

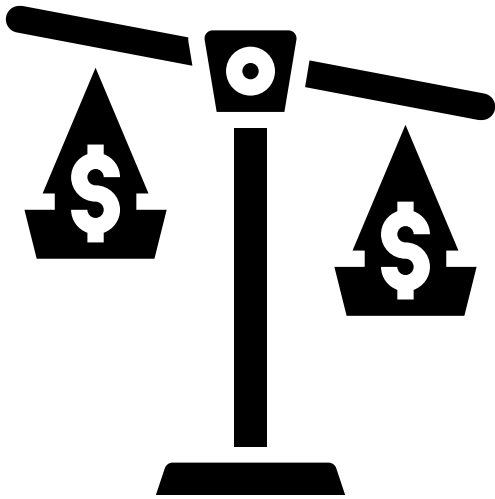
# ***DISPARITIES IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM***

UrbEd Advocacy Guide



**URB**ED

# WHAT IS A DISPARITY?

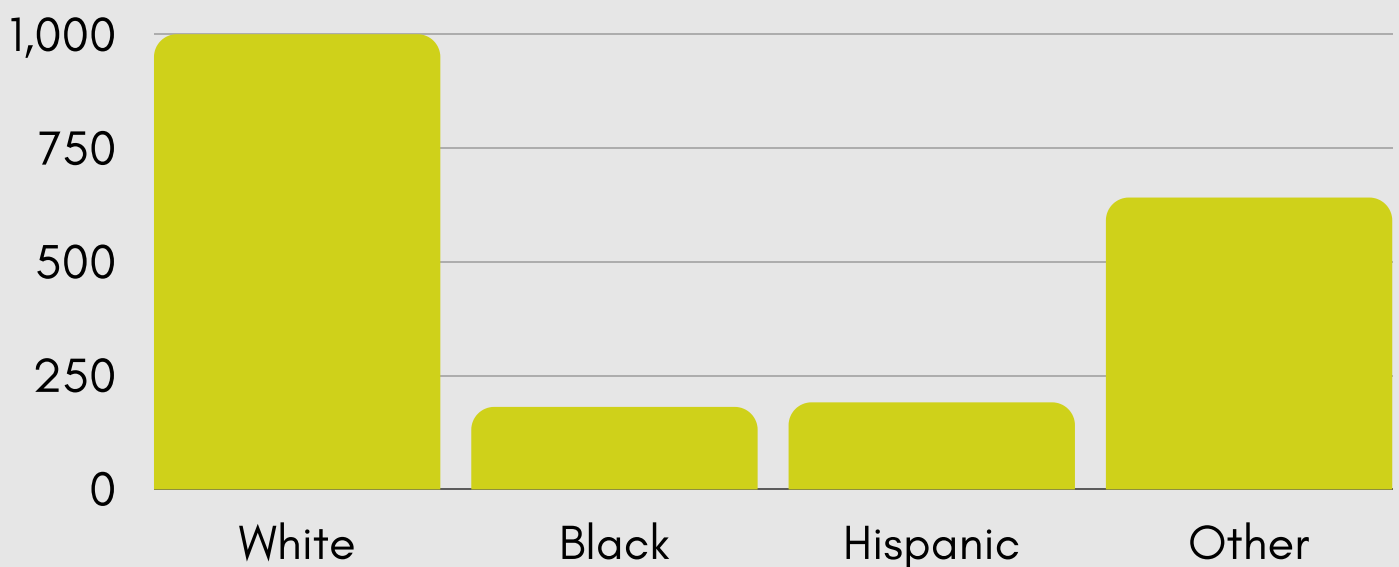


The word disparity as defined by Merriam-Webster means “a noticeable and usually significant difference or dissimilarity”.



