

**ACTIVITY**

# Supporting Question 2: The Pursuit of Educational Justice in the 1960s and 1970s

**Overview**
**About This Activity**

Students will analyze a timeline of events related to the movements for educational justice in Boston's African American, Latinx, and Chinese American communities between 1946 and 1973. In the process, they will consider the various sources of power that changemakers can attempt to leverage in their civic actions.

<b>Supporting Question</b>	How did African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians pursue educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s?
<b>Formative Task</b>	Students will make self, text, and world connections with the strategies used and actions taken by African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians in their pursuit of educational justice in the 1960s and 1970s.
<b>Featured Sources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Sources of Power in the Pursuit of Educational Justice in Boston</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Event Cards   Boston Educational Justice Timeline</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Year-by-Year Titles   Boston Educational Justice Timeline</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Year-by-Year Summaries   Boston Educational Justice Timeline</li> <li>• <b>Handout:</b> Action/Power Graphic Organizer</li> </ul> <p><i>Find these materials in this lesson's <a href="#">Google Folder</a>.</i></p>

**Preparing to Teach**
**Notes to Teacher**
**1. Preparing the Classroom**

In the activities that follow, students will construct a [human timeline](#) of events related to the movements for educational justice in Boston's African American, Latinx, and Chinese American communities between 1951 and 1973. Students will work with partners to analyze individual events, and then they will stand in chronological order in the classroom to share their analysis. To prepare for these activities, take the following steps:

- **Print and cut out event cards:** The events that students will analyze are represented in the handout **Event Cards | Boston Educational Justice Timeline**. Before class, you will need to print and separate or cut out these event cards for easy distribution.
- **Hang year-by-year titles around the classroom:** Before class, print the handout **Year-by-Year Titles | Boston Educational Justice Timeline** and hang the years (1961 to 1974) in chronological order around the classroom.
- **For your reference:** A complete narrative timeline has been provided for teacher reference as you engage with this activity.

## 2. Optional Timeline Materials

If you would like your students to be able to see the events that they analyze within a more detailed historical chronology, including reference points to national events related to the civil rights movement, you can hang the year-by-year summaries from the **Year-by-Year Summaries | Boston Educational Justice Timeline** handout around the room rather than **Year-by-Year Titles | Boston Educational Justice Timeline**.

Note that incorporating either of these resources into the human timeline activity may require additional class time so that students can view and reflect on the extra context.

## 3. Introducing the Concept of Power

In the activities that follow, students will be examining, in part, the individuals, groups, and institutions that had *power* to bring about change in Boston's school system. If you would like to engage your students in a deeper examination of the concept of power, consider teaching the lesson ["What Is Power?"](#) before proceeding with the activities below.

## 4. A Note about the Historical Narrative

As of 2023, there is no definitive synthesis in a single source by a historian of the activism for educational justice by African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, these narratives have been recounted by historians and eyewitnesses (with a few exceptions) in separate, parallel narratives, and most often with the story of African American activism and white resistance at the center. Without discounting the significance of the battle over desegregation in Boston's history, those writing about the educational movements in the Latinx and Chinese American communities point out that this most frequently told narrative furthers a Black-white binary that erases Latinx and Chinese American Bostonians from the story.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the lack of historical sources that weave together the pursuit of educational justice in all three Boston communities, it can be challenging for students to determine the extent to which the efforts by African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians were parallel, overlapping, or even in conflict. For instance, while the push for bilingual

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<sup>1</sup> Tatiana M. F. Cruz, "We Took 'Em On': The Latino Movement for Educational Justice in Boston, 1965–1980," *Journal of Urban History* 43, issue 2 (2017): 235.

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education is represented in this inquiry primarily through sources from the Latinx perspective, this was also an issue of utmost concern to Chinese American families. Similarly, children from all three communities faced similar inequities at school, especially in the disrepair of school buildings, lack of resources, and overcrowding. Yet the solutions they sought were sometimes at odds. As we will see in the next supporting question, the desegregation of Boston's schools, at least initially, had a negative impact on the bilingual education programs that Latinx activists had fought to establish.

The timeline at the center of this supporting question's activities is designed to synthesize the efforts of African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians into a single resource. Keep the limitations of the existing historical narratives in mind as you guide your students through the timeline. When appropriate, it is worth asking your students to consider the following questions:

- Who else might be affected, positively or negatively, by each action taken in the pursuit of educational justice?
- To what extent were these three communities connected in their quests for educational justice? To what extent were they separate or parallel?

