Student Advocacy

Briaunna Embrey-Banks

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Dr. Jones Carney

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Abstract

This paper explores the connections between critical pedagogy and student activism, examining their theoretical and practical intersections. It provides a historical overview of student activism, analyzes its contents in current day, and offers recommendations for fostering more effective engagement in activist movements within educational contexts. The research question being explored in this paper is how can a toolkit be developed that effectively assists high school and college students in identifying different avenues of student advocacy?

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Historical Background

Brown V Board of Education

In 1953, the NAACP consolidated five cases challenging the constitutionality of racial segregation in public schools, a legal battle that culminated in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. These cases were brought from South Carolina, Virginia, Kansas, Delaware, and the District of Columbia, all targeting the "separate but equal" doctrine established by the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling. The case that became central to the legal challenge involved Oliver Brown, a Black man from Topeka, Kansas, who in September 1950 attempted to enroll his daughter in a local elementary school. His daughter, like many other Black children, was denied admission because the school refused to accept Black students. With the NAACP's support, Brown's case became the lead case in the Supreme Court's deliberations. On May 17, 1954, the Court issued a unanimous ruling declaring that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional, stating that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal" (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). The decision marked a critical moment in the Civil Rights Movement, though it was met with significant resistance. Violent opposition and protests spread across the country, and thousands of Black teachers and principals were dismissed as schools began to desegregate (Smith, 2020; National Archives, 2021).

Forms of Student Activism Used

In Brown v. Board of Education (1954), student activism played a pivotal role in challenging racial segregation in public schools. Although the case itself was primarily legal, it was supported by various forms of activism that demonstrated student and community

involvement. One key form was legal activism, where students like those in the "Kansas" case (one of the cases used to create the Brown case) were directly impacted by the segregation policies and became central to the legal argument for desegregation. Another form was protesting, where students and their families, particularly in the southern states, began organizing to protest against the unjust "separate but equal" doctrine. In some regions, young people participated in sit-ins and demonstrations to challenge segregation in public spaces, including schools. These forms of direct action were extremely valuable in showing the widespread demand for equality. Additionally, community organizing was used by groups like the NAACP to mobilize support for the Brown case and highlight the systemic nature of educational inequality. The activism surrounding Brown not only influenced the ruling but also laid the groundwork for the broader civil rights movement.

Little Rock Nine

Following the ruling of Brown v Board of Education. The Arkansas NAACP hand picked ten high school students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock Alabama to see if the ruling on the landmark case would be enforced. The NAACP prepared the students by providing them counseling as well as explaining different situations they may face in addition to preparing them for conflict resolution in a hostile environment. They even asked the students to meet on the first day of school, September 4th 1967 in order to have the students walk to school together. One of the ten students, Elizabeth Eckford did not receive the message due to not having a phone and because of this, went to school alone. As Eckford entered school grounds she was faced with a hostile mob. Governor Orval Faubus, even called the National Guard to keep the students from integrating the school, who denied Eckford access to entering the building. One of the other nine students, Jane Hill not only had to face the mob and the national guard

similar to the other students, but her parents' jobs were also treated. This caused her to re enroll in her old segregated school. This would cause the Little Rock Ten to become The Little Rock Nine. After several attempts for the nine students to attend school, the students eventually got in through a side door, but were met with more angry mobs. The NAACP out of fear for their safety allowed the authorities to send the students home. The violence had gotten so bad President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent 1,200 soldiers and the National Guard to protect 9 students. Nearly a month after the first day of school, on September 25 1967 the Little Rock Nine were able to attend a full day of school. The violence and harassment unfortunately did not end. The students at one point even had acid thrown on them. To provide some type of protection the Nine had guards escort them to their classes, however they did not go inside the classes, locker rooms, or bathrooms. In February of 1958 one of the nine students Minnijean Brown was expelled after having an altercation with a white student. After the altercation other students would wear badges that read “One Down, Eight to Go". Despite all of the hardships Ernest Green, one of the Little Rock Nine became the first black student to graduate from Central High School in Little Rock Alabama. The Little Rock Nine became known as the first group of black students to desegregate public schools in the US.