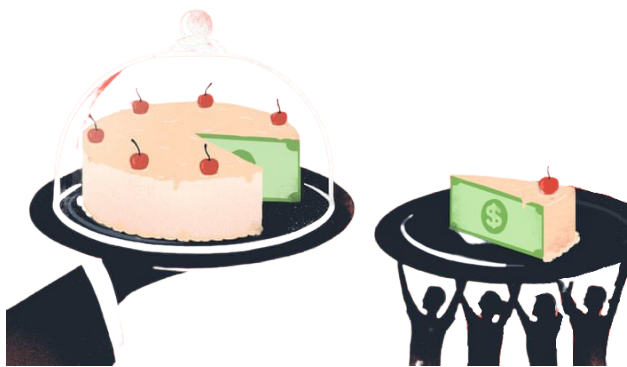
“The word is often used to describe a social or economic condition that's considered unfairly unequal: a racial disparity in hiring, a health disparity between the rich and the poor, ”

## MEAN NET WORTH



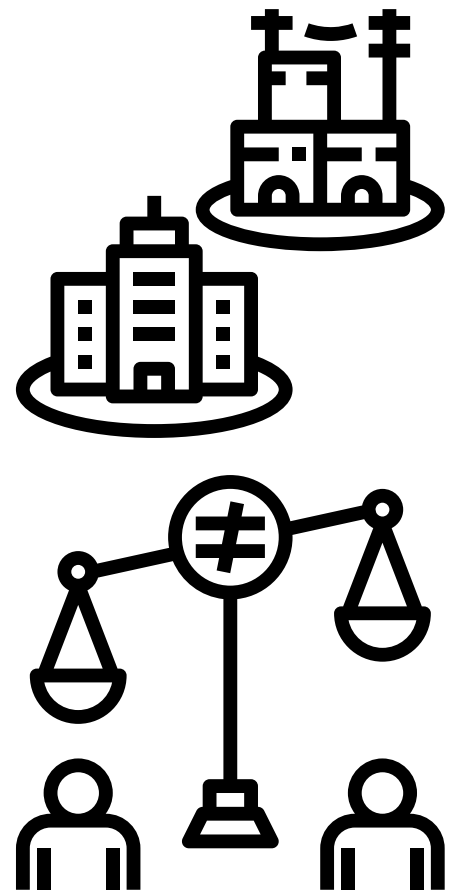
Source: Federal Reserve Board, 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances.

# EXAMPLES OF A DISPARITY



If your younger sibling got three scoops of ice cream and you only got one, there would be a disparity in the amount of ice cream you have.

When applied to the American school system, it means significant differences exist in the school system and the school districts within the system. These major differences are what allow some schools to have better sports equipment than others, more space than others, or even nicer building conditions than others.



# HISTORY



Many modern disparities in school funding are based on the students' race. Schools get lots of their funding from property taxes which skews revenue and its distribution.

Governmental practices, such as **redlining** (systemic denial of services for residents of certain areas based on race), make it possible for school districts predominantly serving students of color to be underfunded and unsafe.

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A HISTORY OF RACIAL SEGREGATION AND REDLINING IN THE UNITED STATES HAS RESULTED IN THE CONCENTRATION OF LOW-WEALTH COMMUNITIES OF COLOR IN URBAN AREAS.

