

Establishing an Equity Team



Note: *The following information is intended to guide you through the process of creating an Equity Team within your organization. It is influenced by the work of Glenn Singleton.*

Purpose: (Come up with a purpose statement)

Through increased cultural competence of all staff, significant improvement in policies, procedures, decision-making processes, allocation and use of resources, family engagement, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant instructional materials, and other important areas that impact academic achievement and the mission of your organization, will be made—particularly for those students, staff, and families that have historically been underserved.

Goal: (Connect to your organization’s mission statement or strategic plan)

The goal of the Equity Team is to promote institutional change within the school and district in order to better serve students, families, and staff.

Strategy:

Establishing an Equity Team provides direction and leadership in culturally relevant professional development (CRPD), policies, and practices. The Equity Team becomes the lens of the school, district, program or organization and aims to institutionalize change.

Equity Defined:

"... [Equity] deals with difference and takes into consideration the fact that this society has many groups in it who have not always been given equal treatment and/or have not had a level field on which to play. These groups have been frequently made to feel inferior to those in the mainstream and some have been oppressed. To achieve equity, according to Young (1990), ‘Social policy should sometimes accord special treatment to groups’ (p. 158). Thus, the concept of equity provides a case for unequal treatment for those who have been disadvantaged over time. It can provide compensatory kinds of treatment, offering it in the form of special programs and benefits for those who have been discriminated against and are in need of opportunity."

Krause, J. K, Traini, D. J., & Mickey, B. H. (2001). Equality versus equity. In J. P. Shapiro & J. A. Stefkovick (Eds), *Ethical leadership and decision making in education* (76-90). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

*If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.*
Lilla Watson

Logistics

1. Equity Team members will make a 2-year commitment to serve in this leadership position.
2. Monthly meetings and additional responsibilities will require 2-5 hours per month.

Equity Team's Role is to...

1. Provide leadership for creating a culturally responsive learning and/or working environment.
2. Assess the needs of their program/school/organization as it relates to both past, present and future race and equity work.
3. Lead staff in researching and developing/improving plans for ongoing CRPD.
4. Help to create a supportive learning environment whereby staff can have ongoing courageous conversations.
5. Lead staff in organizing efforts to infuse institutional change within their organization e.g., Learning Walks, questions posed in staff meetings, readings, classroom observations, discussing work through the lens of race, ethnicity, and culture, and reviewing policy and practice, etc.
6. Utilize the strengths and resources of your organization's staff to address this work. Think about people not on your Equity Team who can help with certain projects or areas based on their strengths.
7. Model engaging effectively across cultures e.g., on-going discussions, risk taking, self awareness, etc.
8. Keep issues of equity and social justice in the center of their organizations work.

Head Administrator's Role is to...

1. Participate on Equity Teams or designate another administrator in their place.
2. Identify a process for getting members on the Equity Team.
3. Assist Equity Team in creating the climate for doing this work.
4. Participate in CRPD with their staff.
5. Sanction the Equity Team's work.
6. Promote courageous conversations amongst staff.
7. Announce to staff why they are focusing on this work and why it is important to him/her.
8. Make time during staff meetings for Equity Team to update staff on progress of their work.
9. Identify times throughout the year for CRPD and a budget to support it.
10. Hold staff accountable for attending CRPD. (In the event that a staff member is unable to attend a CRPD provided by their school or program, have him/her participate in CRPD offered through conferences and workshops open to the community.

