

Opportunity Gap - Talking Points

"The opportunity to learn - the necessary resources, the curriculum opportunities, the quality teachers - that affluent students have, is what determines what people can do in life."

- Linda Darling-Hammond, Professor of Education at Stanford University

To help you with your campaigns and advocacy work, here are some talking points to keep in mind when discussing the necessity with providing every single student with an equal opportunity to learn.

The opportunity gap is the greatest crisis facing America's schools.

- The opportunity gap is the disparity in access to quality schools and the resources needed for all children to be academically successful.
- Students from historically disadvantaged families have just a 51 percent Opportunity to Learn when compared to White, non-Latino students, according to the Schott Foundation's Opportunity to Learn Index. schottfoundation.org (<http://schottfoundation.org>)
- If every child is to have an opportunity for success, every student must have a true Opportunity to Learn.

We must close the opportunity gap in education if we want to close achievement gaps.

- Closing the opportunity gap is the only way we will make progress toward closing academic achievement gaps that separate most Black and Hispanic students from their White and Asian peers.
- We must commit to eliminating the opportunity gap if we are going to build a stronger, safer and more prosperous nation.

- Wealthy districts often are able to replace lost resources- which widen opportunity gaps- through increased tax support, but poor districts cannot.
- Ninety percent of American children attend public schools today, and that will probably continue. Public education is the only system capable of affecting the massive number of students needed to right our country's trajectory.

The opportunity gap has long-term consequences for individuals and our nation.

- Having a high-quality education system for all students regardless of their ZIP codes is not only the democratic measure for leadership, it is increasingly the major determinant of a nation's economic fate.
- Over the next 30 years, U.S. cities and states probably will be defined by what happens for the bottom two-thirds of citizens rather than the top one-third.
- Only one-third of Americans have any college or postsecondary credentials, and the bottom two-thirds of Americans are more likely to drop out of schools and to be incarcerated.
- The bottom two-thirds of Americans control less than 15 percent of the nation's wealth. ideas.repec.org/p/fip/fedgfe/2009-13.html (<http://ideas.repec.org/p/fip/fedgfe/2009-13.html>)
- Black males are pushed out of high school and into the pipeline to prison at rates higher than they graduate and reach high levels of academic achievement.

We can close the opportunity gap.

- We must do everything possible to make sure that each baby born today has the ·Opportunity to succeed tomorrow in a stronger America.
- We can close the opportunity gap by guaranteeing every child's right to a public education based on high-quality early childhood education, effective teachers, college preparatory curriculum and equitable instructional resources and policies.
- The top nations in the world are investing in and reaffirming their public education systems as lifelines for progress.

You can help close the opportunity gap.

- In every town, city and state, public schools will help our nation fulfill its potential.
- Change policies and practices to ensure all children have a fair and substantive ·Opportunity to learn and succeed in public schools regardless of ZIP code.
- Tell policymakers and other officials they are wrong when they attack public education and teachers.
- Raise your voice. Get connected. Take action.

