

CAAASA presents:

Lifting Our Voices:



Presenter:

Dr. Tonikaa Orange

Director for the Culture and Equity Project (CEP), Assistant Director for the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) at UCLA Center X

Field Guide #11:

The Principal as the Equity Leader



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School Re-orientation for Post-COVID Learning:
**What to Know, Do, and Expect
as In-Person Instruction Resumes**

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Field Guide #11 - The Principal as the Equity Leader

Field Guide Overview

Description and purpose:

The role of the school principal has always been challenging. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, the shelter-in-place orders, teacher and staff shortages, students with social-emotional challenges, mandatory vaccinations for adults and children along with vaccination resistance, technology playing an increasingly larger role in at-home and in-class instruction, and simultaneous pressures to both include and exclude social justice (following the unjustifiable police killings of unarmed African Americans) as a requirement in the principal's job collectively make the "juggling act" of a contemporary California principal extraordinarily difficult.



Introduction to Field Guide #11

Dr. Frank Wells
Superintendent
Albany Unified School District

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Over the past seven decades, school leadership has morphed from teacher supervisor to school manager to disciplinarian to site-level fiscal manager to test scores/data monitor to principal as the instructional leader. In our world of post-pandemic education, the most vital role for the post-pandemic principal is that of an equity-focused leader. There is no question that we need to craft a new leadership plan to fix a very old educational problem. Where should a principal focus the majority of his/her time? As you will see in this Field Guide, our promise of equity for every child has yet to be delivered.

Education is a civil right, and all students deserve a high-quality learning experience daily that meets their educational needs. To that end, administrators and teachers must work in an ongoing concerted effort to unlock the full potential of every child regardless of race, gender, family origin or family income. Academically vulnerable students from under-served populations in particular, need principals who are committed advocates of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

Leadership today matters in ways that were less relevant a half-century ago. Equity-focused leadership in today's schools is of particular importance given the significant percentages of African American students and other students of color in California classrooms. In 1960, over 85% of all public school students were white. In 2022, students of color constitute the new majority of public school students. Additionally, the number of students living in poverty has tripled. (The term "minority" should be avoided since African American students often make up the racial majority in their school communities).

The economic vitality of our state depends on successfully educating all students in California's public schools, regardless of their ethnicity, or their past or current conditions. Educational equity is today's uncompromising challenge to every school leader.

Field Guide Overview

Description and purpose:

The questions that will be addressed in this Field Guide include the following:

- What have we learned about the role that an Equity Leader can play to reduce the historical inequalities?
- Since the pandemic, what were some of the lessons we learned about the ways in which today's students continue to be impacted by past injustices?
- How can we apply those lessons learned in ways that will improve the prospects of academic success for African American students and other students of color in the future?
- How do we remove contemporary obstacles to educational equity to assure that every child has an opportunity to maximize his/her potential?
- What mindset does one need to cultivate to become an equity leader whose school meets the needs of all African American students and other students of color?

Learning objectives:

Similar to the notion of practicing medicine, there are educational practices that an equity-focused educational leader engages in and exemplifies. Some of which are values learned over the years from parents, family, and community members. Others are intentionally learned by effective school leaders.

The professional learning objectives embedded in this Field Guide are designed to help administrators and educators do the following:

- Be knowledgeable about the conditions that foster diversity, equality, belongingness, inclusion, equity, safety, and disruption (D²EBIES) operationally in an educational setting and the corresponding role of an equity leader.
- Deepen the participants' understanding of the role of principal as the equity leader, who promotes access, equity, and achievement for all students on his/her campus.
- Understand how systemic racism and bias have impacted our ability to deliver equitable instruction.
- Be able to frame (or actively participate in) a school wide conversation on how to embrace, develop, articulate, and model equity on your school campus.
- Understand the historical obstacles to educational equity and how they can be shared with colleagues confidently.
- Complete the Equity Self-Assessment for Principals: Leading with Equity (addressing and disrupting past inequities) and identify areas for personal growth. (This self-assessment can be found later in this document).
- Gain an appreciation of how systemic bias can impede our ability to deliver equity-based instruction.

Components:

The Principal as the Equity Leader Field Guide has been developed around the following essential components:

- A. The verbatim “Voices” -- excerpts from interviews with students, parents, and administrators. The focus will be on their personal experiences inside their local educational systems, and how those institutions address the needs of BIPOC students.
- B. Lessons learned – analyzing what has worked well in promoting equality in education for African American students, what did not work well, and how we can apply those lessons learned for a more promising future for our students in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- C. Each of the above professional learning experiences will be accompanied by:
 - Questions and written responses to be completed independently or in small groups (with opportunities to share responses with colleagues).
 - “Reflections and Applications” that are designed to provoke reflections on the Field Guide contents, and thoughts on how to devise multiple strategies for applying the content to their school, school district, educational program, and/or daily work.
- D. Videotaped excerpts from an “Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis” webinar conducted by a distinguished California educational leader.
- E. Recommendations of additional print and video resources that can be useful tools to help African American students and students from other communities of color in their pursuit of educational equality.
- F. A survey tool to evaluate Field Guide #11.

The Why



If your school/school district is planning to have a conversation about equity for all children, it is important to (a) define the terms to be used during that discourse, (b) discuss what brought us to the current state of racial affairs, which means we must truthfully address American history, and (c) be candid with ourselves and our colleagues about the distress derived from the lived experiences on both sides of our shared uncomfortable racial history. Not every white individual in your school district can be held accountable for American racism. Nor is every black individual responsible for ending the practices that have permitted institutional or systemic racism to survive for four centuries.

During the Civil Rights struggle of the 1950s and 1960s, there were African Americans who did not support Dr. Martin Luther King and others fighting for justice. At the same time, there were white Americans who also gave their lives in fighting for justice. We cannot look at an individual's skin color as an indicator that they are working for or against justice. As Rev. Jesse Jackson said, "We all came to America on different ships, but we are all in the same boat now." Where that ship is headed depends on all of us collectively working together for equity and justice. Fairness promotes equity, and social justice is a natural byproduct of equity.

How did we get into a state where topics as simple as equity and justice have become so difficult to deliver or even to discuss?

Dissecting identity and racism

The pursuit of equity requires that we identify factors standing in the way of achieving that goal. An understanding of the following six definitions is required:

1. **Race:** a socially-constructed concept used to support an ethnological human stratification hierarchy that was used to reinforce the rationale for the enslavement of persons of African descent. While the concept divides people into three major groups, human variation does not allow billions of people to fall solely into one of these little categories.
2. **Racism** is best described as overt expressions of racial bias, prejudice, discrimination, and antagonism directed towards a person or group based exclusively on their membership in a particular "racial" or ethnic category, typically a group that has been minoritized and/or marginalized. The power to exert that prejudice and animosity rests in the hands of the majority or those in power. Charles Darwin's concept of the "survival of the fittest," was marshaled to legitimize racism as a cog in the natural world.