Forms of Activism Used

Little Rock Nine used many forms of student activism; one of the main forms of activism used was nonviolent resistance. The Little Rock Nine faced daily harassment, threats, and physical violence but remained steadfast in their mission to challenge segregation. This act of courage can also be categorized as protest activism. Additionally, the National Guard’s interference in the students' initial attempts to enter the school brought federal attention to the case, this is an

example of political activism. After President Eisenhower sent federal troops to enforce desegregation, the event became a focal point for national discussions on civil rights.

Greensboro Four

In 1960, the Greensboro Four—Ewell Blair Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McCain, and Joseph McNeil—initiated a sit-in protest at a whites-only lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina. After being denied service, they returned daily, progressively bringing more students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to join their cause. By February 5 1960, the protest had escalated to 309 students participating in the sit-in, which led to significant economic repercussions for local businesses (Cruz, 2020). The protest gathered extensive local media coverage and inspired similar actions across the country. By March 1960, 55 cities in 13 states had organized their own sit-ins. Despite facing brutal treatment such as having condiments poured on them and cigarettes extinguished on their skin, the Greensboro Four ultimately contributed to the integration of the restaurant by July 1960, marking a significant victory in the civil rights movement (Cruz, 2020).

Forms of Student Activism Used

The Greensboro Four's sit-in was a nonviolent protest that involved the students sitting quietly at the counter, requesting service, and refusing to leave when denied. Their activism quickly gained national attention and sparked a wave of similar sit-ins across the United States, particularly on college campuses. This student-led movement showed how young people could be leaders for social change. Additionally, their actions were supported by the community as local residents, students, and organizations rallied to their cause, demonstrating the power of

collective action in challenging racial discrimination. The Greensboro Four's sit-in became a defining moment in the civil rights struggle and paved a way for future nonviolent protests.

Freedom Riders

The Freedom Riders, a group of students and civil rights activists, went on a series of bus rides beginning on May 4 1961, to challenge segregation in interstate travel (Cruz, 2020). Their journey started in Washington, D.C, but soon they were faced with violence, notably in Anniston, Alabama, where the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) bombed one of their buses and then attacked the riders. As they traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, they encountered further assaults from white mobs and the KKK. The situation became so extreme that students were evacuated to New Orleans, Louisiana, when their driver refused to continue. In the fall of 1961, the Kennedy Administration responded to the escalating violence by pressuring the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to protect the Freedom Riders. This led to the ICC enforcing the ban on segregation in interstate transit, marking a significant step towards civil rights in the United States (Cruz, 2020).

Forms of Student Activism Used

The primary form of activism was a protest, specifically bus rides across the southern United States, to test the enforcement of *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960), a Supreme Court decision that declared segregation in interstate bus facilities unconstitutional.

The media also played a significant role in their activism by spreading their message nationwide. The Freedom Riders' actions also sparked widespread student solidarity—college students across

the country participated, supporting the riders or organizing local actions. The legal and political activism that followed, including federal intervention, helped lead to stronger enforcement of desegregation laws.

Current Context

Black Lives Matter Movement

Following the high-profile killings of Black individuals such as Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown, students across the United States mobilized to demand accountability and systemic change, utilizing social media to amplify their messages and organize protests.

According to Akom et al. (2016), student-led initiatives have not only increased awareness about racial inequality but have also fostered a sense of collective identity among young activists. This engagement has manifested in various forms, from campus protests to broader community organizing efforts, demonstrating the critical intersection of education and activism in promoting social change. Moreover, the involvement of students in BLM has underscored the importance of youth voices in shaping the narrative around racial justice, illustrating a continued legacy of student activism in American history (Shah, 2020). In 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement gained renewed momentum following the murder of George Floyd, leading to widespread protests and heightened student activism across the United States. For instance, students at universities such as the University of Minnesota and New York University organized large-scale demonstrations, calling for police reform and greater racial equity on their campuses. These protests often included diverse groups of students who utilized social media platforms to coordinate actions and share resources, as well as amplify their collective voice. For example, there was a #BlackAtMyUniversity movement, which encouraged

students to share their experiences of racism and discrimination within higher education institutions, fostering a dialogue around systemic issues. This movement not only mobilized students but also pressured university administrations to implement policy changes aimed at addressing racial injustices, illustrating the significant impact of student activism during this pivotal time in the BLM movement (Williams, 2020; Johnson, 2021).

