

Welcome to Public School Strong!

We are thrilled to introduce this welcome toolkit designed specifically to help individuals like you organize and effect positive change in your local public school districts.



As passionate advocates for educational equity and community engagement, we understand the challenges that often accompany efforts to promote, protect, and strengthen our public schools. That's why we developed this toolkit with actionable steps and answers to frequently asked questions to guide you through the Public School Strong organizing process.

Whether you're a concerned parent, a dedicated educator, or a proactive community member, this toolkit is your go-to resource for mobilizing your neighbors and advocating for the changes our schools and communities desperately need. From building a strong coalition of supporters to crafting compelling messaging, our toolkit equips you with the knowledge and tools you need to make a difference.

Inside this welcome toolkit, you'll find:

- 1. FAQ for Public School Strong Leaders**
- 2. PSS Leadership Path:** A step-by-step guide for growing your power and building visibility
- 3. Inviting Others to Join You:** Proven strategies for identifying supporters and engaging them in Public School Strong
- 4. PSS Two-Pager:** A recruitment flyer for sharing more information
- 5. Reminders for attending local school board meetings** and basic talking points to use in your advocacy
- 6. PSS Trainings Overview:** A list of national skills- and role-based trainings you can attend
- 7. PSS Reporting Form:** Use this form to report on each school board meeting you attend.

Our goal is simple: to help you develop the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to become a catalyst for change in your community. But these resources are just the beginning. As the campaign grows, we will develop additional resources for you and your local Public School Strong team to use. Together, we can work towards creating more equitable and inclusive educational opportunities for all students.

Thank you for joining us in the fight for better schools and brighter futures. We're glad you're here.

Warm regards,

The Public School Strong team



FAQ for

Public School Strong Leaders



The following FAQ is designed to help you better understand the Public School Strong campaign, and to prepare you to answer commonly asked questions. If you need more help, please email healtogether@raceforward.org.

I've gone to the Public School Strong Orientation Session. Now what do I do?

This toolkit will provide you with the key steps to take now that you have completed the Public School Strong Orientation.

Do you have to go through the Orientation Session to be a Public School Strong leader?

Yes. All Public School Strong leaders have to attend the 90-minute Orientation Session, which includes signing the Public School Strong commitment form. The commitment form is an important way to show that you will promote honest, equitable, fully funded public education, and that you agree to uphold the principles of the campaign.

What do Public School Strong leaders do?

Public School Strong leaders organize community meetings, raise awareness about the issues that district leaders are working on, and turn people out to support or advocate with policymakers. Public School Strong leaders get to know their public school communities well enough to effectively mobilize volunteers, voters, and supporters.

Each volunteer decides how much time they want to commit to building a local campaign presence. Some individuals spend a few hours a week, some a few hours a month. You and your neighbors work together to figure out who does what for your campaign and when.



What meetings do Public School Strong leaders attend?

Public School Strong leaders should attend their local school board meetings and join other leaders at monthly Public School Strong “Community of Practice” virtual meetings. To sign up for these meetings, [click here](#). The monthly Community of Practice meetings are designed to provide supportive space for Public School Strong participants to:

- Share monthly updates on recruitment and retention
- Connect the dots between what they are seeing in their area, and what is happening across their state and nationally
- Learn from each other about what is working and not working in their campaign organizing efforts
- Brainstorm and practice relevant skills

In addition to the monthly Community of Practice meetings, there are various leadership trainings to help leaders like you to sharpen your skills. Keep an eye out in your email inbox for further training opportunities.

What if I can't make it to those meetings?

Everyone misses meetings from time to time. Each local team should make sure they are represented in monthly debrief meetings and in regular school board meetings.

Is there a document that concisely describes Public School Strong?

Yes, you can find more information in this [Public School Strong two-pager](#), or by visiting our website at **PublicSchoolStrong.org**.

Where can I and other Public School Strong leaders find support?

The Public School Strong team has created a structure to support you and other Public School Strong leaders. You can join monthly meetings to get support, share resources, and do check-ins. Public School Strong organizers are also assigned to support particular states. [Click here](#) if your local group/ chapter needs to contact a Public School Strong organizer, or to get more information about meetings and resources.