To be a racist, one must harbor deep-seated animus and must also possess the (political, economic, or social) power.

While a person of color may exhibit "reactionary bias" as a defense mechanism, he/she lacks the requisite power to convert that prejudice into a racist structure that permits the domination of others. Reverse racism is a popular phrase used freely by political conservatives, although the phrase itself is, at best, an oxymoron. People of color are not racist, although they may behave in a manner that reflects a reaction to their lived experiences as victims of structural and institutional racism.

How did today's state of race relations come about? A dangerous mix of individual, interpersonal, institutional, systemic, and structural racism dominated both everyday life and education for African Americans (See Chart #1 - Racism Terms and Examples). The terms are defined and described in the chart below adapted from the *National Museum of African American History and Culture*.

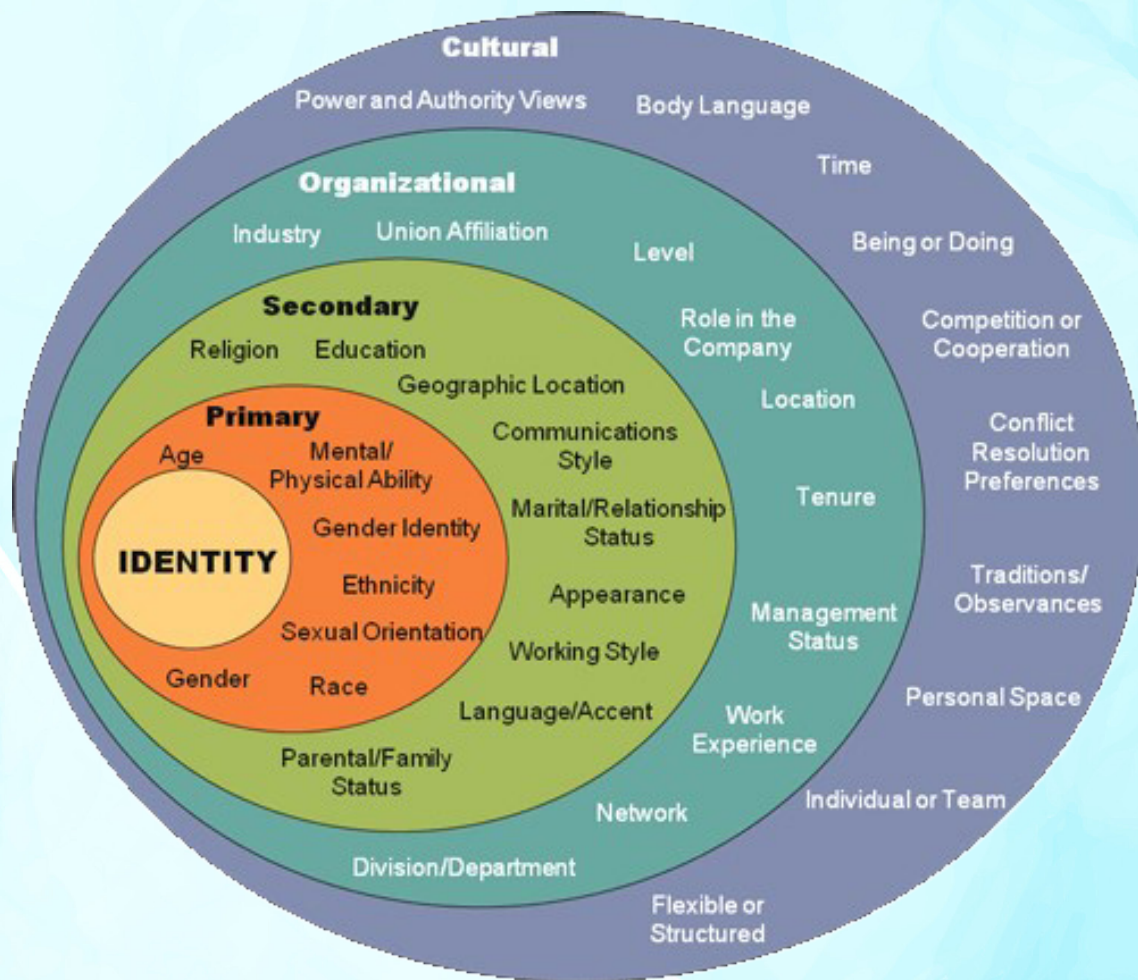
Form of racism	Definitions	Examples
Structural	Cultural values, behaviors, and practices in a society that become so ingrained in daily life that they are seen as “the way things are and have always been.”	African Americans consistently receive longer prison sentences than whites for committing the same offense.
Systemic	Long-term discrimination within a society or system based on racist practices, behavior, and beliefs	A school lacks any people of color among its faculty members despite years of training on diversity in the workplace.
Institutional	Policies or behaviors within an organization intended to discriminate against people based on race, religion, gender, etc.	A personnel manager does not hire job applicants based on “names that would be a bad fit for our school district.”
Interpersonal	Treating others with discriminatory behavior that ranges from micro agree to physical violence.	A staff member regularly shows microaggression and uses racial slurs in referring to people of color on campus.
Individual	Personal beliefs and attitudes towards other races that affect the way a person treats people of color	A person believes that whites are superior to all other races, and makes jokes about people of color

Throughout the world, racism and extremism tends to spike during periods of economic and social stress. However, racism remained a constant variable in American life once it became legalized and institutionalized, intersecting with nearly all aspects in which African Americans conducted life.

3. Institutional racism: the ways in which the joint operation of institutions (legal, economic, social, educational, etc.) unite to produce the desired racialized (apartheid) outcomes.
4. The trauma of racism: the cumulative adverse emotional, psychological, physiological, economic, and social effects of racism on the lives of people of color who have experienced racism and/or internalized their victimhood.
5. Culture: the shared experiences of acts, beliefs, values, language, attitudes, words, institutions, rules, rituals, images, spiritual practices, knowledge, and relationships that are regularly shaped and articulated within defined social systems or geographical regions.
6. Diversity: is reflected in individuals who possess immutable (unchanging over time or unable to be changed) and/or mutable (capable of change) characteristics that make up human diversity. The concept of diversity encompasses respect and acceptance (not merely tolerance) of physical, perceptual, and cultural differences.

(Excerpted and modified based on the work of Dr. Robert Solomon and Dr. Bryan Adamson at the Case Western Reserve University).

