



# Education Equity

## **Justice Café**

November 2020 • Host Kit





## EDUCATION EQUITY

# Opening Reflection

**LEADER:** [Pause for Brief Reflection]

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed our weak educational systems and structures that have failed to meet the needs of both students and educators. The issue for many of these children and students are the preexisting systems of inequality that has kept them from accessing the resources they need to thrive.

The current pandemic has widened the gap of inequality for millions of children and students. According to UNESCO, since the pandemic began, 1.2 billion students from 143 countries have been forced to leave school, sending them home to be educated online. A large majority of those children and students, totaling 670 million, are between the age of preschool and 18 years old. 385 million children around the world live in poverty. For many, school is a means of survival, and it can mean a guaranteed meal. Not having access to school has been a source of food insecurity for many. As education access for many students is the gateway out of poverty, not having access to educational resources during the pandemic such as the internet or computers, is a major deficit, keeping students from thriving. If education is the pathway to a good future, why is the system put into place so fragile?

Let us begin our reflection on this issue with some contemplative voices.

**Reader One:** "Unless children have strong education and strong families and strong communities and decent housing, it's not enough to go sit in at a lunch counter."

—Marian Wright Edelman,  
Children's Rights Activist

**Reader Two:** "The child becomes largely what it is taught; hence we must watch what we teach it, and how we live before it."

—Jane Addams, Social Forner,  
Activist, and Social Worker

**Reader Three:** "Every person has an equal right to receive from the earth what is necessary for life—food, clothing, shelter. Moreover, every person has the right to education, medical care, religion, and the expression of one's culture. In many places people live in fear, danger, or dehumanizing poverty. Clearly, it is not God's will that some of his children live in luxury while others have nothing. In Luke's Gospel, the rich man was condemned for living well while the poor man starved at his doorstep (Lk 16:19-31)."

—Fr. Thomas Betz, OFC, Director of  
Immigration and Refugee Services  
for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

**Reader Four:** "The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done."

—Jean Piaget, Child Psychologist

**Reader Five:** "A quality education has the power to transform societies in a single generation, provide children with the protection they need from the hazards of poverty, labor exploitation, and disease, and give them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to reach their full potential."

—Audrey Hepburn, Actress

Sources: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> | <https://www.globalpartnership.org/blog/education-time-covid-19>





## EDUCATION EQUITY

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### **IPJC Justice Café Etiquette**

- Create** a space of trust and acceptance
- Expect** to be surprised and find new insights
- Focus** on what really matters
- Link** your experience to the global reality
- Listen** to understand and make connections
- Make room** for others to join the conversation
- Respect** each person's unique perspective
- Share** your own experience and truth
- Take action** for justice individually and collectively





## EDUCATION EQUITY

# Ice Breaker Activity

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Screen share the quiz below. Inform participants ahead of time that they will need a piece of paper and something to write with. Have them read the questions to themselves and write down their answers on a piece of paper. Once they are finished, reveal the answers and then break them into pairs or small group. After the small group discussions, you can reconvene the larger group for a brief recap of the ideas and observations that emerged during the small group discussions.

**LEADER:** For this activity, you're going to need a piece of paper and something to write with. Below is a quiz in which you will read to yourself and take. Make sure to record your answers because you will discuss your answers with your partner. Once you take the quiz, indicate through a raised hand that you are done. Once everyone is done, I will read the answers. Give yourself one point for each question you got right and record that number. Once you've scored yourself, I will put you into pairs or small groups for a short discussion.

### Quiz. Let's test your knowledge of Education Inequality

1. True or False. Low-Income children and children of color receive enough educational resources to succeed.
2. Across the world, children with disabilities are denied access to education. UNICEF estimates \_\_\_ children with disabilities currently do not have access to education.
  - a. 23 million
  - b. 53 million
  - c. 93 million
  - d. 150 million
3. True or False. 75 million girls are currently unable to enroll in school.
4. In the U.S. \_\_\_% of Latinx and \_\_\_% of Black students enrolled in a four-year college or university experiences food insecurity
  - a. 14% and 20%
  - b. 16% and 18%
  - c. 22% and 30%
  - d. 10% and 12%





