

Classism in Your School

Examples of How Classism Is Manifest in Schools

1. How are support staff—such as janitors, cafeteria servers, and secretaries—treated at this school? Are there any tensions between them and other groups, such as students or faculty?

For example:

- At one school, some students and faculty crossed picket lines of striking secretaries.
- At many schools, rowdy students create big messes (e.g., torn-up lawns, vomit on floors, food fights, vandalized furniture) with disregard for the groundskeepers and janitors who have to clean up after them.

2. Are there any issues between students whose tuition is paid by scholarships and those whose tuition is paid by their families or between commuting students and those who live on campus?

For example:

- Scholarship students at some schools feel uncomfortable because they work in the cafeterias serving food to other students, which publicizes their economic need, places them in a subservient role in relation to their fellow students, and delays their own meals. One student reported being humiliated by students in the food line who made fun of the hat and apron she had to wear.
- At another school, all the comfortable places to sit and chat are located inside the dorms, and the many commuting students have no lounge.

3. Are there problems with access to educational experiences? For example:

- At some schools, scholarships don't include any money for books, and textbooks cost so much that low-income students have to do required reading in the library, where only one or two copies are on reserve.
- At other schools, plays and concerts are priced too high for some students to attend them, and sports clubs and bands require expensive equipment purchases.

4. Are there any class biases in who is admitted to the school, hired, promoted, given honors, or admitted to fraternities? For example:

- At one school interviews for fraternities routinely include questions about parents' occupation and type of high school.
- Some schools give preference to children of alumni (legacies), thus making it harder for first-generation college applicants to get in.