The immutable and mutable characteristics include primary, secondary, organizational, and cultural ways in which we define ourselves as seen in the illustration below that captures the various facets of our personal identity.



Primary characteristics of one's identity have often defined and/or limited one's opportunities (social status, occupation/employment opportunities, who one could marry, where one could live, etc. = one's future) as well as his/her position in the social hierarchy. The secondary (considerably more mutable) characteristics can impact one's identity, which can affect one's organizational (the industry you are accepted into, the unions you may join, the positions you may ascend to within an organization, etc.) identity. Each of us belongs to multiple "cultures" including those defined by our nationality, religion, social status, political affiliation, lifestyle, region, and occupation.

Most importantly, we are multidimensional beings, whose identity does not rest entirely on any single characteristic. We identify with many of our dominant physical characteristics because those are the initial aspects of our existence that others readily see and to which they initially respond. However, there are occasions when the significance of other characteristics is elevated (while attending a union meeting, union membership takes on greater importance than age, for example). The cumulative characteristics make each of us complex individuals, who cannot be defined by a single characteristic. Race, for instance, does not reveal any other aspects (primary, secondary, organizational, cultural, or behavioral traits) of one's identity, yet it operates in America as the single trait more meaningful than all others, and the one characteristic that can determine many of the other aspects of one's life.

If we are to pursue an honest account of how we got to where we currently are in America, the six definitions above will aid this crucial but necessary conversation.

Scientific racism

Of the myriad obstacles that factor into the educational challenges that African American students confront daily is the erroneous belief that scientific evidence of black intellectual inferiority exists. However, there is no credible scientific proof that links pigmentation with intelligence other than specious arguments and theories proposed by white scientists, many of whom had no trained background in human biology, anatomy, or anthropology.

Scientific racism has been another brand of racism that shaped our society and continues to influence how black children are treated in our schools. Before the issue of racism is placed into an educational context, a historical context is needed to provide us with the necessary background knowledge for understanding how we arrived at our current state.

There are both historical barriers (those whose roots are grounded in centuries of negative racial experiences) and contemporary obstacles that continue to impact students of color in their classrooms. There are some historical facts that are worth revisiting in order to understand the intersection of history and education.

The history of shoddy science propped up to support insidious and destructive racist theories is older than our nation itself. Our knowledge about race was not shaped by credible science or even logic, but by the power of those who controlled what was written about the evolution of our species.

From 1619 through the first half of the 20th century, pseudoscience became the go-to source to rationalize enslavement and the oppression of African Americans. In the 1880s, Sir Francis Galton popularized the term "eugenics," which means "well-born." This theory was grounded in the notion that an individual's social status was the consequence of "good genes" rather than institutional favoritism ("white privilege") and/or structural racism.

Similar theories, crafted by white authors (not necessarily with any scientific background) described racial hierarchies that placed physical, social, and supposed "mental/intellectual" characteristics of European whites at the apex, and of course, Blacks at the very bottom. Social, legal, economic, and political restrictions that largely determined social outcomes were deliberately ignored as determinants of the products. Galton's theories were largely dismissed throughout the world but embraced by racists in the US and Germany who used these ideas to justify policies of segregation, sterilization (in 33 states), and the genocide of "undesirables" in the American and German populations (African Americans and Jews, respectively). It was not uncommon for African American women to unknowingly be sterilized during their stay at Southern hospitals although they had been admitted for other medical procedures.

Regrettably, scientific racism became an essential element in anthropology, science, and social science in universities throughout the United States. Racist pseudo-scientific theories provided cover to many of the prevailing intolerant behaviors and practices during the 19th and 20th centuries and fortified the grasp of white supremacy on the nation. The lack of social progress, according to these

theories, was a result of innately objectionable traits due to unfortunate genetics, and not due to the social circumstances a group might be subjected to, or the lack of resources needed to flourish, but denied.

Biological racism/determinism emerged in the 17th century and was used to explain “the races” via pseudoscience. The theater popularized most by Carl Linnaeus, an 18th-century Swedish physician, botanist and zoologist, who created numerous animal and plant taxonomies. During the era of racial enslavement, Linnaeus’ contributions were priceless as a means to justify racial oppression around the globe. He identified the following five human groups:

- a. The Americanus (Native Americans)
- b. The Europaeus (Europeans)
- c. The Asiaticus (Asians)
- d. The Africanus (Africans)
- e. The Monstrosus (Feral man)

In addition to identifying people by racial group, Linnaeus also assigned each group (1) skin color, medical temperament, and body posture, (2) physical characteristics relating to their hair, eyes, and facial traits, (3) behavior, (4) type of clothing worn by their group, and (5) the form of government their group preferred (See Linnaeus’ “Species” chart below).

Species	1	2	3	4	5
Americanus	Red, choleric (bad-tempered), straight	Straight, black and thick hair; gaping nostrils; freckled face; beardless chin	Unyielding, cheerful, free	Paints himself in a maze of red lines	Governed by traditional practices
Europaeus	White, sanguine (cheerful), muscular	Plenty of yellow hair; blue eyes	Light, wise, inventor	Protected by tight clothing	Governed by religion
Asiaticus	Sallow, melancholic (sad), stiff	Blackish hair, dark eyes	Stern, haughty, greedy	Protected by loose garments	Governed by opinions
Africanus	Black, phlegmatic (unemotional), lazy	Dark hair, with many twisting braids; silky skin; flat nose; swollen lips; Further descriptions of sexual characteristics	Sly, sluggish, neglectful	Anoints himself with fat	Governed by choice

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Linnaeus’ theory of biological determinism (and other similar notions) was not only the naïveté of the Eurocentric world but also (1) the acceptability of racist ideas with little or no credible scientific foundation, (2) the absence of any reasonable contrasting theory that was popularly circulating in Europe as a counterpoint, (3) claims of equality of the races were quickly dismissed as Europeans seem content to trust in specious notions of white supremacy, and (4) whites could easily draw conclusions about large groups as well as individual members of a racial category and their worth, intelligence, morality, etc., without ever

actually encountering a single person belonging to that particular group (a.k.a., “lazy thinking”).

A prominent feature of eugenics was Black intellectual inferiority, which was deployed to defend racial segregation both in social interactions and in public schools. The prevailing philosophy of the eugenics movement (incidentally, supported by the US federal government under the Woodrow

Wilson administration) was, “You can improve your education, and even change your environment; but what you really are, was all settled when your parents were born.” This fatalistic view of racial determinism guided social and educational policies for over 150 years.