## EDUCATION EQUITY

### Ice Breaker Quiz Answers

Share with or read to the participants

1. **False.** Schools districts in the U.S. with the largest communities of Black, Indigenous, and other persons of color ( BIPOC) and/or low-income students get \$1,800 less in state and federal funding per student.<sup>1</sup> The ramifications of poorly funded schools are manifold as poorly funded schools contribute to poorly equipped teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and ill- prepared students.
2. **C.** UNICEF estimates worldwide 93 million children with disabilities do not have access to education.<sup>2</sup> Children with disabilities often live in poverty, lack access to medical services, and are put at risk for physical abuse, especially with quarantine restraints.<sup>3</sup>
3. **False.** Many factors keep girls from accessing education. One of the barriers is child marriage, which is a form of child exploitation and trafficking. In developing nations, one in three girls will be married by 18.<sup>4</sup> In 2016, there were an estimated 15.4 million people in forced marriages, 88% of victims were women and girls, and 37% of victims were under 18 at the time of the marriage.<sup>5</sup> Of the 15.4 million individuals in forced marriage, 44% were under 15 at the time of the marriage.<sup>6</sup> In the U.S., between 2000-2010, it is estimated 250,000 girls under age 12 were married to adult men. Girls forced into marriage will drop out of school to stay home and support their families.<sup>7</sup>
4. **B.** In the U.S. 16% of Latinx and 18% of Black students enrolled in a four-year college or university experiences food insecurity. Whereas, 9% of white are food insecure. 64% of student (all races) who experience food insecurity also experiencing housing insecurity.

### Discussion Questions

1. Share with your partner your score. How did your answers vary? Are there any facts or pieces of information that surprised you?
2. Think back on your educational experience, did you experience any barriers to education? How did you overcome them?
3. Take a look at the quiz again. List the justice issues that intersect with education addressed in the quiz. What are justice issues that contribute to education inequity that were not addressed in this quiz? In what ways do you think the pandemic has exacerbated those issues?

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.teachforamerica.org/stories/educational-inequity-facts>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-disability/covid-19/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.unchainedatlast.org/laws-to-end-child-marriage/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.api-gbv.org/about-gbv/types-of-gbv/forced-marriage>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/stories/child-marriage-around-world>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.unchainedatlast.org/laws-to-end-child-marriage/>



## EDUCATION EQUITY

# A Closer Look

With 1.2 billion students at home what does education during the pandemic look like?

**4 in 10** households lack **broadband access at home**



Annual Income under \$30,000



Annual Income \$50,000 or greater

**53%** say Internet is **Essential!**

Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/junwu1/2020/08/18/the-pandemic-is-a-perfect-time-to-address-the-digital-divide/#6e5947796129>; house img-Blangcon, noun project

Various UN agencies highlight the impact of the pandemic of education, here the biggest challenges due to closures:



**Interrupted learning:** Interruptions in education means students are missing out on the chance to develop key skills essential to their development. The students who are disproportionately impacted are often underprivileged students who are afforded fewer educational opportunities beyond school.

- **Poor nutrition:** Many children and youth rely on school meals as a means of nutrition. With schools closed, this increases their food scarcity.
- **Confusion and stress for teachers:** Just like online learning is not the best method for learning for all students, not all teachers are equipped for an unexpected closure, especially if their students require learning support or one-to-one assistance.
- **Parents unprepared for distance and home schooling:** Parents have been thrown into the demands of facilitating their children's education. This can be particularly challenging if the parents cannot stay at home or if they have limited education and/or resources.

- **Gaps in childcare:** Children and youth with parents who are essential workers are left at home, making them vulnerable for risky behavior from peers.
- **Rise in dropout rates:** Extended school closures can discourage at risk youth from returning school once it reopens. With the economic crisis spurred on by the pandemic, students from financially struggling families might feel pressure to work to provide for their families causing them to drop out of school.
- **Increased exposure to violence and exploitation:** Women and children at home may be at risk of increased violence in their families and communities. Often children and youth from low income or poor families attend school as a way to escape poverty and potential trafficking. School closings have placed children and youth at risk to be recruited into militias, trafficked, or placed into forced marriage. Additionally, for children studying online, there has been an increased threat to internet online predators targeting minors. Teachers cannot act as mandated reporters for suspected abuse or neglect.
- **Challenges measuring and validating learning:** Online school presents an array of challenges. One major challenge is managing the grading and administering of exams and standardized testing. Some schools have elected to postpone or skip major exams until the end of the pandemic. This has raised concerns about student disengagement and learning progress.



Source: <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-education-bedrock-just-society-post-covid-world>; <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061742>

## EDUCATION EQUITY

# A Closer Look

### Some pre-existing issues that were exacerbated by the pandemic...

#### K-12 education

**1.3 million** high school students in the U.S. drop out every year. **More than ½** of those students are students of color and low-income. What contributes to high drop out rates?

