

RESOURCE EQUITY IN ACTION

DEVELOPING YOUR RESOURCE EQUITY

M E S S A G E

Why is strong messaging imperative in advocacy?

- **Your messaging serves as a North Star.** It guides your campaign through political discourse. It provides direction, clarity, and inspiration and encapsulates not only what you stand against but, more importantly, what you stand for.
- **Nothing About Us, Without Us.** Your message – as an advocate in your school system and community – is not only a reflection of an issue or set of issues; rather it seeks to establish a more profound connection between the campaign and the audience they are reaching out to.
- **Messaging has the power to drive and shape the narrative.** Your messaging has the power to shift the conversations at different tables to ensure the solutions to issues are grounded in the realities of your community.
- **Build awareness, influence, and move people to action.** Starting and shaping the conversation requires having challenging discussions and messaging effectively to reach your target audience in a way that makes them care and want to take action.

Learning Objectives

Objectives: *By the end of the webinar participants will....*

1. Be introduced to best practices and successful strategies for constructing messages which help advance resource equity in their communities
2. Be able to identify the components of, and construct a complete, message triangle which makes the case for resource equity
3. Understand how to respond to criticism and opposition using bridging statements
4. Know how to alter messaging to align with the values and needs of various audiences

LEVERAGING ARE CASEMAKING DECKS TO CRAFT EFFECTIVE MESSAGING


Resource Equity in Action





Purpose of ARE Casemaking Decks

Your voice is important, and a necessary part of conversations on advancing equity in our schools.

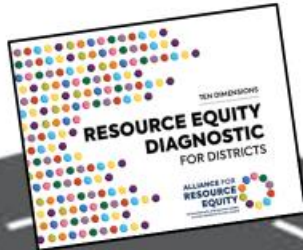
- The Alliance for Resource Equity "Casemaking Decks" help you to leverage your story and your community's data to "make the case" for why it is necessary to address existing educational inequities in your community.
 - You can use these decks as a jumping-off point to craft, refine, and practice your messaging
 - These decks also provide suggested metrics, additional resources, and message templates you can use and share
- 

Alliance for Resource Equity Toolkit



Learn about the 10 dimensions

The Education Combination paper introduces our framework and outlines each dimension.



Assess strengths & weaknesses

Understand the current state of education resource equity by assessing both Foundations of Excellence & Equitable Access



Dig deeper
Consider underlying causes of challenges.

Identify decision-makers

Determine WHO should be the target of advocacy efforts.



Make the case


Develop compelling messaging to address resource inequities in your community.





Questions to Keep in Mind

Before crafting your messaging narrow down the focus of what you are advocating for, analyze the landscape/data to identify the impact, and understand who your target audience is and what they value to effectively make the case.

- 01** Who is my audience and what do they value?
 - 02** What story do I want to tell and what message/point do I want to get across?
 - 03** What evidence or research supports this?
 - 04** What will move my audience to action?
- 

3 Elements of Effective Messaging



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE



MAKE AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION



KEEP YOUR MESSAGE SIMPLE

Know Your Audience



Who is your audience?

- Policymakers? District leaders?
- School board members?
- Other advocates?

What publication(s)/platform does your audience read/use?

- Education Week/POLITICO
- FOX News/CBS/
- Social Media (TikTok/Twitter)

What does your audience care about?

- Start with what they value
- Connect their values with your advocacy message

Make an Emotional Connection



Don't rely on statistics to make your point. Show how this current issue (or your proposed policy solution) impacts students

- Create an emotional response- make it clear why we ALL need to care!
- Use real stories about students to highlight the urgency in addressing the inequity.

Tell your personal story

- Why do you care about this issue? Did you have a similar experience in school?
- How does this impact you as a parent, advocate, or community member?
- Ultimately who are people on the ground being affected, and how can you lift up those voices and stories to move people to act?

Keep It Simple!



