

# [The Reciprocity Project](#)

## *A Community Development and Education from the Ground Up*

### **WHAT IS THE RECIPROCITY PROJECT?**

The Reciprocity Project is a coalition of nonprofits, community organizers, and education innovators that are working together to build a new kind of school from the ground up. Our work is rooted in reciprocal relationships, where the voice and ownership of stakeholders will create schools that are truly in service to their communities. Since racism is the key social determinant driving down health and educational outcomes, racial equity and racial healing are central to our efforts to help communities of color experience healing and restore wholeness.

### **WHAT IS THE GOAL?**

Instead of trying to patch leaks in a system that is structurally failing, we are creating a new frame of reference. Together we are designing the elements of a new school prototype that will be woven into the fabric of communities, with full reciprocity, building prosperous, healthy communities and investing in young people as future leaders. We know that new leadership is needed to do this work, and we are determined to look within our communities to identify and support the local leaders who are most qualified for these roles. These new kinds of schools will be rooted in the local wisdom with an asset-based approach that identifies the strengths and gifts that are already present in communities. We are first asking what communities need, and building institutions that can serve those needs. These schools will nourish and nurture their students as assets, and give them the experiences needed to be the problem-solvers their communities need most.

### **WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT?**

[Our distinguishers](#). Read from people in the community doing the work:

1. School success and leadership framework are tied to impact on the health and prosperity of the community. Reciprocity exists both as a goal and as a tool.
  - a. [Why is our Education System Stuck in the Industrial Age? An interview with Roberto Gonzalez Executive Director Steam Box Rhode Island](#) I learned just how wrong I was moving in. I thought they were broken pieces that needed some repair. And what I found out is that it's not broken at all, it's working exactly as it's meant to work, and it's an antiquated system built for the industrial age. It's built to keep people in line with their class—their social and economic, and of course racial and gender, class.”
2. Community organizers and community organizing play a central role in every aspect of the initiative.
  - a. [What if Community Organizers ran Schools? An interview with Kateri Zuni Radio Producer & Former Youth Coordinator at Generation Justice](#) If community organizers ran schools, the kids would be giving back. They would get to know their community and work with their community. And there are schools doing service learning, internships, and projects where they are embedded in a community organization and actually do the work.

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3. Interventions are driven by the impact of racism as the primary social determinant that informs design, programming, and drives co-construction.
  - a. [How does Racism Generate Inequities? An interview With Kau'i Sang | Director of the Office of Hawaiian Education & Puni Jackson | Program Director at Ho'oulu 'Āina](#) What we do in our education systems is driven by a single mono-cultural lens of that knowledge system. Because of that, we start to experience racism in the context of the institution, because the institution is trying to uphold that single mono-cultural mindset in its design. To make true authentic change we must create space for every child who walks in with their own community knowledge.
  
4. Student success aligns with principles of youth development, intellectual growth, and community integration rather than credits, grades, or competencies.
  - a. [Why don't we value the leadership experiences students already have? A conversation with Castile Aguilar, Campaign Organizer at Youth United for Climate Crisis Action](#) The idea that educators will be involved in the community beyond working with students in the classroom—I can't even tell you how big that is. It's really important that we make sure to hear the voices of our young people. Too many adults say, "Oh, they're not engaged. They're not mature enough. They don't really know what's going on in the real world." Time and time again we love to disprove that statement because we know it's not the case.

[Click here for additional blogs](#)

#### **WHATS NEXT:**

- PowerPoint: [slides from the 10/27/21 TRP Presentation](#)
- Interested in learning more. Fill out this poll to join us for an upcoming TRP 101 and learning from community organizers convening in January 2022. [Doodle Poll](#)
- For more information contact: Email: [thereciprocityprojecttrp@gmail.com](mailto:thereciprocityprojecttrp@gmail.com) or email your presenters directly: Oscar Santos at [osantos@ccebos.org](mailto:osantos@ccebos.org) Moneka Stevens at [moneka@futurefocusededucation.org](mailto:moneka@futurefocusededucation.org)