TABLE OF CONTENTS
SECTION 1
PORTRAITS OF EQUITY
LAYOUT DESIGN BY TRINITY

SECTION 2
BARRIERS
LAYOUT DESIGN BY MOLLY

SECTION 3
STUDENT HIERARCHY OF NEEDS
FEATURING: PERRY TRADITIONAL ACADEMY
LAYOUT DESIGN BY CHRISTA

SECTION 4
FACES OF POWER
LAYOUT DESIGN BY TYLER
This is Cayah
Cayah is 13 years old
Cayah goes to Shady Side Academy

Cayah is a member of the Teen Bloc community
Cayah is a member of an acting company, ATC (Alumni Theater Company).

Cayah’s passions are engaging with the people and communities around her, reporting and writing, and educating herself and others everyday on current everyday worldwide issues.
Eli has been with TeenBloc since summer of 2020.

He is 15 years old and a Freshman at City High Charter School.

Eli also plays football and other activities.

Eli likes to play video games and have fun and he is from the Carrick neighborhood.
I'm Ahmeena and what drives me towards advocacy is being part of a minority and always being the minority places I went growing up.

Since I was in Pre-K I went to a Private PWI and I was the only African American kid in my class until middle school.

That experience impacted me in many ways. I had to experience all the rude things that came along with people who didn't accept minorities.

So growing up I felt like I never had any representation. Things like having nobody else to represent you made me want to help represent people like me so they wouldn't have to feel the way I felt going to those places. I also wanted to voice for those who felt like those places making them feel like they didn't fit in with their people.
Molly has been working with TeenBloc since summer of 2020.

She attends Lincoln Park Performing Arts Charter School as a junior Media major, specializing in tech media and filmmaking. She has been writing and editing for the Creative Writing Team of The Incandescent Review since 2020.

Additionally, Molly is a host for Bridges & Books, a lit podcast created by teens, for teens, where she interviews acclaimed and diverse YA authors and discusses her favorite YA novels. When she’s not writing or recording, she enjoys running, gardening, and spending time with her pet cat, Cornflake.
Trinity is a new member of Teen Bloc.

She is 15 years old and a Sophomore at Shadyside Academy.

Trinity enjoys partaking in multiple different sports and interacting in the theater.

She also enjoys learning more about her community and helping others.
Tyler has been working with TeenBloc since Fall 2019.

He goes to Pittsburgh CAPA 6-12; He does an instrumental major, playing clarinet and writing music.

He is also involved in his school's Student Council, Latinx Student Union, Stand Together, and NHS, Future Kings Mentoring, etc.
Portraits of Equity
Portraits of Equity defines what equity means to different people. It also informs about the different inequalities plaguing the Allegheny County school system, specifically Pittsburgh Public School District.
EQUITY IS THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE GOAL

Paul Farmer
“Equity is the quality of being fair and impartial. Equity shows examples of integrity and equal treatment. Equity in schools are crucial factors to equity as a whole”

“The Pittsburgh Promise is a college scholarship program that offers support and help to students who attend PPS and PCS”

“This need impacts equity by having both Pittsburgh Public schools and Charter Schools have the same graduations and completion of school rates. To have better education statuses especially for PPS teachers and educators to inspire students to graduate and become successful would be the ideal goal”
equity is everyone being at the same level
equity is empathy and equality

equity is beyond the idea of equality; it's about more than just being fair and having enough to go around. It's about making sure it's accessible to all.

equity is a step to equality; a step essential to getting there to be able to form an understanding.

giving a taller ladder to the friend on the higher side of the tree or more giving more for people to be able to have the same access as you so then it can be equal.
Ahmeena

“To me equity is the understanding that all people, races, sexualities, and religions should be held at the same level and receive the same treatment”

“But what I’ve come to realize is equity is more than just another meaning for equality but its a helping hand and a step towards equality”

“While population per race in schools is usually trumped by white the suspension rates are usually higher in people of color especially in the pittsburgh public schools. For example the number of suspensions at perry and the percent of african american students and students who are people of color”
Molly

“69% of students were chronically absent, the majority of them missing 20% or more of the school year. For Pittsburgh CAPA, a creative and performing arts magnet school, only 4% of students were chronically absent”

“A number of factors could be affecting absentee rates, including access to transportation, online resources, trustworthy and certified teachers, and health (and mental health) resources”

