

P4HE Summit: Public Education, Racism, and Community Health: Lessons from New Orleans

Breakout Session Overview



The Partners for Advancing Health Equity Collaborative hosted the 2022 Summit, *On the Front Lines of Equity & Justice*, December 4-6, 2022. The Summit brought together leaders in health equity and justice to foster collaboration across sectors, and to promote action in advancing health equity in research, practice, and policy. This report provides a synthesis of key takeaways from the breakout session, *Public Education, Racism, and Community Health: Lessons from New Orleans*.

Session Voices



Phoebe Ferguson, [Executive Director, Plessy and Ferguson Foundation](#)



Kristen Buras, [Associate Professor in Educational Policy Studies at Georgia State University](#)



Raynard Sanders, [Board Chair, Plessy and Ferguson Foundation](#)

Key Takeaways

Promote public health by supporting public education. The connection between school and health is significant; in fact, these [outcomes are intrinsically linked](#). At school, a child gains access to health care through their nurses, psychological support through their counselors, and other forms of wellbeing such as [the arts](#) and physical education. They find a community that cares for them during the week and develop healthy life skills in the classroom. A child's quality of education is a [fundamental social determinant of health](#), which impacts their quality of life. When low income or minority youth are forced into substandard educational environments, [as shown in the case of New Orleans](#), health inequity surges. Public health activists, [educators, and policy makers must come together](#) to address these issues in a central manner.

Recenter the community's needs in public education. Public education decisions can be influenced by ulterior motives, often at the disadvantage of the people most impacted. To increase test scores, and therefore profits, some schools have turned to high discipline approaches, but at a great cost. This is particularly true of ["no excuse" charter school models](#) that are proliferating across the country. Not only have these models [perpetuated racism in education](#), but students are also [being left behind](#) and subjected to [extreme disciplinarian action](#) as a result. Educational leaders must ensure that community needs remain the top priority.

Take back the power of the community by getting involved. New Orleans' educational crisis offers an example of how high-income and majority groups can step in and take away the power of low-income and minority communities. We as individuals must continue to fight for democracy by practicing [civic engagement](#). Attend government meetings, contact elected officials, join local protests and campaigns, and continue to vote for change.

Share your thoughts!
What did you think of this topic? Would you like to hear more from these speakers? Do you have any resources you would like to share with us? [Email us!](#)

Interested in hearing more? The full recording from this session is available [here](#). For more Partners for Health Equity content including more summit sessions, past, webinars, and a resource library, visit the P4HE [website](#).