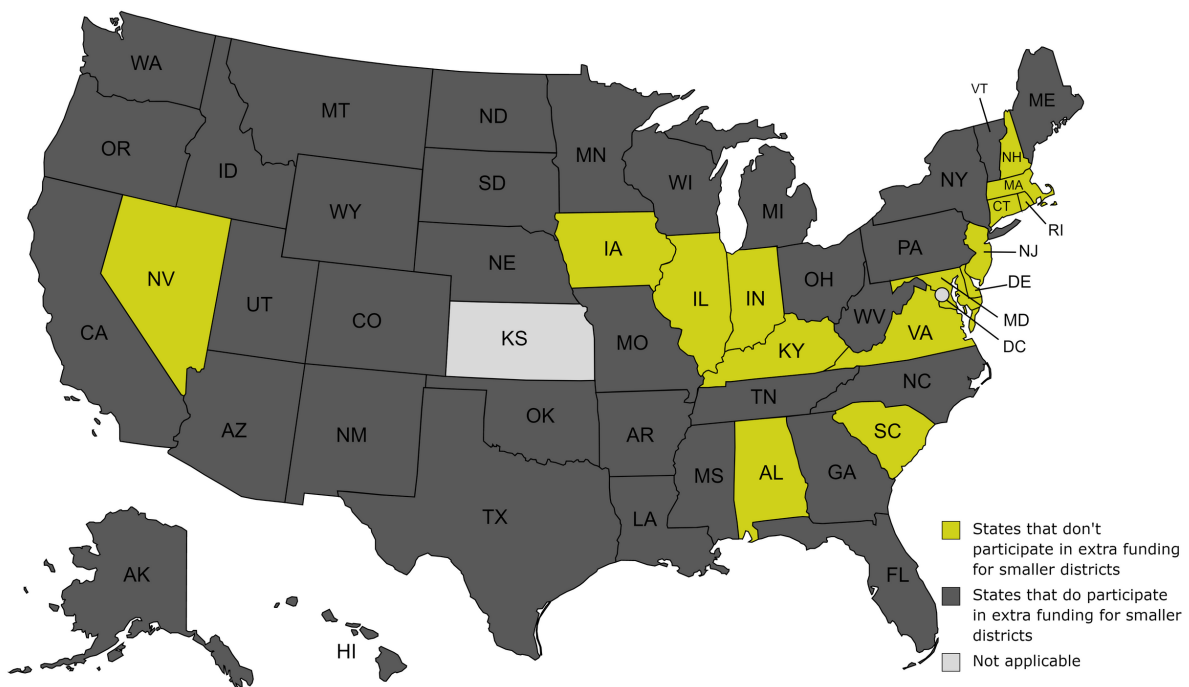
- REBECCA BELLAN

”

# HISTORY *CONTINUED*

*“Thirty-four states, including New York, provide increased funding for schools or districts that are rural, remote, isolated, sparsely populated, or just plain small.”*

-Rebecca Bellan, bloomberg.com



This means that in addition to gaining their regular amount of state funding for students, smaller school districts that serve fewer students will also gain extra funding, in turn reinforcing outdated practices of redlining and gerrymandering. Pennsylvania is a state that provides increased funding for smaller school districts. **What does this say about the funding SDP receives from the state?**

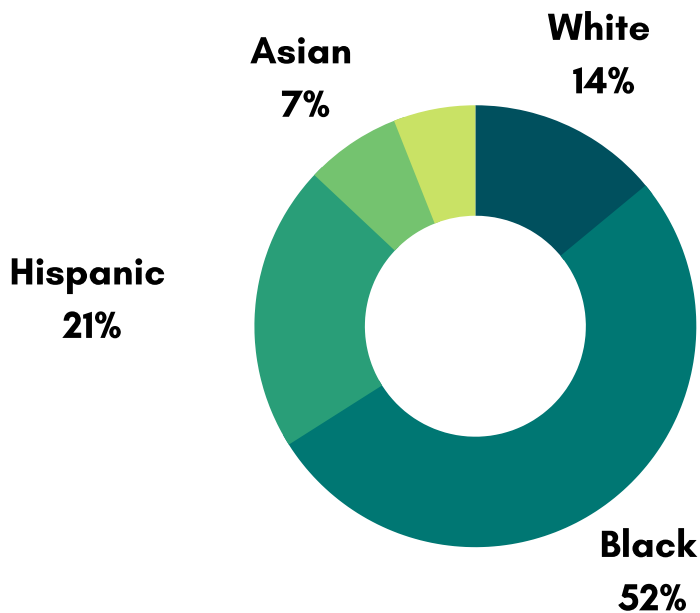
# FUNDING

	SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA	LOWER MERION SCHOOL DISTRICT
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS:	202,944	8,569
TOTAL NUMBER OF OPERATING SCHOOLS:	326 (INCLUDING CHARTER AND CYBER SCHOOLS)	11 (INCLUDING ONE CYBER SCHOOL)
TOTAL FUNDING:	\$3.237B	\$257M
AVERAGE FUNDING PER STUDENT:	\$15,950.21/KID	\$29,991.83/KID

