

Integration and Equity 2.0: New Approaches for a New Era

Call for Essays (Deadline: October 15, 2022)

Introduction: The American Institutes for Research (AIR) Equity Initiative engages in efforts that advance, support, and further AIR's Mission to generate and use rigorous evidence that contributes to a better, more equitable world. The AIR Equity Initiative is a self-funded agenda focused specifically on social and economic inequities that arise from systemic segregation by race and place. Funded work through the AIR Equity Initiative supports new ways of working—marrying the collective strengths of research and technical assistance with partnerships and diverse perspectives across community, practice, and policy experts to re-examine and address longstanding inequities. In particular, the AIR Equity Initiative has made significant investments to transform education by generating and using evidence in collaboration with school districts and communities to improve educational experiences and outcomes, so all students can thrive. Examples of this work include:

- Six funded research and technical assistance projects in partnership with districts and communities focused on issues related to segregation by race and place via our Educational Equity through Policy Implementation competitions.
- A short [video](#) recounting the history of school segregation and its intersection with community segregation and calling for systems-oriented theories of change to guide related research, intervention, and technical assistance efforts.
- An interactive tool to help conceptualize how intersections across school, community, and policy affect student experiences and learning opportunities.
- A grant to The Century Foundation Bridges Collaborative effort to provide technical assistance to more than 50 school districts, charter schools, and fair housing associations attempting to increase racial and/or economic integration.
- An award to an AIR internal team to study the “who, what, why, and how” associated with school integration in a climate where political mandates and incentives are few. This team is developing a tool for assessing integration, drafting guidance about promising practices, and informing the capacity-building efforts of Bridges Collaborative facilitators.

Announcement: Building on these efforts to advance equity, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) Equity Initiative is pleased to call for reinvigorated approaches and strategies to foster school integration and educational equity in K-12 public schools. *Integration and Equity 2.0* will support research, policy, practice, and community engagement on the development and implementation of strategies to address the inequity of resources and opportunities in schools highly segregated by race and economic status.

As a first step, AIR invites stakeholders with varied roles and expertise – including policymakers, school leaders, advocates, researchers, and student leaders – to submit short essays describing a promising strategy for integration and equity that addresses today’s challenges – including housing or transportation systems; law; politics and policymaking; school funding and revenue; or student- and community-related dynamics or needs. Essays will be reviewed by scholars, education or other sector leaders, advocates, and community members with the expertise to evaluate and add to the ideas offered. (Additional information about these essays appears below.)

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- Essays will be **selected for publication and published** in early 2023 through AIR
- Selected essayists will be invited to Washington, D.C. in December 2022 to participate in a **national strategy session** comprising select members of the research, policymaking, advocacy, and school/local communities
- Selected essayists will also be among those invited – and will receive priority status – to apply for an **AIR equity grant of up to \$1 million** each to support the operations and study of the ideas outlined in the essays; these grants will be awarded in Summer 2023 (more information about these grants will be released in early 2023).
 - ◆ While essays and grant applicants that address a broad range of activities (e.g., research, advocacy, litigation, lobbying, etc.) are welcome, grants awarded by the AIR Equity Initiative are limited to facilitating research and research-practice partnerships, as well as the exploration, planning, and study of topics that fall outside of the scope of research/research-practice partnerships. AIR grants may not directly support lobbying, political campaigns, or litigation.
 - ◆ For essayists who may wish to apply for a future AIR equity grant: It is not necessary that essays include multiple authors, or that a team of co-authors for essays precisely match the applicant team for a future AIR Equity Initiative grant application; however, essays that reflect diverse, unique, and/or multi- or cross-sector perspectives described in the essay criteria below – as well as those that demonstrate that consensus on articulated strategies in particular school systems, regions, or communities is achievable or has been reached – are more likely to be selected for publication and invitation to apply for a future grant.

The Problem: Students remain highly segregated by race and economic status, which has contributed to unequal opportunities and outcomes. See Potter, H. (2022); Frankenberg, E., Ee, J., Ayscue, J., & Orfield, G. (2019). In the past four decades, courts have released districts from oversight on racial desegregation and have intensely scrutinized and limited race-conscious strategies to desegregate schools. Governments and schools, with few exceptions, have been unable to 1) develop and 2) implement policies to integrate schools within the strictures of an ever-changing legal and sociopolitical climate. Experts across disparate sectors – including legal/civil rights, research, government, advocacy, and school governance – have generally worked on their own (less often collaboratively or in tandem) to address school integration or desegregation. There has also been limited collaboration among experts across governmental sectors that could play a role in school integration (including education, housing and urban development, transportation, and commerce) to address segregation in communities and regions. Too often, forums to address this problem have been infrequent, closed loop within narrow academic or policy circles, and have failed to generate sustained dialogue or momentum. Yet research evidence suggests that successful policymaking – from policy formation to implementation and practice – requires varied and sustained coalitions. See, e.g., Scott, J., Lubienski, C., DeBray, E., & Jabbar, H. (2014). What's needed is a reinvigorated approach to school integration that aligns research, advocacy, policy, and practice and focuses on both the development and implementation of desegregation strategies. We need to pivot quickly from understanding the depth of the current problem and devote the most energy to elevating new or under-explored ideas and to the formation of concrete proposals. We need bold thinking. We need to put ideas and strategic plans or blueprints on paper. Our plans must be cross-discipline and cross-sector. They must also be targeted to address specific states, regions, and communities; and they must be ambitious yet realistic and attuned to the politics and culture of today.

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Essay Criteria:

→ Required:

- ◆ Focuses on school integration/segregation as an element of educational equity in the United States, including racial integration/segregation
- ◆ Addresses policy development, policy implementation, or both
- ◆ Articulates an innovative or promising approach that could benefit from greater attention and specific strategies and action steps to effectuate the approach
- ◆ Has the potential to be tenable in today's highly polarized and politicized environment
- ◆ Is between 1,500 and 3,000 words in length, including citations (excluding an appendix, if one is included)
- ◆ If an appendix is included, contains no more than two charts, graphs, or diagrams and does not exceed two pages
- ◆ Is convincing and understandable to the general public (i.e., someone who is not a researcher or a legal or policy expert)

→ Desirable:

- ◆ Addresses school integration/desegregation from a multi-sector or cross-sector perspective (e.g., research and law/policy, education and housing, policymaker and community)
- ◆ Briefly summarizes or references – but quickly moves beyond – existing research, law, policy, or strategies (Note: essays need not include research alone as a primary focus)
- ◆ Lifts up unique, diverse, or unexpected voices within communities or various sectors that influence public education and school diversity

→ Optional:

- ◆ In addition to including medium-to-long-term strategies and action steps, also includes a specific research or policy proposal that could be achieved rapidly (within two months) that could inform or lay the groundwork for longer-term strategies. At its discretion, AIR may award one or more small (under 25K), short-term grants prior to Summer 2023. These small grants would be awarded independent of any larger AIR Equity Initiative-funded grant, described above.

For More Information:

Please join the AIR Equity Initiative at an informational Question and Answer session on Tuesday September 27, 2022, at 2 pm ET. Please RSVP [here](#) .

You may also contact Robert Kim or Terris Ross at airequityinitiative@air.org with questions.