

Equity in Education: Erasing Opportunity Gaps

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Warm-Up Quiz

Quiz

The fastest rate of poverty growth in the United States is happening in which kinds of communities?

- urban areas
- suburban areas
- rural areas



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Quiz

According to a national study of US parents (Noel, Stark, Redford, & Zukerberg, 2013), 66% of parents from families not experiencing poverty reported they always checked to ensure their children did their homework. What percentage of parents from families that are experiencing poverty reported they always checked to ensure their children did their homework?

- 42%
- 72%
- 92%

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Quiz

Who said this?: “We have deluded ourselves into believing the myth that capitalism grew and prospered out of the Protestant ethic of hard work and sacrifices. Capitalism was built on the exploitation of black slaves and continues to thrive on the exploitation of the poor, both black and white, both here and abroad.”

- Bernie Sanders
- Eleanor Roosevelt
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Quiz

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Quiz

The three wealthiest people in the world have as much wealth as:

- the 8 poorest countries
- the 48 poorest countries
- the 308 poorest countries



Quiz

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- **the 48 poorest countries**
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Story Time: The Birth of Equity Literacy

- The focus group and the diversity tie: Advantaged view vs. disadvantaged view
- The problem with the problem—harder to change ideology than practice, but no real way to change practice without changing ideology



Our First Task:
Building Our Equity Literacy

>Concepts and Distinctions<

What is Equity?

Inequity is unfair or *privileging and dispossessing* distribution of access and opportunity, including access and opportunity to material and non-material resources

So *Equity* requires a redistribution—not a mitigation, not an add-on program, but a *redistribution of access and opportunity*

How is inequity operating?

How is **racism** operating in your school or district right now? **Ableism**? **Sexism**?
Transphobia? **Heterosexism**?
Islamophobia? **Economic injustice**?

A Hard Reflection

- What is an inequitable policy or practice operating right now in your sphere of influence that might have a negative impact on a specific group of students?
- If you know it's inequitable, why is it still operating?

The Central Questions of Equity Literacy

1. What are the knowledge and skills I need to become a ***threat to the existence of inequity*** in my spheres of influence?
2. Do I have the ***will*** to be that threat?

NOTE: This is a lens, not just a list of practical strategies.

4 Abilities of Equity Literacy

1. Recognize inequity
2. Respond to inequity
3. Redress inequity
4. Sustain equity

Learning to “Recognize”

- Gender and compliments
- Race and informal interaction
- **Humiliations**
 - Book fair
 - Chocolate bar fundraiser
 - Extra credit for sale



Equity Literacy Exercise

- (1) What is an example of a policy and practice you have observed in schools that could unintentionally humiliate or embarrass students or families experiencing poverty?
- (2) What would you do differently to avoid humiliating or embarrassing students of families experiencing poverty?



Important Conceptual Tools

1. Disparity ideologies
2. Interest convergence



The Practical Part of Ideology

A study by the Department of Education found that Black students were disciplined at far higher rates than white students.

It found that Black students were much more likely to be suspended or expelled.

Deficit → Structural (Ideology, Interpretation, Solution)



Disparity Ideologies: Who or what am I trying to fix?

- a. Deficit ideology
- b. Grit ideology
- c. Structural ideology

Disparity Ideologies

Deficit ideology

- look down the power continuum
- ignore structural barriers
- fix marginalized people
- Examples?

Disparity Ideologies

Grit Ideology

- a form of deficit ideology
- recognize structural barriers, but focus on building resiliency so marginalized communities can “overcome” barriers

Disparity Ideologies

Structural Ideology

- removing structural barriers

TRUTH: ***There's no other way to do this.***
If we're stuck at the deficit or grit view, we cannot create equity because we are not responding to inequity.

Cultivating the *structural lens*

Problem: School data show that, on average, students experiencing poverty are not doing as well in school as their wealthier classmates. They are more likely to score below “proficient” levels on state texts and less likely to graduate.

Deficit response	If you are looking through a deficit lens, how would you interpret this problem? What needs to be “fixed”? How would you go about fixing it?
Grit response	If you are looking through a grit lens, how would you interpret this problem? What needs to be “fixed”? How would you go about fixing it?
Structural response	If you are looking through a structural lens, how would you interpret this problem? What needs to be “fixed”? How would you go about fixing it?

Focusing on Barriers

What are the barriers that might make doing the following more difficult for students experiencing poverty than for other students?

- Completing homework
- Participating in extra-curricular activities
- Maintaining a perfect attendance record

Interest Convergence Theory

The theory: White people (or white-run systems) invest in racial justice to the extent it benefits them (the people or the system) to do so.

The implication: When we move beyond “equity lite” and toward the redistribution of opportunity, ***most white and white-led organizations people disinvest.***

Common Equity Detours



Pacing for Privilege Detour

Pacing equity work in a way that prioritizes the comfort of privileged people over progress toward equity for marginalized people

Deficit Ideology Detour

Focusing on adjusting the cultures, mindsets, or grittiness of students, staff, or faculty from marginalized groups rather than the conditions that marginalize them

Celebrating Diversity Detour

Mistaking celebrations of diversity for
progress toward equity

Programmatic Detours

- Recruitment and retention
- Intergroup dialogue
- Service learning



NOTE: The trouble is not the presence of these sorts of things. The trouble is their presence in the absence of racial justice.

Basic Equity Principles



Direct Confrontation Principle

The only path toward equity progress requires ***direct confrontations with inequity***. We have to be able to recognize it, name it, understand it, and eliminate it.

Redistribution Principle

Equity initiatives should ***redistribute access and opportunity***. If your equity initiatives are not doing this, they should be reconsidered.

Prioritization Principle

Equity requires a reimagining of policy and practice in ways that **actively prioritize** the interests of students who are marginalized.

Ideology Principle

Equity can be achieved only through ***ideological shifts*** that inform all policy and practice decisions. Implementing strategies without these shifts has never worked, so why do we keep doing it? (See: interest convergence.)

#FixInjusticeNotKids Principle

No amount of our equity efforts should be spent on initiatives designed to fix students or families. All of our equity efforts should be spent on initiatives ***that transform the conditions*** that marginalize students and families.

Final Reflections

MLK:

“I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; ***who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice***; who constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action’;

...



MLK:

... who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; ...who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season.' ***Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.*** Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.”



Thank you.

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