

**ACTIVITY**

# Supporting Question 4: Pursuing Educational Justice Today

## Overview

### About This Activity

Students will engage with sources that provide snapshots of the pursuit of educational justice in Boston today. They will then trace continuity and change between the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s/1970s and today.

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| <b>Supporting Question</b> | What does the pursuit of educational justice in Boston look like today?  |
| <b>Formative Task</b>      | Students will write a short paragraph describing at least two ways that the pursuit of educational justice in Boston is different than it was in the 1960s and 1970s and at least two ways that it is similar.   |
| <b>Featured Sources</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reading:</b> Changing Demographics in Boston and Its Schools</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Educational Justice Today Graphic Organizer</li> <li>• <b>Video:</b> "Different Trajectories and Inequity in Boston Schools"</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Articles and Discussion Questions   Boston Educational Justice Gallery Walk</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Quotations   Boston Educational Justice Gallery Walk</li> </ul> |

## Preparing to Teach

### Notes to Teacher

#### 1. A Note about the Historical Narrative

One challenging aspect of teaching about the quest for educational justice in Boston during the 1960s and 1970s is that this history did not come to a tidy end. Students will likely want to know what happened after the tumultuous events of 1974–1976. It will be hard to provide them with a satisfying answer. Judge Garrity's oversight of the Boston Public Schools lasted until 1985. While tensions and resentments persisted, including some episodes of violence, the desegregation process continued. Some schools even thrived, as [this 1976 WGBH news report](#) shows.

At the same time, the demographics of Boston, and its schools, began to shift significantly as many white Bostonians left the city and new immigrants arrived. (Students will examine some of these demographic shifts in Activity 2.) While the “racial balance” of schools improved and bilingual education expanded in the 1980s, the city continued to fall short in many ways of providing a quality education to every child. Progress has been uneven at best since 1990.

In short, the quest for educational justice in Boston is still ongoing. Therefore, the focus of this supporting question is to give students the opportunity to look for continuity and change in the pursuit of educational justice in Boston between the 1960s/1970s and today. We encourage you to consult the timeline **Boston Educational Justice, 1980–2022**, which includes some key dates and events that can support you in providing additional context and answering students’ questions as they prepare to understand the educational landscape today.

## 2. A Note about Contemporary Issues Included in Activity 3

Activity 3 includes sources that represent a wide variety of issues related to educational justice that Boston Public Schools (and other school districts in the United States) face today. The activity is designed to provide students with snapshots of the pursuit of educational justice in Boston today. Teachers should use relevance and accessibility as their guides in choosing sources for their students. For example, you might choose a smaller number of the sources to further focus the activity or add new sources to bring additional issues to students’ attention.

## 3. Preparing the Classroom for Activity 3

Activity 3 includes a gallery walk exercise. Be sure to preview the activity below and set up the classroom by hanging the headlines and quotations in the room as described.

## 4. Adapting Activity 3 for High School

Many of the readings used in Activity 3 include a summary or an excerpt of an article. These summaries and excerpts were created so that students can complete the activity more efficiently. The original articles are linked within the readings if you wish to increase the complexity of the activity.

# Activities

## Activity 1: Reflect On Going to School in Boston Today

Explain to students that they are now going to leap forward in time and look at the pursuit of educational justice in Boston today. Begin by giving students the opportunity to respond to the following reflection question in their notebooks or journals:

*What issues of justice and fairness in schools are you experiencing or observing today? What makes you say that?*

After students have had a few minutes to write, discuss their ideas and questions with a [Think, Pair, Share](#).

Follow up the discussion by asking students to comment on how the issues they have named are similar to or different from the ones that Boston dealt with in the 1960s and 1970s.

### Activity 2: Walk through Demographic Changes Since the 1970s

Project or pass out the reading **Changing Demographics in Boston and Its Schools**. Walk through the information with the class and answer any clarifying questions students might have. The information includes some statistics and vocabulary that you may need to explain. After you have shared all of the information, use the [Surprising, Interesting, Troubling](#) (S-I-T) strategy to give students a chance to respond.

After a few volunteers have shared some of their S-I-T responses, explain to students that the pursuit of educational justice in Boston and across the United States is still ongoing. You might share the following statement from Boston's Union of Minority Neighborhoods after the 40th anniversary of the *Morgan v. Hennigan* decision to help frame the activities that follow:

Instead of trying to decide whether we are better or worse as a city than in 1974, we are productive by telling a different story: We still have work to do to ensure equity, access, and excellence for all in the city and its schools. This story acknowledges changes while recognizing our challenges, and opens up space for a dialogue about our past, present, and the future we want for Boston.<sup>1</sup>

### Activity 3: Examine Snapshots from Today's Quest for Educational Justice

Before class, set up a gallery walk by hanging the headline/quotation pages from the **Quotations | Boston Educational Justice Gallery Walk** handout. Begin by explaining to students that they will be looking at snapshots of education and activism in Boston in recent years in order to see what the pursuit of educational justice looks like today.

Use the video "[Different Trajectories and Inequity in Boston Schools](#)" to demonstrate how students will analyze the sources in this activity. While the video is easier for students to engage with, if you have difficulty accessing it, you can substitute the first article in the handout **Articles and Discussion Questions | Boston Educational Justice Gallery Walk** (*Boston Globe*, "What exactly is fair about this?"). Read or watch the source as a whole group, and then discuss the following questions:

1. How is the reading/story related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
2. What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

Now give students five to seven minutes to circulate and read the headlines and quotations you have posted around the room for the gallery walk. When time is up, have students stand next to the headline and quotation that they found most compelling. Once there, they should team up with a partner who chose the same headline. (If there is an odd number of students, you can have

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from "[Unfinished Business: 7 Questions, 7 Lessons](#)," Boston Busing/Desegregation Project (2014).

one group of three. If there is only one student at a headline, you might encourage them to choose a different one for now.)

Next, provide each student with a copy of the reading summary that corresponds with the headline they have chosen, which can be found in the **Articles and Discussion Questions | Boston Educational Justice Gallery Walk** handout. With their partner, students will have five to seven minutes to read the summary together and answer the two questions:

1. How is the reading related to educational justice? What issue does it describe?
2. What connections can you make between this story and the pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?

(If there is time, you might have students complete a second round of this process by choosing a new headline and partner.)

#### Activity 4: Share Findings and Analysis of Educational Justice Issues Today

After the reading and discussion time is up, have students who worked with each reading briefly share their answers to each question. Pass out the **Educational Justice Today Graphic Organizer** for students to use for note-taking. After each group shares, model for the class what they might write in each of the handout's two columns: *Educational Justice Issues Today* and *Connections to the Past*.

Finally, review the list of notes you took with the class and ask students if they notice any patterns or have any other observations.

**Note:** Students will need the notes on their graphic organizers to complete the formative task. You might snap a photo of your completed model organizer to post online for them to review later.

#### Formative Task

##### Write a Paragraph Describing Continuity and Change

Students will write a short paragraph describing the ways that the pursuit of educational justice in Boston is different than it was in the 1960s and 1970s and the ways that it is similar. They should include at least two differences and two similarities in their paragraph. Students should be sure to explain why the similarities and differences they name are significant.