Scientific racism suggests that the educational gap that we are trying to close is biological which makes the deficit model of education so devastating for African American students and other students of color. Perpetuating the dangerous narrative that achievement differences come by way of biological deficiencies dooms students of color to be impacted by lower expectations from their teachers. However, the social construct of race has no known deterministic foundation in biology but contributes to bias and unequal educational outcomes.

Unfortunately, it can be said with very little uncertainty that central to the persistent educational inequities have been grounded in American attitudes and absurd beliefs about race.

The What

Despite decades of programs (e.g., Affirmative Action) aimed at increasing diversity, underrepresentation and exclusion remain issues at all levels of academia (National Institute of Health, 2019). Our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) framework today warrants expansion to include belongingness, equality, safety, and disruption. When reordered, diversity, disruption, equality, belongingness, inclusion, equity, and safety form the acronym “D²EBIES,” which, collectively encapsulates what every student of color deserves from his/her school. D²EBIES is an operational alternative to “colorblindness.”



The D²EBIES during the school day

Feeling isolated for many children is not restricted to being alone. Instead, throughout the in-person school day, countless numbers of children are excluded by others during playtime, conversations, group discussions, and even during cooperative learning lessons in the classroom. Research has shown that children who are struggling emotionally find learning more challenging or downright impossible.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the shelter-in-place (“stay-at-home”) orders resulted in many students spiraling downward emotionally. They descended into constant states of depression due to isolation, whether school was in session or not. Educators began to take careful notice of the social-emotional factors impacting student learning. How a student feels affects whether he or she will learn and how much he/she can remember and/or apply.

Take 30-45 seconds to examine the picture below and answer the accompanying questions.



- What is your visceral feeling from looking at the picture above?
- How and what do you think the rejected boy in the yellow shirt is feeling?
- Have you ever felt excluded in this manner? What was the occasion? What feelings did that circumstance generate in you? By simply recalling the incident, how do you feel right now?
- In a classroom or school, when a child feels excluded, what impact might that have on his interest in the school curriculum and/or his motivation to learn?
- As an adult, have you ever had a comparable feeling of exclusion, rejection, or being

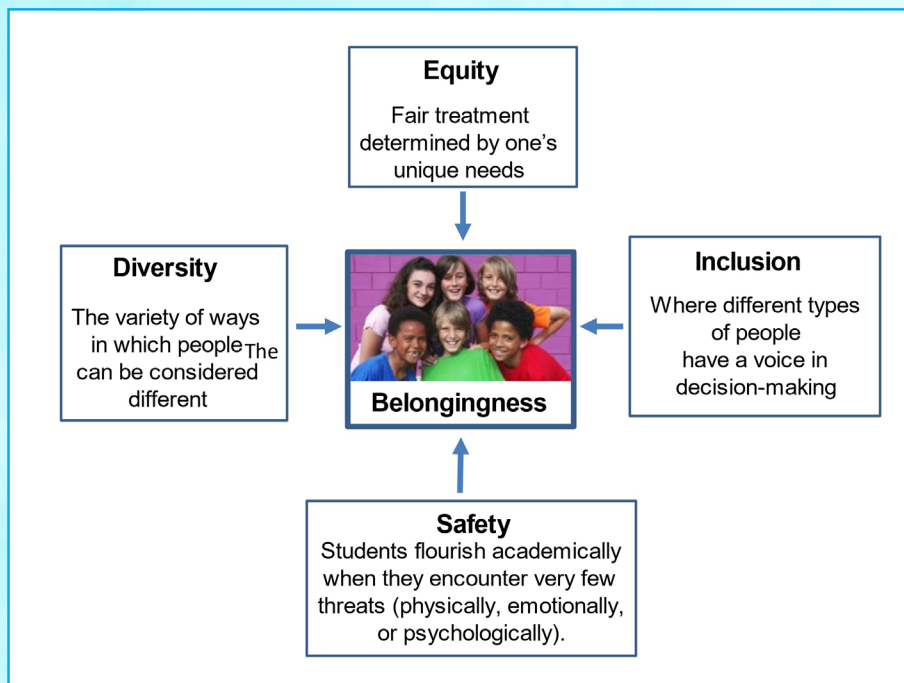
devalued during decision-making at your school? Write down how you felt. What could others have done to help you feel included?

Dispensing educational opportunities based on race can lead to vast differences in performance outcomes. It can also foster lifelong bitterness towards those responsible for creating and/or maintaining a skewed educational system, along with resentment toward those individuals who have been allowed to flourish from unearned privileges. How children are treated by a school and its agents (educators) can affect children's self-esteem for lifetime. Regularly being on the receiving end of noticeably unfair treatment with little or no recourse can damage a child emotionally and socially in ways that can have devastating (even homicidal) consequences.

Because the human brain is a "pattern-seeking device," a child who notices that threats consistently come from individuals who share a single dominant characteristic, that child will respond defensively to other individuals sharing that same trait (e.g., white, females, gray-haired, etc.), and the maltreatment eventually begins to be anticipated. Once internalized, a negative self-concept can continue for a lifetime.

We frequently hear policymakers begin a remark about education with, "All things being equal..." However, the history of the African American experience bears witness that the most crucial factors impacting black education since the late 19th century Reconstruction have never been equal. As educators develop equity goals for the future, we must begin by defining precisely what those goals are. Today, we hope to establish schools that are defined by their commitment to equity, inclusion, equality, and justice. Each of these terms warrants a clear operational definition. All children deserve equally positive treatment in the class

Diversity, equality, belongingness, inclusion, equity, safety, and disruption - "D²EBIES" in our schools



When each of the components of D²EBIES is present in a school district or school building the ideal emotional climate has been achieved. Below is a deeper dive into each of these elements.

Diversity

A pretentiously egalitarian husband who declares, “I treat everyone in my family exactly the same,” suggests that he treats his wife in a manner identical to how he treats his child (which can be folly or fatal!) Diversity in education acknowledges that, in every classroom/school there are variations in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, socio-economic status, geographical origin, and/or academic preparation.

Each child brings different assets and strengths into the classroom. All students arrive daily with their own internal and external challenges. Of the 7.75 billion people on our planet, they demonstrate differences in intelligence, opinions, social skills, religious preference, political orientation, sexual orientation, life experiences, etc., that may contribute to learning or detract therefrom.

Diversity often concentrates on our differences (the demographic makeup) rather than our abundant similarities or the various points where our characteristics overlap and intersect. Research has demonstrated that schools which are more diverse (when controlled for SES), offer experiences that:

- (1) increase self-awareness
- (2) prompt one to examine his/her own perspective
- (3) provide opportunities for perspective-taking
- (4) enhance social development
- (5) promote deeper classroom discussions among students
- (6) see no negative impact on student achievement
- (7) prepare students for engagement in the globally connected world of the future.
- (8) increase their appreciation for different points of view
- (9) students find it easier to express their individuality
- (10) minoritized students feel less marginalized.