- Poverty
- Lack of School Funding
- Overcrowded Classes
- Lack of resources such as internet or parental help

Students who grow up in low-income communities are **2.5X unlikely** to be college-ready

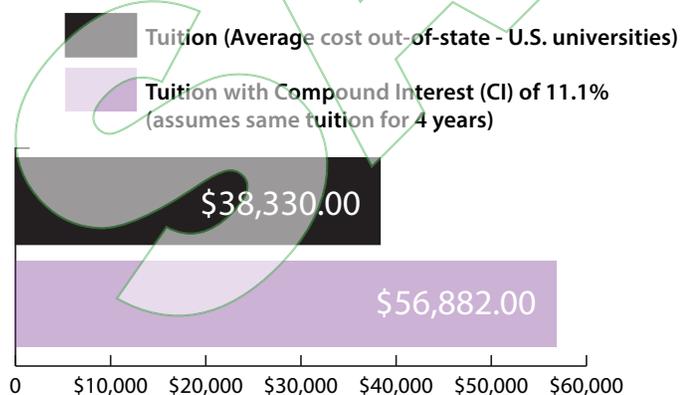
Source: Teach for America

- **94%** of public school teachers in the U.S. have to dip into their savings to purchase supplies for their classroom.

Source: CNN politics

#### Post-secondary education

- The average cost of public out-of-state tuition in the U.S. is \$38,330 a year with **11.1% compound interest**. College costs have increased by **103%**. Whereas, median incomes in have increased by **14%**.



- **41 %** of recent grads and **33.8%** of all grads work jobs in which they are overqualified.
- **1 in 3** college students in the U.S.—nearly 8 million live in or near poverty.
- **72%** of students in the U.S. require financial aid
- Students of color, who make up **45%** of college students in the U.S., are most likely to experience food insecurity

#### How the pandemic is affecting the education of all college and university students?

“As universities closed, many students entered resource-limited or stressful domestic situations that are not conducive to learning.”

—Nathaniel Brown, professor

- Increase in food and housing insecurity
- Low-income students struggle to study due to a lack of Wi-Fi access for online learning
- Low-income students have been deferring their education during the pandemic to support their families who suffered a loss of income

Sources: <https://phys.org/news/2020-05-covid-pandemic-affects-college-students.html>  
<https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/511479-keeping-low-income-college-students-from-going-hungry>  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/20/the-numbers-behind-the-broadband-homework-gap/>



## EDUCATION EQUITY

# Catholic Social Teaching

“We can even say that economic growth is dependent on social progress, the goal to which it aspires; and that basic education is the first objective for any nation seeking to develop itself. Lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate is a starved spirit. When someone learns how to read and write, he is equipped to do a job and to shoulder a profession, to develop self-confidence and realize that he can progress along with others. [...] literacy is the “first and most basic tool for personal enrichment and social integration; and it is society’s most valuable tool for furthering development and economic progress.”

—*Populorum Progressio*, No. 35

“It is the proper function of authority, in the name of the common good, to make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education, culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family and so on.”

—*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para 1908

“Among the causes that greatly contribute to underdevelopment and poverty, in addition to the impossibility of acceding to the international market, mention must be made of illiteracy, lack of food security, the absence of structures and services, inadequate measures of guaranteeing basic health care, the lack of safe drinking water and sanitation, corruption, instability of institutions and of the political life itself. There is a connection between poverty and, in many countries, the lack of liberty, possibilities of economic initiative and a national administration capable of setting up an adequate system of education and information.”

—*The Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*, para 447

“Yet we desire even more than this; our dream soars higher. We are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment or a ‘dignified sustenance’ for all people, but also their “general temporal welfare and prosperity”. This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives.”

—*Evangelii Gaudium* No. 192

“And, in regard to children, great care should be taken not to place them in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed. For, just as very rough weather destroys the buds of spring, so does too early an experience of life’s hard toil blight the young promise of a child’s faculties, and render any true education impossible.”

—*Rerum Novarum* No. 42





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### **Conversation Starter** • Education Equity

1. Where do you see gaps in education access in our society?
2. What do you think are the strengths of digital learning? What are the drawbacks?
3. How might we take advantage of this time to revive or transform our current education systems?
4. In what ways can institutions, communities, parents, and students support increased access to quality education?





## EDUCATION EQUITY

# Closing Reflection

**LEADER:** We close out this time together with a prayer for education equity. May we use this time in our history to finally close this gap of inequality and create a better future for the next generation of students.

*“Holy Spirit,  
Let the wisdom of God come alive among us. Awaken the awareness and compassion of our community leaders and legislators to the disparities within our current education system. Convict the hearts of those who are not performing their duties in integrity and fairness. Help them to become more diligent and focused on their obligation to protect the rights of all children to have access to the best academic experience possible.”*

—The Prayer Institute





## EDUCATION EQUITY

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### **Action Ideas** • Education Equity

1. If you live in the U.S., you can contact your legislators to protect public schools. Go here: <https://protectpubliceducation.org/>
2. Write to your local newspaper and share your/your students/your children's experience with education inequality. This gets the word out about specific issues that might not be common knowledge.
3. If you're a college or university student, you can join Our Turn to become an education equity activist. Go here to join: <https://www.itsourturn.org/join>