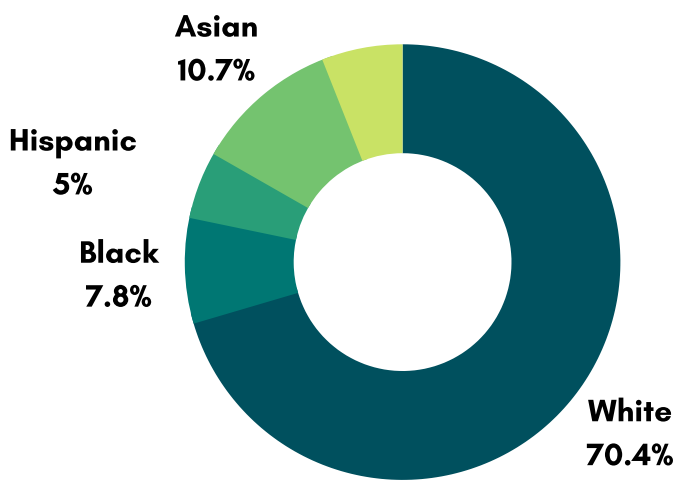
As stated in a study released by EdBuild in 2019, students of urban school districts, on average, receive \$2,100 less per student than their suburban counterparts and up to \$4,000 less than students who attend rural schools. Let's take a closer look at these statistics.\*

\*All data based on 2020-21 school year (Aug 2020-June 2021)

# LET'S LOOK AT THE DEMOGRAPHICS.



**Student Body of the School District of Philadelphia**



**Student Body of the School District of Lower Merion**

The data shows the disparities between the overall spending and the race of the student body. School districts that have a higher percentage of white students receive significantly more funding as opposed to school districts with more students of color.

\*All data based on 2020-21 school year (Aug 2020-June 2021)

# ***FUNDING*** ***CONTINUED***

States across the country use a variety of different funding formulas to determine the amount of money each district within a state receives. The most common option is the **foundation formula** whereby school districts receive funding by a per-pupil measure while also taking into account the needs of various student populations.



In Pennsylvania, the state uses a hybrid foundation formula and hold-harmless system. **This means that a district may not receive any less funding than it had the previous year.** Which slows down the potential for fair funding

## ***FAIR FUNDING FORMULA***

In 2014, the PA general assembly passed legislation to fund schools under a Fair Funding Formula, which aimed to more equitably fund Pennsylvania schools. This, however, has only applied to **new state revenue**. This means that despite the state knowing current funding is inequitable, they would continue to operate schools under current budget restrictions, extending the timetable for real fair funding by possibly **decades**. This delay disproportionately affects Philly schools and larger urban districts. By the time 100% fairness is achieved, generations of students will be affected.