Diversity also enhances a student’s physical health and social-emotional development. In a study involving over 4,300 Southern California students, those who felt safer, less lonely, and reported less bullying in their classes also experienced higher diversity levels in their schools. Equitable communities are also linked to better health and its members enjoy longer than average lifespans. It is not surprising that lists of the “Best Places to Live” are often composed of communities that are (1) in cohesive integrated neighborhoods, (2) enjoy long-term economic growth, (3) in regions that offer stable employment, (4) have highly rated schools, and (5) enjoy high-end diversity.



Equality

Every US citizen is promised “equal protection under the law,” through the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees the traditional American freedoms to formerly enslaved African Americans. In education, equality means providing every child with the same resources as the next child in a “one-size-fits-all” factory model of education. When equality is the goal, what every child receives is most notable for its sameness regardless of a child’s need, skills level, competency level, or background.

While equality meets the goal of fairness, it does not achieve the goal of maximizing the potential of each child, because individual needs vary widely. Some students may need more access to the developmental resources necessary to succeed in early reading. Other students may lack the requisite background knowledge to keep up with his classmates in grasping a new mathematics skill.

Over 60% of the most disadvantaged students come from under-resourced homes or communities and they are the children most often at an educational disadvantage. Economically-disadvantaged students may find it difficult to keep up with their more privileged peers in a technology-centered classroom for various reasons.

Equality focuses on (1) resource allocations to groups, (2) purports to distribute resources to all learners equally. Providing take-home computers to all students may fulfill the goal of equality, but

students from impoverished households may not have Wi-Fi at home or Internet access in their building. During the pandemic, educational equity became a challenge for most school districts. When schools were shuttered during the pandemic, racial disparities grew wider since many low-income families do not have Wi-Fi or the technology at home necessary for remote learning. (Some students relied on Wi-Fi at local fast-food restaurants.)

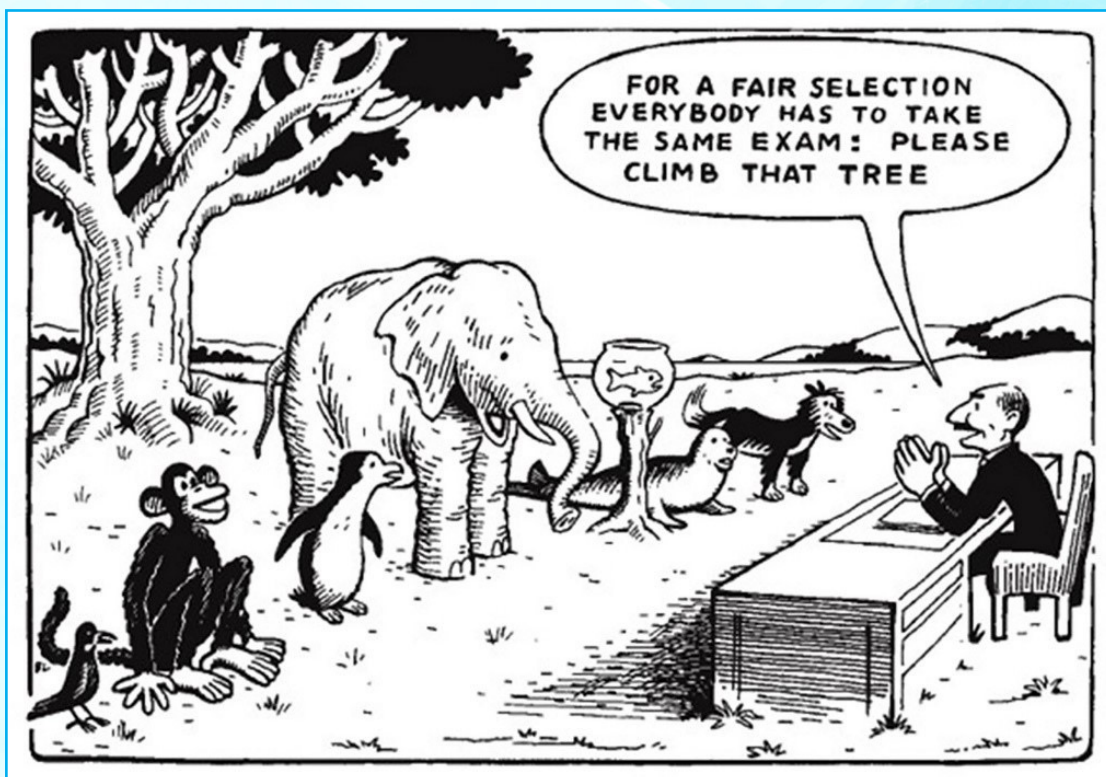
Many economically-challenged students come from families headed by “first responders,” who were unavailable to assist their children during at-home learning or were overloaded themselves with their own work and family responsibilities. Consequently, students of color fell an additional 3 to 5 months behind in math and three months behind in reading/language arts.

An estimated 20% of remote learners received virtually no schooling at all during the pandemic. For them, the educational inequities became significantly worse than the in-school education that was already not meeting their educational needs. The pandemic exacerbated these existing inequities.

Equality sounds like a fair approach to educational delivery, but what if you have disadvantaged students in the classroom? Most importantly, equality is an educational institution’s “starting point” (the “floor”). Students may need different resources that focus on developing different competencies, skills, as well as building background knowledge. Specific learning needs must be addressed through equity. Students who are not struggling should not be consuming resources best directed to those who are.

Equity

Equity and equality are often used interchangeably in education. However, differentiating the two is an important first-step in establishing school environments where all children have a greater chance of succeeding. The following cartoon highlights the distinction.



In this illustration, the goal of equality (sameness) is met, but each organism will not be measured with a test allowing it to demonstrate the ability to utilize skills to which it has adapted in its own environment (equity). In an ideal world, all assessments would be geared towards measuring the unique abilities of each test-taker.

Equity in education is reflected by establishing learning environments where every student receives the resources that he/she needs to

- (1) develop an adequate level of competency in the basic areas of reading, writing, and mathematics, and
- (2) maximize his/her academic potential in the classroom.

When the goal is equity, success is defined by the learning outcomes for each child, rather than the resources poured them. When we pursue equity, we also recognizing that

- (1) “one size” does not fit all,
- (2) a single instructional approach may reach some students, but not others, and
- (3) individual differences and prior educational success, background knowledge, learning preferences, level of motivation, etc., dictate that multiple learning paths and different learning paces for each child is likely warranted.