The Public School Strong team also hosts advanced trainings and role-based trainings. To learn more about these trainings, [click here](#).

If you are an NEA member and you still have questions after connecting with a Public School Strong organizer, reach out to Adriane Dorrington at ADorrington@nea.org.



Should I recruit other folks to be Public School Strong leaders in my district?

Yes! If you want to recruit someone to your Public School Strong team, please invite them to a national [Orientation Session](#). If your team already has a district captain, please coordinate with them about anyone you want to bring into the team.

Our goal is to have Public School Strong teams in every school district in the country. If you know someone interested in starting a Public School Strong campaign outside your district, please invite them to one of the upcoming Orientation Sessions. After, we will connect them to the Public School Strong team in their district. If there is no Public School Strong team currently in that district, we will provide further information on how to get one started.

When can I meet the other Public School Strong leaders in my district?

If you are joining Public School Strong from a district where there is currently a team, a local district captain will reach out to you. Your local district captain acts as a point person, and is responsible for coordinating meetings and different roles within the team. Consult them for the cadence of your meetings, but you are ready to participate in your local team after attending the Orientation Session.

If you do not live in a district with an existing Public School Strong team, keep an eye open for an email inviting you to connect to others in your district who have gone through the Orientation Session, or to join your state's Public School Strong Facebook group.



JOIN the movement to promote, protect, and strengthen our public schools.



PublicSchoolStrong.org





Public School Strong Leadership Path

To build power and grow your visibility!

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1

Attend a Public School Strong Orientation & Fill Out the Commitment Form

Visit bit.ly/psstraining to register for a PSS Orientation! Attend the orientation and fill out the [commitment form](#).

2

Get Your T-Shirt & Connect With Other PSS Members Locally

Get your t-shirt in the mail. Get in touch with the PSS campaign to connect to other PSS members near you.

3

Attend Your Local School Board Meeting While Wearing Your T-Shirt & Observe

Attend your local school board meeting while wearing your t-shirt and observe. Identify others who are values-aligned. Fill out the [debrief form](#).

4

Recruit Others & Attend Public Comment Training

Recruit others to attend the [PSS Orientation](#). Then, ask them to help you observe at the next school board meeting. Attend a PSS [public comment training](#).

5

Attend Your Local School Board Together & Make a Comment

Make a public comment while others observe. Take photos with your PSS group at the school board meeting. Share photos and highlights in your [debrief form](#) and with your local PSS Facebook group.

6

Develop New Skills & Grow Your Local Group

Attend a [PSS media training](#) and learn how to generate positive social media and press. Connect with other districts to grow and learn from each other.

7

Form a Public School Strong Team in Your District

Identify a District Captain who will attend a District Captain training. Work with the team to fill other PSS roles in your district. Attend [skills-based and role-based trainings](#).



Inviting Others to Join You

Public School Strong is not a solo sport! Getting just one or two more people to join you at your local school board meetings while wearing Public School Strong t-shirts can make a big difference in how you feel and how you are perceived. Below are some tips for getting your friends, family, and others to join you.



1 Identify Supporters

If you are thinking “I don’t know anyone who would do this”, you can start with listing the places where you interact with people throughout your day or use this worksheet.

2 What Makes Them a Good Fit?

Here are some questions to ask yourself as you consider who to approach.

3 Prepare Before Your Convo

Think about what you still don’t know about them that might help you both figure out if they should be on the team.

4 Tune Them In To *This* Conversation

Reach out to have a one-on-one conversation. Let them know you want to talk with them about something important, not just catch up.

5 Tell Them What PSS Is

Use language that is clear and brief. You can practice briefly describing it in the mirror, or bring these talking points with you when you meet with them.

6 Answer the “Why Me?”

Communicate why you are reaching out to them in particular, e.g. “...*not just because you are my sister, but because I know you really care about x and you are good at y and we would make a good team!*”

7 Don’t Do All the Talking

Ask them for their questions about how it works, initial reactions. Be curious about how they feel about participating in this

8 Let Them Know You Hear Them

Validate their feelings and concerns.