“Equity to me is providing an empathetic, individualized approach to education and opportunity. There is a clear difference between equity and equality, as equality takes on a ‘colorblind’ mindset, ignoring the institutional, structural racism that is deeply embedded in society”
EQUITY
fairness without any prejudices or aid
By: Trinity
Trinity

“Equity can be defined as fairness without any prejudices or aid that allows one to have more readiness than the other. This means there should be an ability for people to be able to get as far as their peers; despite one’s financial standings, race, sexuality, or others”

“The percent of students who missed twenty percent or more of the school year in Westinghouse was 69%. Urban Pathways has less than one-fourth of that percentage”

“If more assistance could be provided to schools, such as Westinghouse, to help more students be able to consistently come to school; would not only decrease the percent of students missing twenty percent or more of the school year but would increase the schools’ graduation rate(simultaneously decreasing the percentage of high school dropouts)”
WE’RE ALL HUMANS WHO NEED EQUITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES.
Tyler

“Equity in our schools is the process of reforming our school procedures to support academic fairness and inclusion to all students and staff”

“For example, black students are more likely than white students to attend PPS schools with high concentrations of children in poverty”

“This is something that we need to be aware of, especially for wanting equity”

“This gives reasons to why assumptions are made against minority students and students who have an IEP”
“It shouldn’t be the case that you have to be economically ‘advantaged’ in order to gain a ‘good’ education.”
Maisie

“The definition of equity is being fair and impartial. Equity in schools is a big part of equity”

“60% of students in Perry High School are chronically absent. This reflects onto their school work, and therefore produces less graduates. Another part of this could stem from the fact that 80% of students who attend Perry are economically disadvantaged”

“It shouldn’t be the case that you have to be economically ‘advantaged’ in order to gain a ‘good’ education”

“This isn’t fair to those who don’t have access to this education and therefore isn’t equitable”
Elijah

When I think about equity I think mainly about resources. Equity is a big issue in PPS schools. Some schools are being treated differently than other schools. An example of an equity issue is a school like Allderdice, located in Squirrel Hill, has way more access to resources and funding than a North Side school, like Perry Traditional Academy.

I believe this to be true considering Allderdice has an absentee rate of 21% where Perry Traditional Academy has 58%.

It creates a question alone of why so many students at Perry are chronically absent. I don’t think it’s just because the kids are ‘bad’. Students in predominantly Black schools are being failed, frequently in this district, and something needs to be done.
I feel like schools in other neighborhoods like Squirrel Hill, Shadyside, etc are treated way better than a school on the North Side because Perry is always shown as a bad school, the media never shows us the good things that happen there. We need school equality in more schools because it's not far that some schools are being treated bad because there on a certain side of town or because there numbers are bad. If we had school equality it would make the school, and the district, much better.
BARRIERS

: circumstances or obstacles that keep people or things apart or prevent communication or progress
In this section, TeenBloc discusses barriers that people in the Pittsburgh community have faced in regards to getting access to Covid-19 vaccinations and other resources. This has largely affected BIPOC individuals -- from health care and essential workers, to children and teens. In addition, we explore the inequities amongst schools in areas with low literacy rates, poor leadership, and a void of communication in information about the Pandemic.

Barriers are bound to be constructed, but it is up to us to tear them down little by little in order to improve the quality of life and fairness in Pittsburgh. This starts with focusing on marginalized groups who have had it the worst. The data is real, and if we pull from it and learn to read it, we become unstoppable and lives can be saved. It is necessary to approach barriers head on so that real change can happen. TeenBloc illustrates some ways this need can be fulfilled through tangible ideas, actions, and dedication.
EQUITY IN EDUCATION

LEADS TO

EQUITY IN HEALTH
“Equity plays a huge role in the Covid vaccines and who has access to them. African Americans, Hispanic people, and Pacific Islanders are less likely to get the vaccine than white people because they might not have access, they might be hesitant to get it because of failure with the medical treatment in the past or because medical places are racist and refuse to assist people of color. So because of race you are put in danger and cannot get the help you deserve to keep others and yourself safe.”

“Some groups of youth do not have the education or money to get the vaccine and they sadly are at risk and higher danger of exposure of Covid-19. There could be a physical business that just works on finding people who cannot get the vaccine and giving it to them and educating them on why having the vaccine is important and safer.”
“Here in this graph you can see that white people had more recipients than any other race because they had easier access to [the vaccine]. Adding all the other races up would equal 33.9%. So the percentage of POC vaccine recipients were nearly half of the white vaccine recipients. This graph also shows how the vaccine was unfairly distributed. There was more than enough for white people (and other or multiple races) but not nearly enough for any other race.”
“Youth is affected because their growth and opportunities may be stunted due to things that they essentially have no control over. Young people are too often put into a position of no power, and BIPOC youth are even more so hindered.”