Forms of Student Activism Used

Many forms of student activism were seen in the Black Lives Matter Movement including social media activism, protests, and community organizing. The use of social media to amplify messages and organize protests is a key form of activism mentioned. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook enabled students to connect, share resources, and coordinate actions around racial justice issues. Social media activism allowed students to increase awareness, mobilize support, and foster a sense of collective identity, as seen with movements like #BlackAtMyUniversity. Another form seen were protests. Students organized on-campus protests at universities such as the University of Minnesota and New York University. These protests involved direct action to demand accountability, police reform, and racial equity. Finally community organizing was used. Beyond campus-specific actions, students also engaged in community organizing to push for broader societal change. This form of activism involved collaborating with other groups to demand systemic reform, such as police accountability and changes to racial policies.

Student Activism Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy, a concept developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, emphasizes the role of education in promoting social justice and empowering marginalized groups. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), Freire critiqued traditional education models. He described it as "banking education," where teachers deposit information into passive students. Instead, Freire advocated for a more interactive and dialogic approach to learning, where students are encouraged to question and challenge societal inequalities, encouraging critical thinking and transformative action. A central point to Critical Pedagogy is the idea that education should not only exchange knowledge but also empower students to become agents of change in their communities. Freire's work has had an impact on educational theory, especially in addressing issues of race, class, and power in the classroom, and it continues to inspire educators seeking to promote equity and social justice in education today (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011).

Literature Review: Student Activism and Critical Pedagogy

Introduction

Student activism has long played a pivotal role in shaping social and political fields. Throughout history, students have used their collective voice to challenge societal norms, demand social justice, and advocate for educational reform. As an educational theory, Critical Pedagogy offers a framework for understanding how students engage with and challenge systems of power and oppression. Critical Pedagogy emphasizes dialogue, reflection, and action to transform both the

individual and society. This literature review explores how Critical Pedagogy intersects with student activism, analyzing theoretical foundations, key scholarly contributions, and the legal/political factors influencing student movements. Critical Pedagogy provides a way in which student activism can be understood as a process of empowerment and social change. Freire's concept of "*praxis,"* the interplay of reflection and action, serves as a core element of student activism. In this framework, students are not passive recipients of knowledge; they are active participants in their own learning and seen as agents of social transformation (Freire, 1970). Critical Pedagogy encourages students to critically examine the socio-political structures that shape their lives and to engage in collective action aimed at dismantling oppressive systems.

Another important concept in Critical Pedagogy is the idea of *dialogical education*. This process empowers students to recognize and confront inequalities within their educational and greater society, and to advocate for change through activism.

Literature Review

Numerous scholars have examined the relationship between Critical Pedagogy and student activism, emphasizing both the theoretical and practical applications of Critical Pedagogy in various educational settings. Giroux (2011) argues that student activism, when framed through a Critical Pedagogical lens, provides an opportunity for students to engage with critical social issues, challenge dominant ideologies, and cultivate leadership skills. Giroux highlights the importance of creating "spaces of resistance" in education where students can critically analyze the structures of power and privilege in society. Similarly, hooks (1994) discusses the importance of creating "engaged" educational environments that foster critical thinking and social responsibility among students. hooks emphasizes the need for education to be transformative,

calling on educators to create opportunities for students to engage in activism as part of their educational experience. She also highlights how student activism, when grounded in Critical Pedagogy, serves as a catalyst for personal and social change.

Duncan-Andrade (2009), in *The Art of Critical Pedagogy*, argues that student activism is most effective when it emerges from a foundation of care, community, and collective responsibility. His work highlights the significance of emotional and social support in fostering student engagement with activism. Duncan-Andrade expresses that creating spaces where students feel valued and supported is not just beneficial, but essential for cultivating long-term involvement in social movements. By linking activism with emotional care and communal ties, he suggests that students are more likely to engage deeply with the issues they care about, making activism sustainable and meaningful. Similarly, McLaren (1998) extends the ideas of Critical Pedagogy by focusing on the intersections of race, gender, and class within educational activism. Building on Freire's notion of dialogue and critical consciousness, McLaren explains that addressing identity and power is important to empowering students to confront and challenge various forms of oppression. According to McLaren, Critical Pedagogy helps students not only understand their own positionality but also build solidarity across differences, enabling them to organize around shared struggles and resist forms of inequality both within and outside the classroom. This process of solidarity-building, he argues, is fundamental to the development of a radical student activism that can address complex social issues. The integration of Critical Pedagogy into student activism can be understood as a process that links educational practice with social change. This conceptual framework involves several key elements:critical consciousness, participatory learning and praxis and dialogical education.