Your messages need to be short

- Describe the main advocacy point in 10 words or less
- Make your messages easy-to-remember and quotable
- Think of what you would say in a tweet (soundbite)

Avoid Jargon and education speak

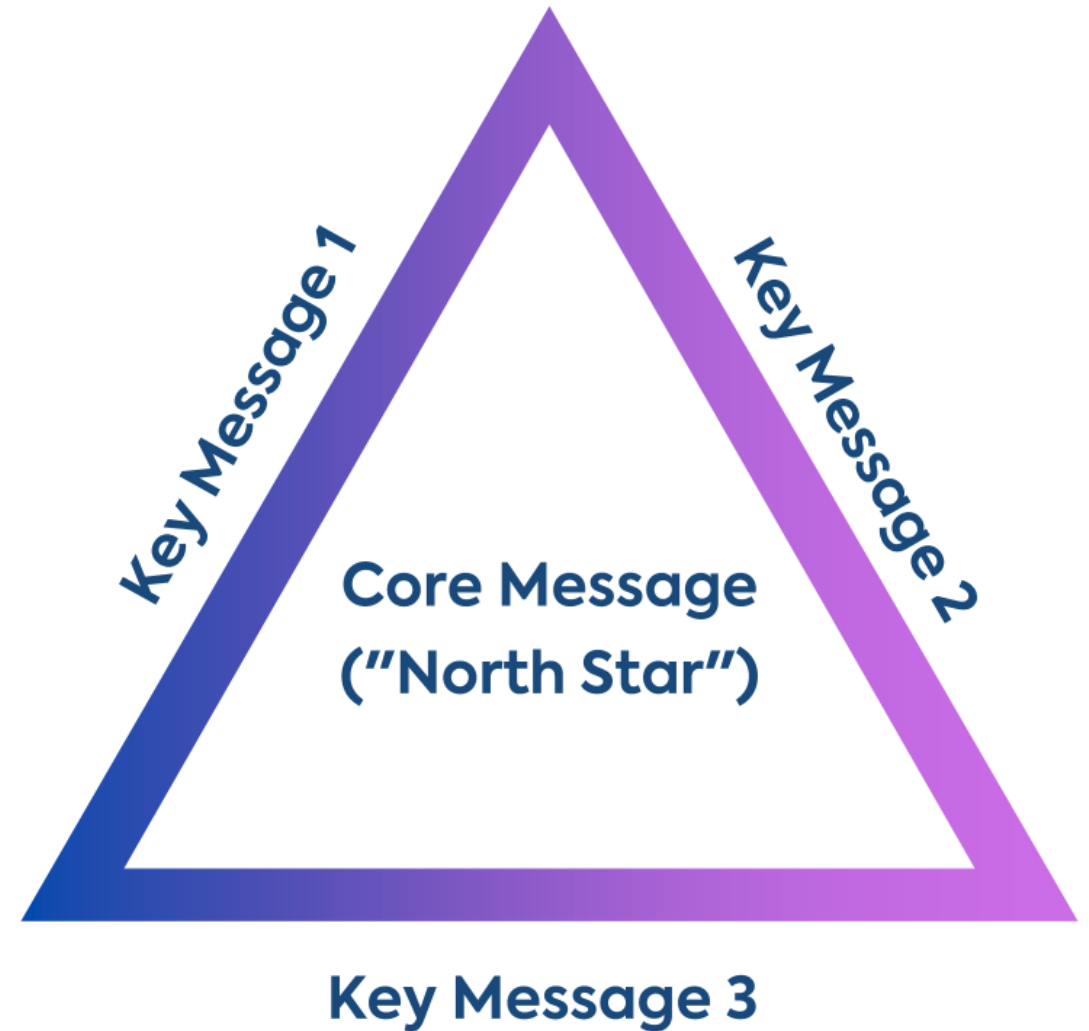
- Use asset-based, accessible language

Message Triangle Fast Facts

- Based on the principle that it is easier to visualize an image than it is to memorize a lot of words.
- Structured specifically **for social change and advocacy messages**: provides a structure to frame issues in a way that resonates with people's core values, makes the message personal, and can be tailored to a specific audience.
- Helps identify and home in on **1 core message and 3 supporting, key messages** that are compelling, credible, and concise.
- Offers structural focus but is not intended as a script.

Your core message is the North Star message you are trying to get across.

Your 3 key messages are what will move your audience toward your ultimate objective.



Positive & Inviting School Climates

Explore the possible root causes of your district's challenges and choose promising actions based on the distinct needs of your students.

ARE interactive workbook provides a structure to help your team better understand what is causing challenges related to Positive & Inviting School Climate and identify concrete next steps for improving the experiences that students have in school.

This dimension explores the following key questions:

- **6.1 Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?**
- 6.2 Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?
- 6.3 Does each student have access to effective social-emotional learning opportunities?
- 6.4 Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?