In the United States, inequity in education has created achievement gaps between poor students and their more affluent counterparts, as well as gaps between the races. Extra resources must be channeled to those schools with greater numbers of disadvantaged students who need supplementary educational assistance. Equity is more individually responsive to the needs of a diverse student body by meeting students where they are rather than where they should be (or where they would be if an equity-focused system had been designed and implemented previously to address their widely different individual needs, particularly the most academically vulnerable).

While equality might insist on providing all students access to the stairways taking them to the third-floor chemistry classrooms, equity would call for providing elevator access to take wheelchair-bound students to those chemistry classrooms. Everyone should have the resources and tools necessary to give them access to opportunities to succeed regardless of their current physical or academic limitations. It is often the case that the most economically challenged students are the most academically vulnerable students who lose ground quickly when resources are not aligned with their learning needs. While diversity measures our intentions and commitment, equity looks to produce equal access and parity in outcomes for different student groups.

Occasionally, equity means that we intentionally offer small group support or more focused individualized attention to particular students in order to address learning obstacles. Equity acknowledges that disadvantages and advantages do exist in the real world, but they can be confronted and lessened in ways that permit a greater chance of success for all students by leveling the playing field.



Equity does the following:

- is focused on each individual student.
- is adaptable to the needs of each learner in the classroom.
- acknowledges external factors that may become internal impediments to learning including:
 - poverty
 - housing and security/homelessness
 - coming to school hungry
 - medical/dental/health challenges
 - families in crisis
 - in-class and at-home language barriers
 - absent or uninvolved parents

Although 97% of teachers acknowledge that equity is the preferred teaching-learning strategy, many of them also acknowledge that they have never received training on how equity should be delivered in the classroom. Equity is “brain-considerate” and requires somewhat more work than equality, but the former is substantially more effective for the learner than the latter.

One of the greatest dangers in education is the “homogeneity assumption” frequently made by educators who assume that all children enter the classroom with the same background knowledge, skills, history of academic success, interest level, motivation, self-discipline, technology skills, etc., suggesting that a variety of teaching approaches may not be necessary. However, students from the same SES class may have enjoyed some of the same opportunities, but they seldom come to school with precisely the same experiential knowledge.

Horizontal equity in education is defined as treating people who are already assumed equal in the same way. Equity supports every student, not just those who are disadvantaged, but those who are different in ways beyond economics. When we are aware of a student’s individual needs, we are better able to provide relevant resources based on his/her specific needs. When their needs are met, diverse students become competent learners. Vertical equity presumes that each student has unique needs and provides resources accordingly.

The prevailing notion, supported by neurodiversity, is that our students are all different and should not be regarded as being the same. Any educator with a modest degree of experience working with children (or adults) has discovered that all learners do not grasp concepts at the same rate, nor do they remember previously learned information to the same degree, nor do they tackle new concepts with the same baseline knowledge. Instead, we know that all brains are different, which is regarded as “normal variations” within the human population. Students have behavioral traits, learning attributes, and experiential knowledge variations that impact learning and achievement outcomes. Equity provides students with both the kind and the quality of resources that fit their learning circumstances.

“The route to achieving equity will not be accomplished through treating everyone equally. It will be achieved by treating everyone justly according to their needs and circumstances.” - Paula Dressel, the Race Matters Institute.

Inclusion

Equity in education is often seen as two-dimensional. The first dimension is fairness for all students. The second is inclusion, which takes advantage of the diverse forces and resources found in a classroom, school, or an organization and deliberately harnesses them in ways that benefit and value everyone. A welcoming climate is not enough to meet your students’ diverse needs.

Inclusive practices create environments where involvement, respect, interpersonal interactions are continuously welcomed. In decision-making, all parties are on an equal footing and given the same opportunity to help craft the final product -- a collaborative classroom project, an ad campaign, or a company policy. All parties are invited to participate and give their input whether it aligns with the thinking of others or not. A distinction between diversity and inclusion is comparable to the difference between being invited to attend a dance and being asked to dance once there.

Diversity is what you have in your differences, while inclusion is what you do to take advantage of those differences in ways that benefit all learners in the classroom. While diversity focuses on “who is in the room,” inclusion is concerned with “how do we all work together” effectively with a common purpose, project, or outcome. In inclusion, the narrative shifts from “How

are we different?" to "How are we going to work together effectively to achieve our goal?" Inclusion advances the 21st century objectives of cooperation, compassion, creativity, empathy, and collaboration. In the inclusive model, everyone feels welcome at the table. Unfortunately, people of color often are present in the room, but are outside of the conversations and decision-making. In an inclusive model, there is gratification and being heard.

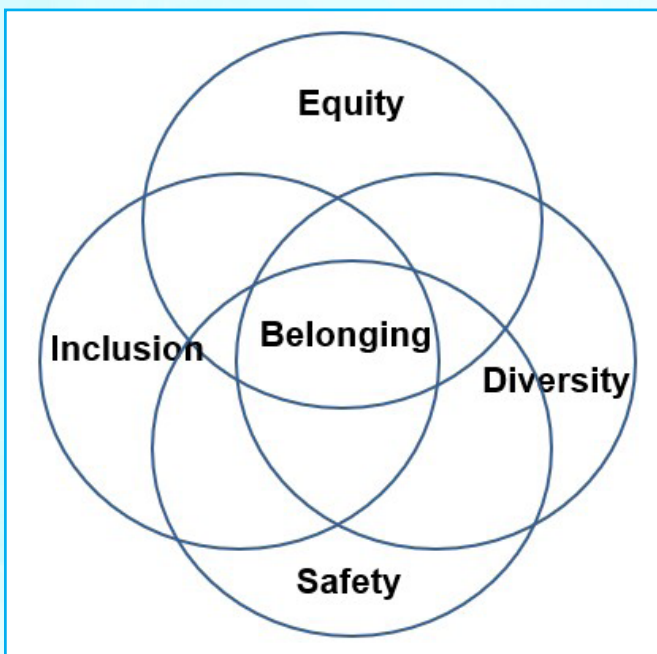
One of the most telling aspects of inclusion is revealed when we pay close attention to who is in the room and who has been excluded or overlooked. When decisions are made without certain individuals or without input from particular groups because they are not represented it becomes easier to understand why the needs of certain groups can go unmet for decades.

Belongingness

Belongingness is experiencing a constant sense of personal acceptance, respect, inclusion, and support in the learning environment. Students who do not feel they belong have difficulty connecting with the content to be learned, with the teacher, or with other students in the classroom. Their comprehension, motivation, and productivity will suffer. Students who feel a greater sense of belonging are more likely to persist to graduation (Strayhorn 2012).