Freire's concept of critical consciousness is central to both Critical Pedagogy and student activism. It involves a process of becoming aware of one's social, political, and economic realities and recognizing the ways in which these realities are shaped by systemic forces of oppression. For students, this awareness often leads to activism, as they seek to challenge the conditions that perpetuate inequality (Freire, 1970).

Critical Pedagogy stresses the importance of participatory education and praxis. When students engage in activism, they are practicing the process of reflection and action that is at the heart of Critical Pedagogy. The act of engaging in activism is not only a political act but also an educational one, as it transforms students' understanding of themselves and their role in society (Giroux, 2011).

The emphasis on dialogue within Critical Pedagogy fosters an environment where students can engage in discussions that challenge dominant narratives. In activism, these dialogues help students build solidarity with one another and deepen their commitment to social justice issues (hooks, 1994). Dialogical education encourages students to think critically about the world and take action to create social change.

Legal and Political Factors Impacting Student Activism

Student activism has historically been shaped by legal and political factors that either support or suppress students' ability to advocate for change. In the United States, Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969) was a landmark case in which the Supreme Court ruled that students do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." This decision affirmed the right of students to engage in

political activism, setting a legal precedent that supports student-led protests and activism in schools.

However, student activism is not always protected by the law. In the Supreme Court case Bethel School District v. Fraser (1986), the Court ruled that schools can limit student speech if it is seen as inappropriate or disruptive, even if the speech is part of an activist effort. The case involved a high school student, Matthew Fraser, who gave a speech at a school assembly with sexual jokes, which led to his suspension. The Court decided that schools have the right to stop students from making speeches that go against the values of the school, such as using offensive language (Bethel School District v. Fraser, 1986). Although this case wasn't directly about political activism, it set an important rule that schools can limit speech that is disruptive, even if it's part of a protest or activism. The Fraser decision shows the tension between students' right to free speech and schools' right to maintain a safe and respectful learning environment. It suggests that while students do have some First Amendment rights, those rights are not as strong in school settings (Chemerinsky & Gillman, 2017). Schools can limit certain types of speech if it interferes with education. This case has been used to justify restrictions on student protests, especially when the protest includes speech that could disrupt the school environment. Therefore, Fraser is an important case in understanding how the law limits student activism in schools.

Politically, student activism is influenced by broader societal movements and government policies. In recent years, issues such as climate change, racial justice, and gun control have mobilized students across the world, creating global movements. Political polarization, however, can complicate student activism, as it may lead to ideological conflicts within the student body and between students and administrators.

Recommendations: Student Activism

Student activism is a way students can fight for change at their educational institution or even for their greater community. There are many different forms of student activism that are categorized.

Key Considerations for Aspiring Activists

When considering becoming an activist, something to note is that anyone can become an activist. There are a few things to consider to decide when considering becoming one:

- Are you educated on your topic? Activists need to deeply understand the cause they are advocating for. Understand the history behind the topic.
- What change are you fighting for? Have solution ideas in mind. Make sure they are realistic and attainable no matter how big or small. Keep in mind an ideal timeframe and who you are advocating to make this change.
- Know your target audience: Who's attention are you trying to grab? The general public, a specific institution or person? And consider the best way to get them to care about your cause.
- Know your risk(s): Understand the potential consequences of the action(s) you are taking to make change. Are you challenging a law/policy, could law enforcement get involved, could you potentially be suspended/expelled for this (educational settings).