RESOURCE EQUITY GUIDEBOOK

POSITIVE & INVITING SCHOOL CLIMATE



ALLIANCE FOR
RESOURCE
EQUITY
Uniting advocates and education leaders
to unlock excellence for every student



Creating a Message Triangle to Tell Your District's Story



Review Key Questions

Review the Alliance for Resource Equity's Key Questions on Positive, Inviting School Climate:

- **Key Question 6.1:** Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?
- **Key Question 6.2:** Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?
- **Key Question 6.3:** Does each student have access to effective social-emotional learning opportunities?
- **Key Question 6.4:** Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages families?



Identify your "North Star" or Core Message

Determine what you want to communicate. What is the underlying vision?

- Consider reiterating the Alliance for Resource Equity's vision:

Each student has a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment at school, including fair and consistent rules and discipline policies, positive relationships with staff and students that foster belonging, effective social-emotional learning opportunities, and meaningful family engagement that meets students' needs, so all students can reach high standards and thrive.



Support Messages With Data

Use available data to form 2 messages that outline the problem and its impact or relevance.

- See Appendix A for list of data metrics.
- Prepare a powerful data metric, soundbite, and narrative for your key messages.



Create a Call to Action

The last key message should prompt people to act.

- What action are you requesting from your district?
- What is the most immediate next step?
- What do you want your audience to do?

Forming Key Messages 101



Start by analyzing metrics (Appendix A) to help answer the key question in the dimension.

For instance, looking at the % of suspended/expelled students by school poverty level and by % who are students of color could help determine the answer to **Key Question 6.1: “Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?”**

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Appendix A: Data Resources Chart

Key Question	Data Metric	Data Notes	Data Source
<p>Key Question 6.1 Does each student experience a safe school with transparent, culturally sensitive, and consistently enforced rules and discipline policies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of students suspended/expelled by race/ethnicity, special education status, and economic status % of students subject to seclusion or restraint, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, special education status, and economic status. Number of sworn law enforcement officers and security guards present in schools, and scatterplot comparison between FTE (x-axis) and proportion of students of color, students with disabilities, and students from low-income-backgrounds attending each school (y-axis). 	<p>NCES data includes suspensions and expulsions. Depending on your district’s context, you could consider them separately or together. For messaging purposes, together is likely easier.</p>	<p>Urban Institute/NCES</p>
<p>Key Question 6.2 Does each student have positive relationships with staff and other students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of total reported “offenses” (such as incidents of physical fights, sexual assault, or attacks with weapon) by school, and scatterplot comparison between rate of incidents by school (x-axis) and proportion of students of color or students from low-income backgrounds attending each school (y-axis). Number of total reported incidents of bullying/harassment by school, disaggregated by proportion of students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, and school type (elementary, middle, high). Number of chronically absent students by school, and scatterplot that compares rates of chronic absenteeism (x-axis) by proportion of students of color or students from low-income backgrounds (y-axis). 	<p>While there are many factors that contribute to chronic student absences, this measure provides an important snapshot of the strength of relationships and sense of belonging for a student at school.</p>	<p>Urban Institute/NCES</p>
<p>Key Question 6.3 Does each student have access to effective social-emotional learning opportunities?</p>	<p>% of students that report having access to social-emotional learning opportunities, and the quality of these opportunities, by race/ethnicity status, school poverty level, and school type (elementary, middle, high).</p>	<p>No federal data sources here. Your district or state may have publicly available student survey data that can help answer this question. Check DOE school report card.</p>	
<p>Key Question 6.4 Does each student attend a school that actively and meaningfully engages with families?</p>	<p>% of families that report feeling engaged by their school, by racial/ethnic status, school poverty level, and school type (elementary, middle, high).</p>	<p>No federal data sources here. Your district or state may have publicly available family survey data. Consider also looking at the availability of parent resources (including in multiple languages) that are available on school/district websites.</p>	

For Key Questions 6.3 and 6.4, there are no strong federally-maintained data sources. Rely more heavily on your own personal experiences, general knowledge, and popular news sources to help fill out the gaps in data. While this lack of data may lead to only an imperfect data metric in your message triangle, it may still be sufficient in surfacing foundational information and lines of inquiry where a key message becomes clear.



Forming Key Messages 101

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2

Consider the available data points.

What story do they tell? How directly do they speak to the issue?

Let’s suppose we learn that Black students and students from low-income backgrounds are suspended and expelled at significantly higher rates than their White and more affluent peers. **We can use these data points to inform our key messages.**

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3

Solidify the message.

