



# QuickStart Guide

## Framing Strategies for Building Narrative Resilience

### Framing strategies for talking about racial equity, public education, and community schools

Framing involves making choices about how to deliver a message: what to emphasize, how to explain critical concepts, and even what to leave unsaid. The strategies described below help communicate more effectively with members of the public about specific issues related to public education. These strategies help build people’s understanding of how a public education system that centers racial justice and equity can be advanced and why that is important.

### Strategy #1: Counter pro-voucher arguments by explaining the scheme’s harmful effects on students of color and low-income students.

Public education advocates need to counter the narrative that privatization, school choice, or voucher programs advance equity. One way they can do this is to challenge the narrative head-on by taking care to explain *how voucher programs can disadvantage students of color and deepen existing inequities*.

**Tip: Create an easily accessible “examples bank” that demonstrates how privatization harms students of color and low-income students.**

Example: High-quality public education ensures that every student has an equal chance in life, regardless of race or where they live. School choice initiatives, like voucher programs, make this vision difficult to achieve. These programs take money from the public school system to pay tuition at private schools. This is more likely to take place in Black and Brown communities which are underfunded to start, ...

... and forces them to cut corners and increase class size. The end result is that neighborhood public schools, and the communities that depend on them, are deprived of important resources that students need to learn and succeed.

## **Strategy #2: Advance a positive vision of educational opportunity that centers race.**

Racial equity must be part of conversations about remodeling public education. Thus, it is important for advocates and activists engaging members of the wider public to know how to include race in their narrative. Research shows several effective ways to do this: (1) Center race by recognizing the ways in which people of color are disadvantaged or not fully supported by the current education system; (2) Foreground the need for equitable opportunities for success (such as fair and equitable funding); and (3) Outline a vision for a racially just future in public education.

Example: There is a long and painful history of race and education in our country—well before *Brown v. Board of Education*. Our country is long overdue to place race at the center of how we think about remodeling education. We cannot be race-neutral if we are ever going to address and account for the inequalities that students of color face. Many districts around the country have already incorporated culturally responsive curricula in classrooms. The result is that students of color are affirmed and validated by having their unique histories and experiences elevated among their teachers and peers.

## **Strategy #3: Tell an aspirational story about community schools using specific, concrete examples.**

Remind people that public schools are public institutions that serve a greater democratic good. And like other public institutions, schools need to be invested in. Explanatory examples help communicators make that case. Examples help make solutions clear and visible to the public and save members of the public from having to interpret or imagine how a challenge may be resolved. In testing, community schools as an example were applied to demonstrate how innovative approaches have already been implemented to good effect in some parts of the country. Community schools are great illustrations of what happens



when parents, educators, and communities work together to support students' needs. Focus on how changes are innovative and have the potential to transform learning.

Example: Recent innovations in public education have demonstrated the ability to transform the system to make sure students of all racial backgrounds are included and affirmed. Community schools—public schools that partner with families and community organizations to support students' school success—are one place this is already happening. They have been implemented in a number of places across the country, including Kentucky and Ohio, helping reduce inequalities. The Oakland International School in California is a great example of this transformation. The school supports people and families who have immigrated recently. Through the school's many partnerships, it provides after-school tutoring, English as a second language classes for families, medical services, and an after-school and weekend sports program.