9 Address Barriers

Find out if they see anything that might get in the way of them participating and ask them how they might address that; then suggest any ideas you have.

10 Make a Clear Ask!

Would they be willing to talk with you about it more at a specific time- (ex: at coffee tomorrow, a phone call on tuesday, or now) or take the next step of coming to a PSS Orientation?

Follow up your conversation with a reminder about next steps. Remind yourself to check in with them after they do the Public School Strong Orientation!



Concerned about the attacks on public education? Do you want honest, equitable, fully funded public schools?

Parents, educators, and students around the country are organizing to strengthen our public schools so that all children can thrive.

Join Public School Strong!



Public School Strong is a national campaign with one simple goal: to convince local policymakers that every child – regardless of zip code, race, gender, or ethnicity – deserves to have equitable access to quality public schools that don't discriminate.

Public School Strong leaders learn how to advocate for honest, equitable, and fully funded public education at school board meetings, with state legislators, and in other places of power. Together, these leaders visibly promote, protect, and strengthen public education so that all children benefit.

We are not alone! The majority of people in our country are on our side.

JOIN the movement to promote, protect, and strengthen our schools.

Public School Strong is a campaign of HEAL Together – a joint initiative of Race Forward, the Schott Foundation for Public Education, and the NYU Metro Center.

Campaign partners include:

- Center for Popular Democracy
- Midwest Academy
- Peoples Action
- Red, Wine & Blue
- Run for Something
- Western States Center
- Parents Together
- Local Progress
- American Federation of Teachers
- Georgia Youth Justice Coalition
- National Education Association
- The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools
- Moms Rising
- Teaching for Change
- School Board
- School YWCA
- Parents Together
- Action Alliance for Quality Education



AT A GLANCE

What Does Public School Strong Do?

BUILD – We build volunteer organizing teams who want to promote and strengthen our public schools

LEARN – We help people learn how to talk to policy makers and advocate for public education

GROW – We build community power in local public school districts that translate into statewide power

Wanna know more?

What does it mean to become a Public School Strong Leader?

Public School Strong leaders organize community meetings, help raise awareness about the issues that district leaders are working on and turn people out to support or advocate with policymakers. Public School Strong leaders get to know their public school communities well enough to effectively mobilize volunteers, voters, and supporters.

Each volunteer decides how much time they want to commit to building a local campaign presence. Some individuals spend a few hours a week, some a few hours a month. You and your neighbors work together to figure out who does what for your campaign and when.

What do you learn in the Public School Strong trainings?

Individuals who attend Public School Strong trainings gain skills to advocate for honest, equitable, and fully-funded public schools. In the first Orientation Session, participants learn the basic values and principles of the campaign, then sign a commitment to promote, protect, and strengthen public education. Online Orientation Trainings are held the second Tuesday evening of every month.

After that, participants attend a series of 60- to 90-minute training sessions designed to:

- Strengthen public speaking skills
- Build an understanding of racial justice and gender equity
- Expand knowledge of school boards
- Teach critical community organizing and mobilization skills

Who should sign up to join Public School Strong?

You should! Public School Strong is made up of everyday people like you. If you want your local public schools to respect all identities, utilize a rich variety of age-appropriate books on diverse topics, and support our educators' freedom to teach the truth, then you are already a part of the movement. It's time to join together in Public School Strong.

How do you sign up?

You can sign up for the first Orientation Session by scanning this QR code, or by visiting bit.ly/psstraining



What do you do after the Orientation Session?

After the Orientation Session, you'll receive an email with links to several documents that will help you build or expand a local Public School Strong campaign. You will be able to work with and learn from networks of like-minded public school advocates from across the country. And you will receive more information for additional trainings that will help you develop the skills to successfully advocate with your local school board and other policymakers.

Once you sign the Public School Strong commitment, you will get a t-shirt to wear to meetings with policymakers. Find more information on our website at PublicSchoolStrong.org, or by emailing healtogether@raceforward.org.