Establishing an Equity Team

- A. Following are questions you will want to consider answering before putting together your Equity Team:
1. Are there 1-2 people that can help you with the process of developing an Equity Team? These people will not necessarily serve on the Team. However, they can help you think things through and participate in the selection process.
 2. What is the purpose or goal of the Equity Team?
 3. What will be the focus of the Equity Team e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, etc.?
 4. Determine who will lead the efforts and connect with that person. The Equity Team should include someone in a leadership position who is able to make decisions in your school/department (e.g., principal, assistant principal, executive director, or administrator).
 5. How many people will be on your Equity Team? A minimum of two staff members and a maximum of 8-10 depending on the size of your school/department.
 6. What diverse representation should be on your Equity Team (e.g., classified, certified, office staff, maintenance, management, students, community members, racial diversity, gender, etc.)?
 7. How long will members serve on the Equity Team?
 8. What will you call your Equity Team?
 9. When will you meet, how often and for how long?
 10. When would the Equity Team first come together?
 11. Are you able to pay staff for the additional work?
 12. What funds do you have to support the ideas that the Equity Team comes up with e.g., CRPD?
 13. Will you have an application process for selecting Equity Team members and if so, how will you ensure equity in the process and when are they due?
 14. How will you select who gets chosen to be on the Equity Team? Think about an application process to include questions like...
 - a) The purpose and goals of the Equity Team.
 - b) What is your role within this organization?
 - c) How long have you worked for this organization?
 - d) Why would you like to be on the Equity Team?
 - e) What experience do you have personally or professionally that helps you to understand issues related to diversity?
 - f) What do you feel you bring that would support the efforts of the Equity Team?
 - g) Example: The Equity Team will be meeting on the third Thursday of each month from 3:00-5:00p.m. Will this be a problem for you? If yes, please explain.

- h) If there are people who you know would be great serving on the Equity Team, consider encouraging them to apply. Be sure and tell them what skills they bring that you believe would make them a good fit. Also be sure to inform them that you cannot guarantee they will be selected.
- B. Announce the formation of the Equity Team including the purpose and logistics details in an email, staff meeting, or through other channels to ensure diverse engagement. Note that members do not have to already possess an understanding of this work. They only need be committed to the process and believe in its value.
- C. Put together Equity Team notebooks for the first meeting for each participant to include the following tabs:
 1. Articles you want them to read.
 2. Agenda
 3. Minutes
 4. Blank paper for notes

Already have an Equity Team

1. What successes have you had?
2. What challenges have you faced?
3. Where are the opportunities for growth?
4. What work have you specifically done as a staff to address cultural competence?
 - Which area does your staff currently have the greatest need: Awareness, Knowledge, Skills or Action/Advocacy?
 - Having identified where your staff is at in their cultural competence, where do you see staff in the cycle of organizational change.
5. What support do you need to be successful?

Getting Your Equity Team Started

Consider discussing the following in the first meeting with your Equity Team :

1. Have members introduce themselves and why they wanted to be on the Equity Team.
2. Review with the Equity Team the purpose of the Team.
3. Review the Equity Teams Roles & Responsibilities.
4. Establish norms for your discussions with an eye toward equitable participation and addressing challenging issues as they surface.
5. When, where, how often and how long will your Equity Team will meet? (Recommend at least once a month the same date and time each month for a minimum of two hours).
6. Who will chair the Equity Team?
7. Who will take notes?
8. Who will ensure that if the Head Administrator is not on your Equity Team they are updated on a regular basis as to the work and direction you are going in?
9. Who will report progress to the staff and when?

10. Discuss the importance of attending all meetings? Too many absences of members can hinder the process.
11. How will members of your Equity Team receive the professional development they need to lead this work (e.g., books, trainings, conferences, etc.). Brainstorm ideas of what you might read or watch together and conferences or trainings you might attend.
12. What support does your Equity Team need to be successful?
13. How will staff know that an Equity Team exists, what they are working on and how they can offer input without being on the Equity Team?
14. Area of focus:
 - Narrow your focus in the beginning. Race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc., are all important areas in this work. But, like a thesis, if you make it too big it will become overwhelming. Find a focus and use that as a model to work on and engage your staff.
 - You can expand into other areas of focus later, once you feel like you know more about what you are trying to do and have had some measurable successes.
15. Some areas to look at addressing first might include one or two of the following: professional development for Equity Team members and staff, your mission statement, policies or procedures, achievement gap/client data, hiring practices, or the environment.
16. Identify 2-3 things to work on in the first year and begin developing a strategic plan.