“To solve this issue, teachers need to be hired based on the training and intention they are putting into their curriculum. Consideration of students’ needs should also be put into this; you should never onboard a teacher without properly seeing how students are reacting. Although many of these teachers seem committed, something has to be going wrong as more than half of the students are chronically absent, being pushed away from school. I easily think this must be due to students who don’t feel worthy, appreciated, ready, or understood.”
Vaccine education is necessary & role models create change through info. & advice.
“The black community was one of the main groups that needed vaccinations and other COVID-19 assistance and yet they were not one of the main ones to receive it, due to the inequalities in the healthcare system. This demonstrates how those who need help the most, don’t receive it in the current medical management. This is a relevant violation of inequality in the world which correlates to other aspects of life, not just in the medical world.”

“This also affects their future by putting them and the future generations at the same disadvantage because of the lack of data literacy. This is a continuous issue that will not stop until it is fixed. For it to be fixed or even to begin on the pathway to it being fixed there needs to be more data literacy in all schools, no matter the wealth of the district, easier access to data, and data that is easier to read.”
inequalities in education lead to inequalities in medicine
“During the pandemic, there were many absences and suspenses on students for not logging in online at Perry. The teachers and staff didn’t realize that the student probably couldn’t log in due to poor connection or they’ve never achieved a device! At Perry, there weren’t enough teachers or students last year! Inequity is breaking apart our system as a whole in the PPS community!”

“As an individual attending one of the PPS schools, I have the perseverance and wisdom to create conversations based on topics that concern all of us, no matter what type of view we have on that specific topic. I really like to communicate with others and understand their different beliefs on these situations and want to inspire those views that will attract others to do the same. Just by teaming up and discuss options, things can be better and solved.”
VACCINES ARE FRESH!
EQUITY IS FAIR!
WE ALL NEED IT!!!
“People who don’t have those specific thing should not have to suffer and get sick from it. They should be given equitable treatment. That saying treatment suited to their specific needs. This correlates to data literacy within schools. If you weren’t data literate you wouldn’t be able to read the information and more specifically stats and graphs given to you in this report. Then you would be missing out on necessary and impactful information that could affect you and your community. Also you would have less access to vaccines as you wouldn’t have the resources to get them. Allegheny county as a whole has significantly more white people vaccinated than black people.”

“To help this it would be smart to integrate values such as equity into these infrastructures and make it so people who have different needs, can gain access to things that can improve that need, rather than have to suffer for it”
“There seemed to have been issues with rollout and according to the report, tended to favor people with data literacy and access to people within the system and transportation”
“I think the health barriers for covid vaccines are people being afraid to get it because they think the government put something in it and because false facts about the vaccine. Big Influencers are saying that the vaccine will make you have long term health conditions or others say just don’t get it. People not getting the vaccine is affecting the kids to because they can’t go to school because there is to many covid cases and that can be prevented if everyone gets the vaccine. I think this is impacting the equity of the schools and businesses to because they don’t have any workers because they don’t want to get the vaccine or they refuse to get it. I think there should be more people and companies influence people to get the vaccine.”
TO SUCCEED
WE NEED...

COMMUNITY

SAFETY

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

HEALTHY FOOD
In order for any High School student to succeed, there is a system of needs and resources that must be acknowledged, addressed, and provided to ensure a fair and equitable environment for all.

February-May of this year, we visited Perry Traditional Academy to get Peer Student perspective on what resources and supports are wanted and needed.

This section includes a series of responses from frequent discussions regarding emotional and physical needs for a healthy and productive learning environment.
COMMUNITY IS

Good vibes in the classroom. -Michael

Feeling and being wanted. -Jamel

I feel like I belong more when I understand the work given to me and am able to discuss other perspectives. -Kayla

...when the teachers are cool and chill and don’t try to boss me around. -Demir
Students in Mrs. Brentley’s Social Justice class have been collaborating with TeenBloc to understand the data behind advocacy and leadership.

This is a team collaboration stemming from months of discussion and planning to create a visualization of Peer Perry Student perspectives and a call to action to better the learning and emotional environment at Perry Traditional Academy.

Damir (top left) helps remind Michael (left), Mason (center), and “” of the concept that the rest of the group developed as a team. - Photograph by Tiffini German
ESTEEM

I FEEL GOOD WHEN...