- **Key Message 1 identifies the issue:** “Schools with more students of color and students from low-income backgrounds suspend and expel students at higher rates than Whiter, more affluent schools.”
- **Key Message 2 explains why this matters:** “Stringent discipline policies result in missed learning opportunities and harm students’ sense of belonging in school.”
- **Key Message 3 advances a call to action:** “Our district must prioritize racially and culturally conscious approaches to discipline instead of continuing to invest in harmful, zero-sum practices.”

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- **Key Message 3 advances a call to action:** “Our district must prioritize racially and culturally conscious approaches to discipline instead of continuing to invest in harmful, zero-sum practices.”

4

Use additional elements to support each of your key messages. For Key Message 1, this could look like:

- **An illustrative data metric:** “On average, Black students are suspended and expelled at twice the rate of their White peers in the district, and schools with higher proportions of students from low-income backgrounds have significantly higher rates of suspension/expulsion than more affluent schools.”
- **A punchy soundbite to use for an interview:** “Stringent discipline practices disproportionately impact our students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, removing them from the classroom and restricting their ability to receive instruction.”
- **A powerful narrative element:** Share an example of how a suspension or expulsion made it harder for a student to catch up on missed instruction.

District X Example

Key Message 1

Schools with more students of color and students from low-income backgrounds suspend and expel students at higher rates as compared to Whiter, more affluent schools.



DATA METRIC: On average, Black students are suspended and expelled at double the rate of their White peers in the district, and schools with higher proportions of students from low-income backgrounds have significantly higher suspension/expulsion rates than more affluent schools.



SOUNDBITE: “Stringent discipline practices disproportionately impact our students of color and students from low-income backgrounds, removing them from the classroom and restricting their ability to receive instruction.”



NARRATIVE: Share an example of how a suspension or expulsion made it harder for a student to catch up on missed instruction.



DATA METRIC: When students feel that they belong and are accepted, supported, and connected to their school community, they perform better academically and have better social-emotional and behavioral outcomes.



SOUNDBITE: “Instead of ‘hardening’ our schools, our district must double down on evidence-based policies that are restorative and relationship-focused, which are critical to students’ holistic development and their academic learning.”



NARRATIVE: Ask the district to examine alternative approaches to stringent discipline policies and explore multi-tiered supports.

Core Message ("North Star")

Each student has a physically safe and emotionally supportive environment at school, including fair and consistent rules and discipline policies, positive relationships with staff and students that foster belonging, effective social-emotional learning opportunities, and meaningful family engagement that meets students’ needs, so all students can reach high standards and thrive.

Key Message 3

Our district must prioritize racially and culturally conscious approaches to discipline instead of continuing to invest in harmful, zero-sum practices.

Key Message 2

Stringent discipline policies create missed learning opportunities and harm students’ sense of belonging in school.

DATA METRIC: Studies indicate that overuse of strict disciplinary actions can significantly harm students’ academic and psychological development and reinforce the school-to-prison pipeline.



SOUNDBITE: “School safety depends on creating inclusive learning environments that foster a sense of belonging and prioritize positive relationships.”



NARRATIVE: Share how stringent policies have failed to improve a student’s sense of safety and undermined their sense of belonging.



Message Triangle Checklist

Does your message triangle do ALL of the following?



Align with the shared values of your audience?

- Shared values allow the conversation to start from a place of agreement.
- This requires knowing your audience first!



Define the impact?

- Do your supporting facts (data metrics, narratives, soundbites) explain how those shared values are being undermined? Clearly outlining the consequences and inequities helps convey a sense of urgency without exaggerating the problem.



Asset-frame the issue?

- Define the scope of the issue in terms of systems and structures, not students, and avoid defining marginalized communities in deficit-based language.



Highlight the benefits?

- After establishing the issue/problem, explain how your solution SUPPORTS your shared values. Explicitly stating the value helps reaffirm tangible outputs your stakeholder cares about.



Include a call to action?

- A positive vision helps your audience realize what's possible and recognize the role they play in sparking the change.

Dismantling Opposition and Avoiding Traps

- **Bad information:** Don't repeat negative, incorrect, or inflammatory language. Instead, find a positive spin in your response and/or calmly correct misinformation before moving to your positive response.
- **Speculation:** Instead of trying to predict the future, reiterate the information you know and your key message.
- **Irrelevant Question:** Use a bridging statement to connect back to your key message.



Question/concern that ...