Reminders for School Board Meetings



- ✓ Regularly attend your local school board meetings in order to support honest, equitable, and fully funded public schools.
Look for opportunities to support and encourage school board members to do the right thing to support honest, equitable and fully funded public schools – aligned school board members can be partners in our movement to protect and transform public education. If experienced and skillful, look for opportunities to de-escalate the toxicity and chaos often found at school board meetings, and get the conversation back on track to focus on what kids really need.
- ✓ Stay calm under pressure and focused on our goals – don't get distracted by attempts to cause conflict.
- ✓ Engage with other school board meeting attendees safely and respectfully – do not engage in shouting matches or disruptions, and behave with non-violence at all times.
- ✓

Helpful Talking Points

Use these talking points as a foundation to build on during public comments at school board meetings and when talking to community members.

- **Public School Strong** is a national campaign with one simple goal: to convince local policymakers that every child – regardless of zip code, race, gender, or ethnicity – deserves to have equitable access to quality public schools that don't discriminate.
- Our vision for the future is one where every student attends strong public schools that are free of hate and division, and that support quality educators who can provide all our children with the skill and knowledge they need to thrive now and in the future.
- [Study after study](#) shows that most people in this country want these things, too! Our collective prosperity and wellbeing depends upon every child receiving a high quality education.
- Communities across the country are organizing themselves to show their support and share what they know. The exciting growth across these states shows just how connected people feel to these values and to public education that will help all children thrive.
- Eventually, we expect that Public School Strong will expand to all 14,000 public school districts in the United States, knitting people together of all races and backgrounds who believe in public education and want to make sure all children can learn from the past, make sense of the present, and prepare for the future.

a p i c u t n r e o e ?
e t e e r e r o





Find a schedule – and registration links! –
for upcoming Public School Strong
orientations and trainings by visiting

bit.ly/PSS-Trainings-Overview

OR



Scan me

SCHOOL BOARD REPORTING FORM



Print out this form and bring it to your next school board meeting to fill out. When you're done, enter your responses at: bit.ly/pssreportform

BASIC INFORMATION

Your Name

Date of Meeting

School District

Who else came with you who is part of PSS? List their names.

How many others seem to be aligned with PSS values? Who are they? What are your next steps for following up with them?

Did you take a picture of your group (with your shirts)?

☐ Yes!

OBSERVING THE PARTICIPANTS

How many attendees seem to agree with our side? Any observations?

How many extremist/anti-public school types are there? Any observations?

How many attendees seem undecided or in the middle? Any observations?

OBSERVING THE DISCUSSION

Did anyone from your PSS group speak? What did they say? How did school board members seem to respond?

Did any extremist / anti-public school types speak? Which groups? What did they say? How did school board members seem to respond?

What else happened at the meeting that you want to share?

OBSERVING THE DISCUSSION CONTINUED

What issues or themes came up in the public comments or from the school board members? How many people were for or against these topics? What messages were shared about these topics?

	# OF PEOPLE FOR	# AGAINST	COMMENTS
RACIAL JUSTICE OR CRT			
BOOK BANS OR ACCESS TO BOOKS			
LGBTQ AND TRANSGENDER INCLUSION ISSUES			
VOUCHERS & CUTTING SCHOOL FUNDING			
PARENTS' RIGHTS			
LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY			
MENTAL HEALTH OR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING			
WAGES FOR TEACHERS AND EMPLOYEES			
OTHER ISSUES:			

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

How many school board members are on the board?

How many seem to definitely SUPPORT PSS's values? What are their names?

How many seem to definitely OPPOSE PSS's values? What are their names?

How many are you UNSURE of their stance? What are their names?

WRAP UP

How did it feel to you to attend wearing your PSS shirt? What questions do you have or what support could you use? Anything else you observed?

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Remember to enter your responses afterwards into this reporting form. This helps us build a collective picture of school board fights across the country:
bit.ly/pssreportform

Reporting
Form
QR Code:

