have a crisis in school governance. The overwhelming majority of state takeovers, mayoral control and appointed school boards exists in cities that serve primarily Black and Brown families. That is a voting rights issue and we want it to stop. We need the elimination of these oppressive structures that ignore the voices of concerned constituents and grease the rails for politically connected charter and contract school operators. Defenders of these

structures argue that elected school boards bring “politics” into public education. We retort with this: how could it possibly be more political than it is now? Privatizers regurgitate civil rights language, while ignoring the voices of the people directly impacted. It is shameful conduct that will not go unchallenged. We want elected, representative school boards. While they are not a panacea, we view democracy as a necessary ingredient in moving towards an equitable school system, a practical application of the notion of *accountability to the public*.

7. Eliminate the Over-Reliance on Standardized Tests in Public Schools.

J4J wants an end to punitive, high stakes standardized tests. Require districts to use tests for assessment only, with multiple assessment tools utilized to evaluate student growth and needs. Multiple studies have confirmed that standardized tests are an excellent indicator of one's zip code, not their aptitude. In America, standardized tests have long been used to support the illusion of white supremacy and we argue that the intent is the same today. If W.E.B. DuBois understood this in 1940, it is inexcusable to be tone deaf today. Standardized testing has been used to purge school districts of veteran Black teachers and to inflict harmful school closings on Black and Brown communities. Today parents of all races are in a full scale revolt against standardized testing. The Opt Out movement is a rainbow of parents who refuse to allow their children to be subjected to tests that do not aid teaching and learning, but enrich politically connected testing companies. We encourage the federal government to listen.