- Distracts from key issue
- Introduces dangerous line of opposition
- Expresses different mission/goal

BRIDGING STATEMENT

Your response, which hits on your key messages
in service of core "North Star" message

"I find the more important issue to be..." "Let me emphasize again..." "What matters most in this situation is this: ..."

"What I've said comes down to this..." "And that reminds me..." "Here's the real problem..."

"I think it would be more accurate (or correct) to say..." "It all boils down to this..."

"While ___ is important, it's also important to remember that..." "Before we leave this subject, I need to add..."



Question/concern that ...

- Distracts from key issue
- Introduces dangerous line of opposition
- Expresses different mission/goal

BRIDGING STATEMENT

Your response, which hits on your key messages in service of core "North Star" message

When students misbehave, we need a way to hold them accountable for their actions. Stringent policies ensure safety and security in the classroom so our students can learn.

While I agree that students should be held accountable for their actions, research shows that these stringent policies do not improve school safety and can even make students feel less safe. What we do know from research is that...

Ultimately, school safety depends on creating inclusive learning environments that foster a sense of belonging and prioritize positive relationships. Therefore, we need to be doubling down on evidence-based policies that are restorative and relationship-focused, which are critical to students' holistic development and their academic learning.

Restorative justice practices just won't work in our school, especially as compared to more stringent measures.

Let's be clear: stringent policies don't "work" now. I feel compelled to clarify that...

Harmful exclusionary discipline policies have not been shown to increase school safety; instead, they have disproportionately negative impacts on underserved students, exacerbating school discipline disparities and increasing risks to students' mental health and well-being. These policies can attack students' cultural identity and have been linked to the school-to-prison pipeline. Additionally, they remove students from the classroom and cut students off from instruction.

Parents also need to be invested in their child's behavior at school. If parents don't care, it's hard for discipline of any kind to take hold.

While I agree that parents play an important role in signaling appropriate behavior at school, it's important to recognize that...

Engagement is crucial for students and their families, and must be authentic. Developing genuine, strong relationships, and regular communication channels between educators and families that center student success and high expectations helps to create a positive and inclusive school climate that helps to decrease discriminatory discipline practices (among other benefits).

ARE Casemaking Decks + Resources



SCAN ME

- [ARE Casemaking Deck 1: School Funding](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 2: Teaching Quality & Diversity](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 3: School Leadership Quality & Diversity](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 4: Empowering, Rigorous Content](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 5: Instructional Time & Attention](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 6: Positive & Inviting School Climate](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 7: Student Supports & Interventions](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 8: High-quality Early Learning](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 9: Learning-Ready Facilities](#)
- [ARE Casemaking Deck 10: Diverse Classrooms & Schools](#)



Q & A



Activity #2 – Adapting To Your Audience

Instructions:

- 1. We will split into breakout rooms. Each room will be assigned:**
 - a. An audience to "make the case" for equitable school discipline policies to
 - b. A venue in which they will be addressing this audience
- 2. Alter the key messages in the message triangle we just created based on what you know about your audience.**
- 3. Choose an additional supporting element (a sound bite, narrative, or data point) for each of your key messages.**
- 4. Put it all together!**

Activity #2 – Adapting To Your Audience

Jamboard

Link: https://jamboard.google.com/d/1NvO2rsvT2ahqZwbNrGyKko14_YZSbzCDtjN5WQF5nz4/edit?usp=sharing



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Check out our website and join our monthly mailing list for education resource equity news, tools, and events.

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<https://educationresorceequity.org/>



Join Us For Our Final Session Next Week!

**RESOURCE EQUITY
IN ACTION**

**MEASURING IMPACT
AND MAINTAINING**

MOMENTUM

Wednesday, March 20th, 2-3pm EST



[Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Give Us Feedback!

Please provide feedback on today's session so that EdTrust can continue to bring you timely, impactful, and engaging events!



<https://forms.office.com/r/0yHSFMgyaD>

Partners



Education Resource Strategies is a national nonprofit that partners with district, school, and state leaders to transform how they use resources (people, time, and money) so that every school prepares every child for tomorrow — no matter their race or income. Since 2004, ERS has worked with more than 40 school systems and states to improve resource equity for students by analyzing data, exploring trade-offs, planning strategically, building consensus, and monitoring progress.



The Education Trust

The Education Trust is a national nonprofit that works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. Through research and advocacy, EdTrust supports efforts that expand excellence and equity in education from preschool through college; increase college access and completion, particularly for historically underserved students; engage diverse communities dedicated to education equity; and increase political and public will to act on equity issues.