In a school environment where we have (1) provided equality, (2) addressed equity, and (3) included all students, a child's feeling of "belongingness" can determine whether he/she participates in the learning process or merely observes others doing so. A lack of engagement leads to less learning and poor academic performances. How students from marginalized groups feel at school has been shown to be a key determining factor in educational outcomes (Dortch and Patel, 2017).

Per the Venn diagram below, when a diverse school is judiciously driven by equity concerns where every child feels respected and included (it is not judged as "different" or unusual), and they have no qualms about safety (physically, emotionally, intellectually, etc.), then each student can develop a sense of belonging in that classroom/school environment. This should be a goal of every Pre-K through university education institution.



The American University in Washington, DC offers the following benefits of diversity and inclusion in the classroom:

- diversity improves cognitive skills and critical thinking
- exposure to diversity helps prepare students for adulthood
- diversity prepares students for citizenship in the real world
- diversity promotes creativity

Diversity and inclusion clearly offer long-term benefits to all areas of American society.

Two decades ago, diversity was the goal for many corporations, which meant implementing hiring initiatives to increase the number of BIPOC individuals in an organization. However, the experiences of those BIPOC individuals after they had joined the organizations was to be “present” in the organization but not included (sidelined) in activities, and particularly in decision-making.

Americans spend approximately 90,000 hours of our lives at our place of work, which constitutes almost two-thirds of our waking time. Mathematically, that translates into spending more time with our coworkers than with our families. It behooves us to find and implement effective strategies for interpersonal communications and interactions with as many diverse populations as we can. While inclusion means everyone feels welcome at the table, belongingness is the secure feeling that you belong there, and others are grateful to have you present. Together, they promote psychological safety. Inclusion gives you a voice. However, belongingness is when others make decisions and take action on what was heard from you.

Safety

Safety means experiencing a school environment where one feels comfortable enough to learn, to express emotions, to make social connections with others, to develop positive relationships, and where the challenges and excitement of engaging in something new involves little or no risk. School environments should ensure physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both children and adults. Research has shown that when students are saddled with safety concerns in their environment, learning and memory are often the first casualties. Moreover, long-term experiences of fear lead to long-term learning difficulties. In trauma-informed instruction, the trauma can be as impersonal as a hurricane and as personal as physical abuse from a caregiver. Students who do not feel safe in school spend a substantial amount of their school day looking for environmental stimuli that may constitute a threat.

Psychological studies of racism have found that the most effective strategies for reducing prejudice, stereotypes, and racial animosities are (1) to have diverse individuals work collaboratively on a mutually-beneficial task, where all participants share an equal status (Mousa, 2020), and (2) provide culturally-sensitive, and ongoing diversity training for participants, and give them regular feedback on their progress towards the agreed-upon diversity goals. (It is important to note that people of color also benefit from D²EBIES training. Students of color can be victimized by people who look like them). Ultimately, D²EBIES fosters the bond environment for developing productive relationships on campus.

Disruption

Disruption: in school settings refers to students misbehaving or interrupting in class. However, disrupting injustice, disrupting inequities, and disrupting institutional racism, are part of the types of social interruptions that can lead to positive change in a society that was designed around racial inequalities. Historically marginalized students should learn, early and thereafter often, that the condition of their community and/or racial group is not the result of inherent racial deficiencies although that may often be implied. The 1950s-1970s Civil Rights struggle was a disruption that became necessary to address centuries of injustices. For equity and justice to prevail, sometimes disruption is a moral imperative.

An adage says, "What you permit, you promote." Over the decades, inequities were not only permitted, but they were promoted by the local, state, and federal governments. In the 1930s, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation was asked to create city "residential security maps" for real estate investors. The purpose of the maps was to identify those neighborhoods that were worth investing in versus those that might be declining in value. Bank lending targeted those neighborhoods that were considered worthy of investing where home values were stable or likely to increase. However, the central factor defining "investment value" was whether a neighborhood was all-black, racially integrated, or all-white.

White neighborhoods were deemed "Type A" and outlined in green indicating that the Federal Housing Administration would underwrite low-interest home loans in those neighborhoods. "Type D" neighborhoods were all-black neighborhoods and were "redlined," which meant black applicants would experience systemic denial for commercial bank loans and FHA backing in predominantly integrated or mostly black neighborhoods, even Blacks with high credit status. Integrated neighborhoods were labeled "Type B or C" indicating that they were "declining" or "still desirable," but not preferable because of their racial makeup. When home loans were extended, interest rates made for extortionate monthly loan payments with unforgiving penalties for late/missed payments.

By 2020, the homeownership rate for white families was 75% with black families at forty-four percent. However, the location and value of their homes were drastically different making for a \$12 to \$1 family wealth ratio comparison, where property values hampered the average African American family's ability to accumulate wealth. Home insurance followed similar patterns. One urban coalition concluded that, "A neighborhood without insurance is a neighborhood doomed to death."

As bank funding flowed to the "A, B, C, D" neighborhood types designated by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, corresponding state and local taxation determined which neighborhoods were well-kept by city services and which neighborhoods had well-resourced local schools or poorly funded school districts. The federal government played a key role in segregating our neighborhoods (structural racism) and thereby segregating our schools by race. Because high poverty neighborhoods paid lower taxes, their schools received less funding, and had fewer educational resources to support quality learning. Consequently, lower academic performance in the impoverished neighborhoods was highly predictable, and sadly, considered acceptable.

These conditions were exacerbated following World War II with the G.I. Bill that provided federal assistance for veterans to buy a home, start a business, attend college, and receive job training. However, these benefits were largely restricted to whites, and allowed them to earn higher wages and purchase homes in racially- and economically-segregated suburban neighborhoods that allowed them to build family wealth that African American veterans were denied, creating housing inequity.

Economist Moritz Kuhn and his colleagues concluded, "The historical data also reveal that no progress has been made in reducing income and wealth inequalities between black and white households over the past 70 years," in a 2018 report published by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. For white families, homeownership constituted the largest financial asset. The black-white wealth inequality is far more pronounced than income inequality since the former influences the latter and determines the educational opportunities available to wealthy versus impoverished

families. Parents in the top 1% income bracket have children who are 77 times more likely to attend expensive elite universities than children whose parents are in the bottom 20% income bracket.

