



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

Why Community Engagement Efforts in School Districts Must Address Existing Inequalities

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The issues of family and community engagement and local control are often at the heart of debates about education policies and school reform. This makes sense, since research shows that students, communities, teachers, and administrators often benefit when education professionals, families, and community members collaboratively identify shared educational goals that support student success.

However, research also shows that some community members – most notably privileged parents – have the resources and time needed to more fully engage with local school districts, leading to some intentionally and unintentionally leveraging their networks to promote policies that hoard resources and opportunities for their children. This means that community engagement efforts often leave out the voices of minority and disadvantaged community members, further widening the inequalities plaguing the nation's schools. For community engagement efforts to be established and expanded thoughtfully, school districts must enact policies that allow for more flexibility, support, and opportunities for all community members.