

BLOG AND OP-ED GUIDANCE

To successfully advocate for changes in our educational systems, it's often important to bolster *public awareness* of the issues and *public support* for your position. Publishing a blog or op-ed can help. This tool from Ed Trust offers guidance on developing, writing, publishing, and promoting blogs or op-eds about the importance of pushing for educational equity and justice for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.

What's your advocacy goal? What's your strategy for reaching that goal?

Be specific. Are you advocating for X, or Y, or something else? Who has the power to make that change? What do you need them to do, and how can you get them to do it? Starting with clear answers to "What does success look like?" and "How can we win?" will help ensure that your tactics — including publishing a blog or op-ed — are aligned with your goals and strategy.

Who's your audience, and what do you want *them* to know or do?

Are you trying to activate allies who already agree with you, inform folks who are out of the loop, or persuade a skeptical group to come around to your side? You'll want to tailor your content — the information, the tone, the calls to action — for the specific audience you're trying to reach.

What's your argument?

Whether you're trying to activate, inform, or persuade, you can't just tell people what you think should happen. You must present an *argument* that compels them to see the issue from your perspective and act. What are the critical facts and data points that folks might not know? Why is your position the right one — and why are others wrong?

What examples and anecdotes will you include?

How can you humanize your argument with stories of real people who are negatively affected by the current policy and stand to benefit from the policy change you're advocating for? If you're a directly impacted person, you could consider sharing your own story. If not, how can you include in your piece the voices, experiences, and stories of directly impacted people? Introducing a human element early on — even in the first sentence or paragraph — can help you draw in readers and connect with them.

Who should the blog or op-ed come from?

A successful blog or op-ed isn't just about the message. It's also about the messenger. Who does the audience want to hear from? Whom will they trust? If you're the author, maybe the byline should be yours — especially if you're [directly impacted by the issue](#). Maybe adding an influential [co-author](#) is a good idea. Or maybe you'd rather stay behind the scenes and write the piece on behalf of someone else. You probably know the song, "I Wanna Dance With Somebody," by Whitney Houston. But did you know that it was co-written and produced by

Narada Michael Walden? Sometimes — in public affairs writing as in popular music — the person who writes the words isn't the person who delivers them to the audience.

Track the news and be ready when the opportunity arises. Timing is absolutely crucial. When your issue is dominating the news — whether it's school closings due to the pandemic, a national racial reckoning, culture wars, unfinished learning — what's hot in the presses are exactly the issues that readers want to read, and newspaper publishers want to publish. Think hard on how to link your issue explicitly to something happening in the news. If you're a researcher studying teacher diversity and school culture, for instance, start off by discussing the school staff shortage. Or look ahead to a holiday or anniversary at least a month in advance that will provide a fresh news peg -- Teacher Appreciation Week or FAFSA completion (and enable editors to plan the story in advance).

How long should an op-ed or blog be and how do I submit my piece?

Keep it short and simple. State your opinion clearly and quickly, use a human-interest story to show the reader what you are talking about and to elicit an emotional response, and support your argument with facts and figures then finish strong. Typically, op-eds are 800 – 1,000 words and blogs are 600 to 800 words. If your op-ed is too long, editors likely will not consider using it. So once, you know your audience and the outlet in which you want to land an op-ed — before you put pen to paper — visit the newspaper website in the opinion section, they will have further guidance. The op-ed project has links to several major paper's submission guidelines <https://www.theopedproject.org/submissions>