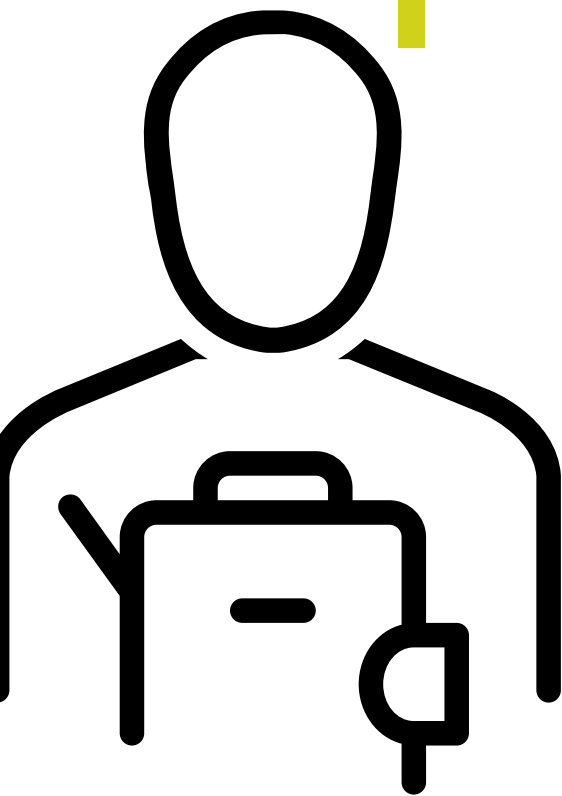
# ***POLICE***

***VS***

# ***COUNSELORS***



In 2013, the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) laid off all of its school counselors due to budget cuts. There are **324 counselors** employed by the SDP at the time the article was written, just miles away, the much smaller Lower Merion School District (LMSD) currently employs **forty** counselors. This equates to less than one counselor per school in the SDP and four counselors per school in the LMSD. Conversely, there are currently over **350 school resource officers** employed by the SDP as reported by The Notebook in 2020.

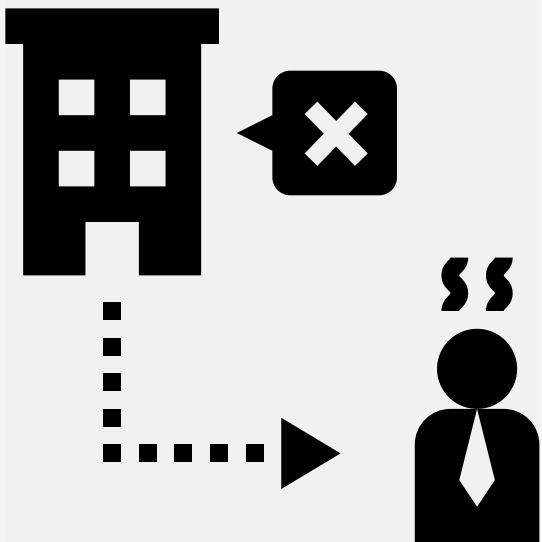
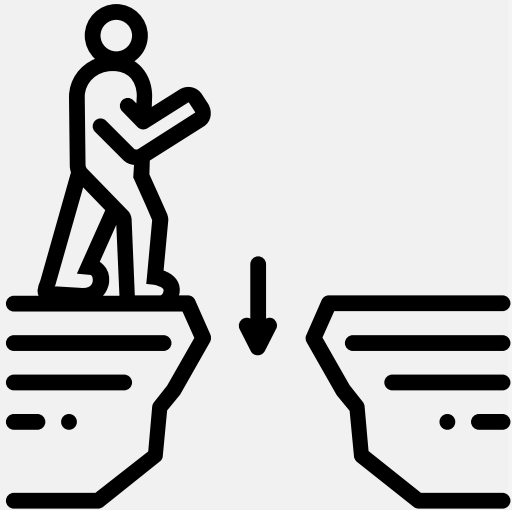
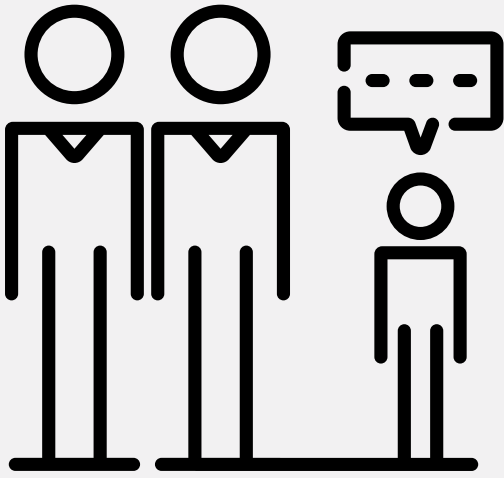


In 2019, the Philadelphia School Board mandated that every district-operated school place metal detectors at all student entrances. In LMSD's 2018 comprehensive plan, they assert that, "**School Resource Officers are not utilized in our district;** however, we coordinate with the local law enforcement agency if warranted." There is no mention of metal detectors in this same plan.

