

## Human Vitality

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## Transform a Child's Life: Create Social Equality in US Schools

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The unequal distribution of wealth in America has a substantially negative effect on the quality of education received by disadvantaged children. Starting at a disadvantage (their cognitive scores are 60% lower their richer peers),<sup>[i]</sup> they then enter school systems in low-income neighborhoods with fewer resources and even fewer good teachers.<sup>[ii]</sup> Though they're in the greatest need of **solid education** as a pathway out of poverty, poor students are the least likely to get it.

Education is so important to us here at Hearts, and one of the ways we're supporting more **equitable education** system is by donating to **Pencils of Promise** through our iHeart Change campaign. Yet there are problems with our schools systems here at home. We're hoping you'll get involved, too!



## Quick Facts: Education Inequality in US Schools

- **32% increase in achievement with more teachers:** Class sizes in disadvantaged schools are large because of the lack of teachers. Yet reducing class size from 22 to 15 (32%) increases student achievement by the equivalent of 3 additional months of schooling over the course of four years.<sup>[iii]</sup>
- **57% less school funding for some low-income students:** For instance, in Alaska, school districts in the 95th percentile of per-student funding received \$16,546 per student but those in the 5th percentile received a mere \$7,379 (1998 numbers).<sup>[iv]</sup> <sup>[v]</sup> States with similar disparities include Vermont, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Montana.
- **Disadvantaged schools are falling apart:** Nearly 50% of the funding for public schools comes from local taxes; disadvantaged school districts receive the least funding.<sup>[vi]</sup> <sup>[vii]</sup> Disadvantaged schools are decaying because the tax base cannot provide repairs.<sup>[viii]</sup>
- **Higher crime rates at low-income schools:** Chicago's 46 lowest-performing disadvantaged schools are located in areas with the highest crime rates and the highest percentages of neglected and abused children.<sup>[ix]</sup>
- **Poverty impacts education outcomes more than race:** There is a huge gap between standardized test scores for affluent and low-income students. This gap has grown by nearly 40% since the 1960s, and far outstrips any such gaps correlated with race or ethnicity.<sup>[x]</sup>

## Take Action! Increase Social Equity in Disadvantaged Schools

1. **Mentor a child from a low-income community:** Help an at-risk child succeed in school by volunteering your time for tutoring, reading, or mentoring. Check with human service agencies or the **United Way Volunteer Reading, Tutoring and Mentoring** program for opportunities to help kids succeed in school.
2. **Throw yourself into afterschool programs in low income communities:** You can get involved in afterschool programs that provide supportive learning environments in low-income areas by either volunteering your time or donating funds. Get started with **Afterschool Alliance's Lend a Hand web page**.
3. **Invest in low-income students through scholarship programs:** After completing their K-12 public education, the best option for disadvantaged students to stay out of poverty is by attending college. Unfortunately, it is also completely out of reach for many low-income students. Check with your local civic clubs (Lions Club, Rotary, etc.) or universities to see if they have need-based scholarship programs you can support. Another very interesting program that supports low-income

students going to college is [QuestBridge](#).

4. **Lobby for more equitable school funding programs:** Supporting sensible school funding reform is extremely important for education equality. The idea is to shift at least some school funding away from local taxes to the state level so that districts that are more disadvantaged get the resources they need to improve. For an excellent review of which states have engaged this process and which haven't, take a look at [School Finance Reform in Red and Blue](#).

## Dig Deeper: Exploring Issues of Education Inequality

- [National School Finance Statistics for 2007](#): Shows median per pupil expenditures for the top 5% and bottom 5% of school districts in each state, data that clearly shows persistent inequalities.
- [Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card](#): Shows that 80% of the states fail to fund their schools in a fair manner.
- [U.S. Public Education Statistics, 2007](#): Excellent source of relevant statistics from the US Census Bureau.
- [The Funding Gap: Warning, Watch the Gap](#): A great in-state comparison of districts with highest and lowest numbers of low-income students.
- [Poor oral health can mean missed school, lower grades](#): Among 1,500 disadvantaged elementary and high school students, those who reported recent tooth pain were four times as likely to have below-medium grades and miss school because of dental-related health issues.

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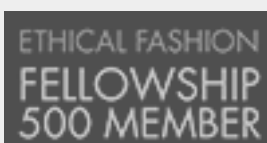
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