A Few Suggested Introductory Readings & Resources

Having a library of resources helps support on-going equity work. You may want to purchase several copies of a book for a discussion group and have a system for people to check out the videos to watch in small or large groups.

Books

- Alexander, M., (2010). The New Jim Crow. The New Press.
- Banaji, M., Greenwald (2013). Blind spot: Hidden biases of good people. Delacorte Press. New York.
- Chou, R.S., Feagin, J.R. (2010). The myth of the model minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism. Paradigm.
- Hollins, C.D., Govan, I.M. (2011). Train the trainer: Helpful tips for leading and facilitating conversations on race. Starseed Publication. www.culturesconnecting.com
- Kivel, P. (2002). Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice. New Society Publishers.
- Lipsitz, G. (2006). The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics. Temple University Press.
- Raybon, P. (1996). My first white friend: Confessions on race, love, and forgiveness, Penguin Books.
- Singleton, G.E., Linton, C. (2006). Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools. Temple University Press.
- Steele, C (2010). Whistling Vivaldi and other clues to how stereotypes affect us. W.W. Norton & Co, Inc.
- Takaki, R. (2008). A different mirror: A history of multicultural America. Boston:

Trepagnier, B., (2006). Silent racism: How well-meaning White people perpetuate the racial divide. Paradigm.

Van Ausdale, D. and Feagin, J. (2001) The first R: How children learn race and racism. New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

Articles

McIntosh, P. (1998) White Privilege & Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women Studies or Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, same author shorter version of the article.

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M., Torino, G.C., Bucceri, J., Holder, A.M.B., Nadal, K.L., Esquilin, M., Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. American Psychologist. 2007

Websites

↪ **Asian Nation:** Asian American History, Demographics, & Issues. <http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>

↪ **National Education Association:** www.nea.org

↪ **Project Implicit** a researched base test you can take on line that measures your unconscious attitudes and bias. www.implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html

↪ **The Racial Equity Toolkit** developed by the City of Seattle lays out a process for evaluating and implementing the racial impact of policies and practices. http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/docs/RacialEquityToolkit_FINAL_August2012.pdf

↪ **Racial Equity Tools** offers tips and resources for organizational change work. <http://racialequitytools.org/home>

↪ **Reducing Stereotype Threat.** www.reducingstereotypethreat.org

↪ **Rethinking Schools** provides articles and resources for teachers looking to infuse social justice in their practice. <http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml>

↪ **Teaching Tolerance** has free resources including DVDs, CDs and publications for educators, parents, and kids. <http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp>

Videos

↪ **My Brown Eyes:** A young boy rises early and prepares for his first day of school in America, unprepared for the challenge that awaits him at school (19 min). www.master-comm.com

↪ **The Color of Fear:** This is about the pain and anguish that racism has caused in the lives of eight North American men of Asian, European, Latino, and African descent. Out of their confrontations and struggles to understand and trust each other emerges a dialogue that most of us fear, but hope will happen sometime in our lifetime (90 min) Stir Fry Productions. <http://www.stirfryseminars.com/>

↪ **Unnatural Causes:** Consists of 7 short videos addressing questions like: How can class and racism disrupt our physiology? Through what channels might inequities in housing, wealthy, jobs, and education, along with a lack of power and control over one's life, translate into bad health? What is it about our poor neighborhoods, especially neglected neighborhoods of color, that is so deadly? How are the behavioral choices we make (such as diet and exercise)

constrained by the choices we have? (4 hours) California Newsreel
<http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/>

- ↳ **Race The Power of an Illusion:** This definitive three-part series is an eye-opening tale of how what we assume to be normal, commonsense, even scientific, is actually shaped by our history, social institutions and cultural beliefs. <http://newsreel.org/>