# ***IMPACT***

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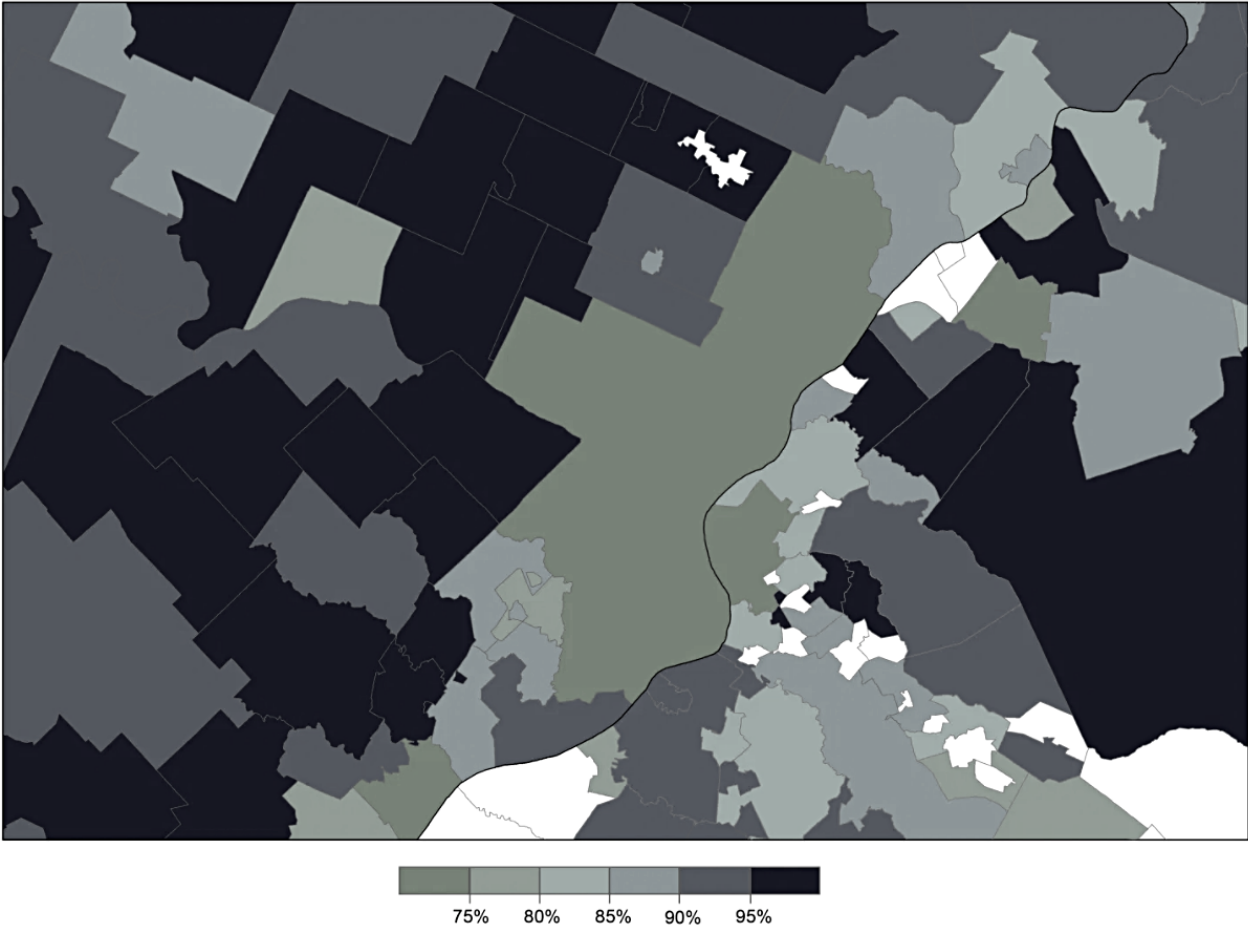
With these disparities creating stark differences in urban and suburban educational environments, *where does that leave the students who are most impacted?*