### Activities

#### Activity 1: Introduce the Timeline and Discuss Sources of Power

Remind students that in response to Supporting Question 1, they created a definition of *educational justice* based on their analysis of the criticisms of and visions for Boston Public Schools asserted by African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians in the 1960s. In considering Supporting Question 2, students will learn about the variety of strategies that members of these communities used in the 1960s and early 1970s to make Boston's schools more fair, equal, and just.

Explain that most of the strategies people used involved influencing or organizing individuals, groups, and institutions that had *power*: power to change school policies, power to enact laws, power to influence politicians and public opinion, power to provide educational resources directly to children and families, and other kinds of power. It may be helpful to explicitly name some of these groups before students engage with the timeline. Pass out **Sources of Power in the Pursuit of Educational Justice in Boston** for students to refer to as you introduce each of the following groups:

- Community Organizations
- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
- The Boston School Committee (BSC) and the Boston Public School System (BPS)
- Boston City Government
- Massachusetts State Government
- United States Federal Government

#### Activity 2: Analyze Individual Timeline Events

Explain to students that before they examine the "big picture" by working with the timeline posted around the room, they will first take time to think about some of the individual events that appear

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in the timeline. Specifically, they will work in pairs or trios to read a brief description of an event and consider what sources of power the people taking action tried to tap into to support their efforts.

Group students into pairs or trios. There are 13 events for the class to analyze, and some of them are more complex than others. Depending on the size of your class and how you wish to differentiate the activity, group students accordingly.

Pass out one **event card** to each group. Then share the following questions (by writing them on the board or projecting them) for groups to answer about their event:

- What action did the individual(s) or group in this event take?
- Why did they take this action? How did they think this action would help bring about educational justice?
- What sources of power did they attempt to use or influence? How?
- What sources of power stood in the way of their efforts to achieve educational justice?

Before students begin their work, consider choosing an event from the timeline for a “think aloud” to help students better understand the task. During the “think aloud,” be sure to refer to the list of sources of power that the class examined in Activity 1. Then give students five to ten minutes to discuss their assigned event and answer the questions.

### Activity 3: Construct a Human Timeline

Pass out the handout **Action/Power Graphic Organizer** for students to take notes on as they create a human timeline and share their analysis of events from the previous activity. On a piece of chart paper, or on available whiteboard space, create a two-column chart with the headings *Action* and *Source of Power* so that you can model note-taking throughout the activity.

Ask each group from Activity 2 to choose a spokesperson, and then invite those students to line up along the timeline you have constructed in the room. Since there will be multiple students with events from some years, they should first gather at the year of their event and then arrange themselves chronologically by the specific date. Some events do not specify days or months; those students can line up in the chronology before the students with more specific dates.

Now have students share their events in chronological order. Each student spokesperson will (1) read the description of the event from their event card and (2) share their group’s answers to the analysis questions.

As students report out, model taking notes on the chart you created while students fill in their graphic organizers. By the end of the timeline-sharing process, the chart will display the range of actions that the African American, Latinx, and Chinese American communities in Boston took and the sources of power they tapped into.

*If you have chosen one of the options to include additional historical context (see Notes to Teacher), read aloud the entire timeline (including the events in the year-by-year summaries), pausing for each student in the human timeline to share their event at the appropriate time.*

**Note:** *Students will need the notes from the chart to complete the formative task later. You can have students copy down these notes from the chart, or you can snap a photo to post online for them to access later.*

#### Activity 4: Debrief the Human Timeline

Debrief the human timeline activity by leading a class discussion, beginning with the following questions:

- Which sources of power did African American, Latinx, and Chinese American Bostonians use or influence in their efforts to bring about educational justice for their children?
- Which sources of power supported their efforts, and which ones stood in the way?
- How did African American, Chinese American, and Latinx Bostonians respond to opposition to their pursuit of educational justice?

#### Formative Task

##### Make a Self, Text, or World Connection

Students will create a list of at least three actions taken by African American, Latinx, or Chinese American Bostonians between 1961 and 1973 to bring about educational justice for their children. For each action, they will name the source of power that the people taking action attempted to tap into.

Finally, students will choose one of the actions and make a [text-to-text, text-to-self, or text-to-world connection](#) with it. They should describe the connection in a short paragraph.