Methods of Action

Sit-ins. Sit-ins are a form of nonviolent protest where activists occupy a public or private space, typically a business or government building, to protest an issue or demand change. The key to a sit-in is the refusal to leave the space, often until a particular demand is met (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Marches. Marches are organized public demonstrations where people gather and walk together, usually through public streets, to advocate for a social, political, or environmental cause. Marches can range from small, local protests to massive national events (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Petitions. Petitions are formal written requests, often signed by many people, that demand specific action or policy changes from institutions, governments, or corporations. The essence of a petition is its ability to aggregate widespread support for an issue in a way that can be presented to decision-makers as evidence of public sentiment. Petitions can be physical or digital and serve as an accessible tool for advocacy in both local and global contexts. While they do not directly affect policy, they often serve as a precursor to larger actions, amplifying public demand for change (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Walkouts. Walkouts involve individuals or groups deliberately leaving a space, such as a workplace or school, as a form of protest against a specific issue. Walkouts are often used to draw attention to policies or practices that are considered unjust or harmful (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Rallies. Rallies are large public gatherings that aim to rally support for a particular cause or social movement. Unlike marches, which involve moving through public spaces, rallies typically involve speeches, performances, and other forms of expression in a central location, such as a park or government building. Rallies serve as an opportunity for activists to mobilize supporters, create visibility for their cause, and inspire further action. The purpose of a rally is often to energize a movement, demonstrate public commitment, and influence public opinion or political decision-makers (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Boycotts. A boycott is a strategic withdrawal of consumer support from a company, country, or organization in protest of its policies or actions. Activists use boycotts to exert economic pressure on an entity, forcing it to reconsider its practices by impacting its bottom line. The success of a boycott depends on its scale and the ability to mobilize widespread support (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Social Media. Social media activism, often referred to as "hashtag activism" or "clicktivism," involves using platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok to raise awareness about social, political, or environmental issues. The immediacy and widespread reach of social media make it a powerful tool for organizing protests, spreading messages, and rallying global support for causes (Soken-Huberty, 2024).

Choosing The Correct Method Tool Kit

Once you fully understand your topic, and weigh the consequences associated with each method of activism, you want to choose a method that allows the most wanted attention to your cause. This toolkit provides a breakdown of six key forms of student activism—Marches, Petitions, Walkouts, Rallies, Boycotts, and Social Media Activism—explaining when each method is most appropriate and at which Level of Education. (High School, College/University, Graduate School) they tend to be most effective.

Marches

When to Use. Marches can be used to mobilize large groups. When students need to demonstrate broad public support or create visibility for an issue, marches allow students to physically unite and be seen by the media, which often leads to greater awareness. Another time marches can be used is to influence policy or raise awareness. Marches can pressure policymakers, institutions, or governments by showing the scale of public support or dissent.Finally marches can be used to draw attention to an ongoing crisis. Marches are effective when you need to make a public statement about urgent social, political, or environmental issues.

Level of Education.

College/University. Ideal for large-scale mobilization. College students often have the organizational infrastructure, resources, and autonomy to organize large marches. The university setting also allows for more political engagement, making marches a common form of protest.

High School. While high school students can effectively organize marches, the logistical challenges (e.g., parental consent, supervision) can limit their scale. However, marches in local communities can still be impactful.

Graduate School. Marches are less common but can be effective when addressing specific academic or labor-related issues (e.g., funding cuts, working conditions for graduate assistants).

Petitions

When to Use. Petitions can be used to gather support and show legitimacy, mobilize support and for policy or institutional change. To gather support and show legitimacy petitions are ideal when you want to demonstrate broad, organized support for a cause and create a reasonable record of demands. When using petitions to mobilize support they can be useful for gathering signatures and formalizing requests for change, often serving as a foundation for further activism or negotiations. For policy or institutional change: Petitions can be directed to school administrators, local governments, or even national leaders to request specific changes or interventions.

Level of Education.

High School. Petitions are often effective at the high school level to organize initial support for causes like school policies, local community issues, or changes to educational systems.

College/University. Petitions at the university level are highly effective, especially when mobilizing large numbers of students. College students can quickly circulate petitions both in person and online.

Graduate School. Graduate students may use petitions to address specific concerns like research funding, working conditions, or administrative policies. These petitions are often more specialized but still effective in creating formal documentation of support.

Walkouts

When to Use. Walkouts can be used to demonstrate immediate disagreeance, create disruption and draw attention:and if other methods of activism are ineffective. Walkouts are effective for showing direct action against a specific policy, decision, or event that has immediate relevance to students' lives (e.g., school shootings, political decisions). Additionally, a walkout is a powerful tool when students need to disrupt the normal flow of activities to force attention to a cause. Finally, If petitions, meetings, or other forms of activism have been ignored, walkouts can serve as a more visible form of protest.