Oftentimes, it leaves them with fewer opportunities and trying to fill in the gaps in their education themselves. Students of color are disproportionately impacted by the discrepancies in their school system, **having lower levels of achievement and higher levels of suspension and school officer contact.**

# ***IMPACT*** ***CONTINUED***

## **High school graduation rates for the Class of 2013 in Philadelphia and its surrounding suburbs**



*Source: State departments of education*

Urban school districts tend to have lower high school graduation rates than suburban school districts due to a lack of resources and adequate support throughout the course of students' educational journey. Because of this, students from urban schools have a much harder time entering the workforce and that has the ability to hurt them for the rest of their lives.

# HOW DO WE BRIDGE THE GAP?

Although it may be a challenge, these issues can be fixed! It is up to us to make education equitable for all students no matter their race, gender, or sexuality.

**HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN HELP MAKE THE CHANGE:**

- **READ UP ON SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES ON THEIR WEBSITE, THEN GO TESTIFY AT A BOARD MEETING**



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO TESTIFY AT BOARD MEETINGS, VISIT OUR WEBSITE [URBEDADVOCATES.ORG](http://URBEDADVOCATES.ORG) AND READ OUR PHILLY SCHOOL BOARD 101 ADVOCACY GUIDE OR WATCH OUR TESTIFYING AT SCHOOL BOARD ADVOCACY VIDEO!



- **WRITE LETTERS TO YOUR OFFICIALS**

THERE ARE MANY PEOPLE INVOLVED WITH SCHOOL CHANGES. THESE INCLUDE: LOCAL AND STATE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS, THE SUPERINTENDENT, AND MEMBERS OF STATE EDUCATION COMMITTEES. DEMAND THEM TO CHANGE POLICIES AND PRACTICES THAT HARM THE EDUCATION OF BLACK AND BROWN STUDENTS.

READ URBED'S *FINDING YOUR POLITICIANS* ADVOCACY GUIDE at [URBEDADVOCATES.ORG](http://URBEDADVOCATES.ORG) SO YOU KNOW WHO TO WRITE.



- **GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT IS DOING WORK AROUND THESE ISSUES FOR INSTANCE, CHECK OUT URBED!**

# **HOW DO WE BRIDGE THE GAP? CONTINUED**

Here are some more ways you can help make the change:



- **KEEP AN EYE ON THE PA BUDGET PLANS THE LEGISLATURE APPROVES THE BUDGETS FOR THE YEAR AROUND MAY AND JUNE. MAKE SURE TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVE TO VOICE YOUR CONCERNS ABOUT THE SCHOOL BUDGETS.**



- **VOTE!**

**YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES HOLD THE POWER TO CHANGE ISSUES THAT IMPACT YOUR CITY AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY.**

**IN PHILLY, THE MAYOR APPOINTS THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS. USE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE TO ENSURE THE CANDIDATES MOST FIT FOR THE JOB MAKE IT INTO OFFICE AND HELP CHAMPION CHANGE IN OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM.**



**FOR MORE RESOURCES ON VOTING, READ ANY OF OUR THREE ADVOCACY GUIDES ON VOTING AT [WWW.URBEDADVOCATES.ORG/GUIDES](http://WWW.URBEDADVOCATES.ORG/GUIDES).**

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