I get good grades.

Kayla

I complete my goals.

Demir

There's someone to go to.

Jamel
SAFETY/HEALTH

IN ORDER TO FEEL SAFE I NEED...

I NEED MASKS IN ORDER TO FEEL SAFE
-KAYLA (REGARDING COVID REGULATIONS IN SCHOOL)

MANY SCHOOLS HAVE LIFTED THEIR MASK REGULATIONS, DESPITE SOME STUDENTS NOT BEING VACCINATED. THIS MAKES A LOT OF STUDENTS FEEL UNDERSTANDABLY UNCOMFORTABLE.

BETTER FOOD.
-JAMEL

MANY STUDENTS EXPRESSED FEELING SLUGGISH OR NOT OVERALL HEALTHY DUE TO THE LACK OF NUTRITIONAL VALUE IN MOST LUNCHES PROVIDED.

NOT HAVING HEALTHY LUNCH OPTIONS INHIBITS THE BODY ON A MENTAL AS WELL AS PHYSIOLOGICAL LEVEL. MANY STUDENTS WILL NOT EAT THE FOOD WHICH THEN SETS A TONE FOR THE REST OF THEIR DAY.

OUR BRAINS NEED NUTRIENTS IN ORDER TO FOCUS AND REGULATE OTHER STIMULI THROUGHOUT THE DAY.
LAST FALL, TEENBLOC PARTNERED WITH THE COMMUNITY VACCINE COLLABORATIVE BY SURVEYING PEERS TO UNDERSTAND HESITATION AND OPINION ON COVID VACCINATION.

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN HELPFUL FOR MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND TEENS AND PROVIDE APPROACHABLE, TRANSPARENT DATA AND INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS, AS WELL AS THEIR FAMILIES.

PITTSBURGH COMMUNITY VACCINE COLLABORATIVE
A FEW EXAMPLES FROM A SERIES INTERACTIVE COVID VACCINATION SURVEYS ADMINISTERED VIA INSTAGRAM.
WE’RE JUST GETTING STARTED!

SOMETHING IS BREWING AMONG THE STUDENTS AT PERRY. EACH DAY STUDENTS ARE CONTINUING TO OPEN THEIR EYES AND FURTHER REALIZING THEIR VOICES DO MATTER AND SOMETHING CAN BE DONE. STAY TUNED.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TIFFINI GORMAN
Faces of Power is the voices and visuals from others who want to be immediate change in their society.
“It is quite remarkable a there is a 10:1 student-teacher ratio exists at PPS. There needs to be more educators present to teach these kids. If the school system and administrators are not there for them, no one will be.”

“There is a 0% rate of students who passed the AP Exam, a 21% Mathematics proficiency rate, a 33% Reading proficiency rate, and only a 78% graduation rate of students at PPS. Obviously, there has to be more knowledgeable educators hired, and the people responsible for not providing quality need to be fired!”
INCREASE OF CHANGE = DECREASE OF INEQUALITIES
“At Westinghouse, sixty-nine percent of students missed twenty percent or more of the school year, while at Urban Pathways, fourteen percent of students missed twenty percent or more of the school year. This is due to the inequities when it comes to students' access to help and support.”

“Without the ability to understand the root causes, they will not be able to understand how it would hurt their students in the future.”
Argument = who is right ??
Discussion = what is right ??

Have an understanding day.

- Mihir Mehta
"By looking into data of different schools in PPS like CAPA 6-12 versus Perry High School, there are many differences and inequities. Perry High School has more suspension rates than CAPA does, especially with minority students...the way they're being represented is not accurately reasonable or fair."

"I want to empower other students at CAPA, Perry, and other schools to read about this data with schools and convince the PPS system to do something to better promote our schools before any damage is caused while in recovery of the pandemic. Not everything is perfect, but we can at least have as much equity as possible for all students and teachers coming into the PPS community."
Maisie Johnston
Grade 11

Maisie has been an active Member of TeenBloc since 2018. While Maisie has taken time to expand her horizons with various other activities, such as softball. Maisie has been a powerful voice and exemplary leader during the creation of this zine.
TEENBLOC is part of A+ SCHOOLS +US Initiative, dedicated to empowering Pittsburgh youth grades 8-12 to understanding educational and social equity through data-based research and analytics by way of advocacy-based art and storytelling.

Follow our collective journey

@aplusschools

Learn more about TEENBLOC!