Level of Education.

High School. Walkouts are particularly effective at the high school level due to the direct impact of school policies on students' daily lives. They are an immediate and visible form of protest that disrupts the normal routine and garners attention.

College/University. College students can also organize walkouts to protest issues like tuition hikes, academic policies, or political events. Walkouts here may be combined with other forms of activism to create greater impact.

Graduate School. Graduate students are less likely to use walkouts, but they can be effective for more specialized issues such as academic freedom, labor rights, or faculty policy changes.

Rallies

When to Use. Rallies can be used to build solidarity and energize a movement, to raise awareness, or to show large-scale support. Rallies are ideal for gathering a large number of people in a single space to build morale, share information, and demonstrate collective action. They work well when you want to energize supporters. Additionally, Rallies are effective for raising public awareness on specific issues, especially when combined with speeches, performances, or public information sharing. Finally, a rally's strength lies in its ability to show a visible, unified force advocating for a cause.

Level of Education.

College/University. Rallies are highly effective in colleges and universities where students can organize large groups easily and have the autonomy to gather in public spaces. These rallies often attract media attention and can lead to institutional or political pressure.

High School. While rallies can be effective in high schools, they may require more logistical effort due to administrative oversight. However, they can still be powerful, particularly when students are protesting issues that directly affect them, such as educational policies or gun violence.

Graduate School. Graduate student rallies tend to be smaller and more targeted but can be effective for addressing specific academic or labor issues (e.g., pay raises, working conditions).

Boycotts

When to Use. Boycotts can be used to disrupt economic interests. demonstrate non-cooperation, and pressure for policy changes. Boycotts are effective when students want to disrupt the economic interests of corporations, institutions, or governments that are responsible for or complicit in the issue at hand (e.g., environmental destruction, labor exploitation). Additionally, boycotts signal a refusal to support a particular company, product, or service as a way to draw attention to a specific issue. Finally, boycotts can be an effective tactic when students want to influence corporate behavior, political decisions, or institutional policies by withdrawing support.

Level of Education.

College/University. Boycotts are often effective on university campuses, particularly when students organize to target issues like divestment from fossil fuels or boycotting companies with unethical practices (e.g., sweatshops).

High School. Boycotts are less common but can be effective for protesting local businesses or school-related issues, such as cafeteria food suppliers or school policies.

Graduate School. Graduate student boycotts are rare but can be effective for labor-related issues, such as strikes or work stoppages for better pay or working conditions.

Social Media Activism

When to Use. Social media activism can be used to reach a large audience, organize and mobilize, and build a global movement.Social media activism is particularly effective when you want to spread awareness quickly to a wide audience. Platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok allow students to amplify their messages beyond their immediate community. Additionally, Social media is essential for organizing events like marches, petitions, and rallies. It provides a platform to connect students and share updates. Finally, social media activism is especially effective for global causes where geographical barriers are less important, such as climate change or human rights movements.

Level of Education.

College/University. College students are highly active on social media, and the use of digital platforms for organizing and spreading activism is essential in this setting. Social media campaigns can quickly go viral, mobilizing large numbers of students.

High School. Social media is highly effective for high school students as well, especially when mobilizing support for local causes, political events, or social justice movements. Students can reach their peers and broader networks with ease.

Graduate School. Graduate students may use social media for more niche academic or professional causes, such as advocacy for research funding, policy changes in academia, or specialized labor rights issues.

Conclusion

Each form of student activism has unique strengths and is best suited to particular goals, timing, and contexts. Marches, petitions, and rallies are especially effective in college and university settings, where students have more autonomy and resources to organize large, visible actions (Binns & Atkinson, 2019). Walkouts are highly impactful at the high school level, where they disrupt daily routines and draw attention to immediate issues (Valenzuela & Watson, 2017). Boycotts and social media activism are versatile tools that work across all levels, with social media particularly enabling fast, far-reaching mobilization (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Understanding the strengths and limitations of each method can help student activists strategically select the right approach to advance their cause.

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