We still live with the legacy of redlining. Those red lines segregated the neighborhoods. They reduced city services to those neighborhoods. They segregated the schools. They decreased school funds. (A U.S. Department of Education study found that 45% of high-poverty schools received less state and local funding than the average for other schools in the same school district.) They reduced funding for city services in predominantly black neighborhoods (except for policing). They provided a modest or no return on the funds invested in homes. Their lines predicted which neighborhoods would deteriorate. Those neighborhoods were at high risk of health issues because environmental safety was ignored. They overlapped with the centers of poverty. Corporations did not approve grocery store franchises located in those neighborhoods converting African American neighborhoods into “food deserts.”

The pernicious practice of redlining was far more than merely a deceitful housing and banking matter. Like layering overhead transparencies, all of these destructive institutional practices overlapped in ways that compounded the plight of people living within those lines. The practice created an almost inescapable cycle disadvantaging the already disadvantaged. (Breaking out of the cycle requires more than just improving education.) In 2020-21, the redlined regions were the early COVID-19 hotspots.

Today, most Americans live in racially segregated communities, and not exclusively attributable to racial bias. The persistent and extreme black-white (and white-Latinx) wealth gap is grounded in residential segregation, and both have been key to other racial inequities. The federal government played a central role in orchestrating these disparities, and it should be at the center of designing corrective remedies.

Recognizing our collective history of inequality, one can choose to be (1) a disruptor of the status quo, (2) an advocate of the status quo, or (3) silent, which makes one complicit and hardly different from an advocate, since complicity is what allows policies and practices of systemic racism to flourish. Public awareness of the pervasive inequities has not eliminated them. It is only through taking a stand as a disruptor of institutional racism that the harmful policies can be challenged, and the injurious practices dismantled.

To some, their innocence lies in the fact that they were not present when the inequities were created and therefore are not responsible. However, no one should claim that they are not party to America’s inequities simply because they were not responsible for initiating those practices of injustice nor have they vigorously advocated for the continuation of such practices. Standing by idly as a “privileged” observer (rather than a victim of inequalities) and permitting the unjust systems to operate smoothly and safely renders one a sponsor of injustice that undermines equity by way of the “sin of silence.” Historically, privilege has been the incentive for remaining silent. Remember, educators are daily examples to their students. Some argue that their lives have been just as difficult as people of color. While this may be a true statement, it is also true that there was not a single law or institution in America that made their white skin central to their hardships.

Living amid gross racial inequities is hardly a new aspect of the African American experience. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement together brought a much sharper focus on the social interactions that have a tendency to move community members in the direction of social justice and those that continue to take us further from that principled position. Unapologetically, making diversity, disruption, equality, belongingness, inclusion, equity, and safety the priorities of a school or school district can move faculty and staff members into the “Growth Zone” of “Becoming Anti-Racist” described by surgeon, Andrew M. Ibrahim, MD, MSc at the Corndel Management Training Organization. His diagram below was inspired by Dr. Ibram X Kendi’s How to Be an Antiracist.)



Members of every organization should be interested in making improvements to their institution. When school administrators put the D²EBIES into practice, they spell it “liberation.” If anti-racism was seen as a quilt, D²EBIES would be woven into the fabric by (1) seeking diversity, (2) disrupting the status quo that perpetuates inequities, (3) advocating for equality, (4) assuring belongingness for every child on your campus, (5) including all of the educational stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, community members, legislators, etc.) in crafting and carrying out your school’s mission, (6) providing equity for every learner regardless of background or need, and (7) guaranteeing that every child feels physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe at your school.

Embracing the D²EBIES will enhance the school climate but doing so requires a readiness to change on the part of individuals prone to resist them. Several factors contribute to an individuals’ preparedness to change his/her behavior. These factors include openness to acting more inclusively, one’s internal motivation to respond without prejudice (Plant and Devine, 1998), a lack of discomfort interacting with members of diverse social groups (Stephan, 2014), and general enthusiasm for supporting diversity (Pittinsky et al., 2011).

No educator or administrator is responsible for our past history of institutional racism. However, every educator and administrator is responsible for dismantling the current vestiges of institutional racism so our African American students and other students of color may have a more promising future for which we are all responsible.

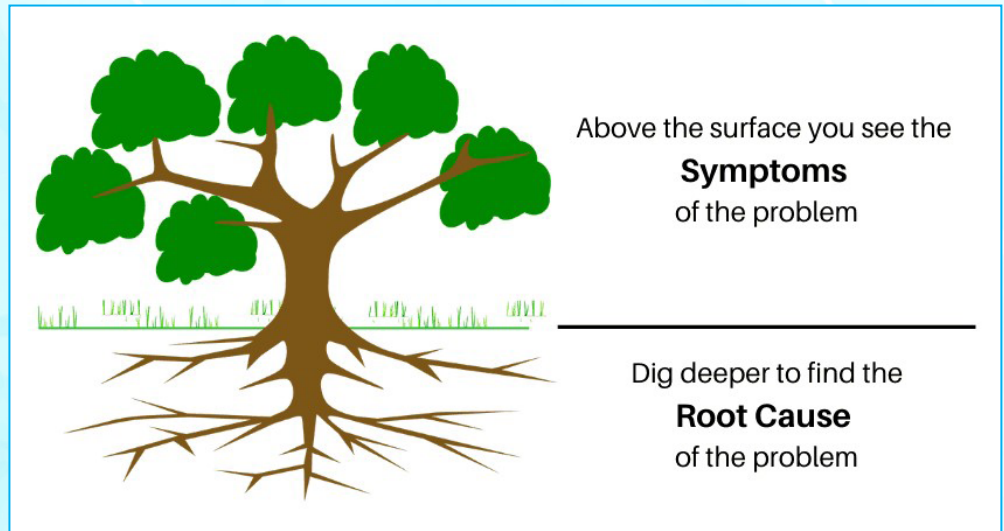
The How

Root Cause Analysis (RCA) is a strategy used in problem solving that utilizes discussion and data analysis to dig deeply into an existing problem. Unlike traditional problem solving, RCA seeks to

identify the underlying causes of a problem rather than examining the obvious symptoms and exploring ways to treat the symptoms without addressing the causes.

Root Cause Analysis: a method of problem-solving where attention is refocused on its causes rather than seeking to merely treat the more obvious symptoms.

Often, the symptoms of problems in education garner far more attention than their more important fundamental causes. Yes, it is certainly easier to place Band-Aids over several sores but it is far more effective long-term to find out what brought about the sores and address those deeper causes (mimicking medical models) rather than simply placing bandages on the superficial wounds.



Using the RCA model, schools (and school districts) can do the following

1. Identify the significant causal factors that your school cannot/does not control
 - race and ethnicity
 - poverty (family income/resources)
 - neighborhood segregation (the history of American “residential redlining”)
 - the state and local economy
 - social mobility
 - quality preschool education
 - local employment opportunities (unemployment)
 - the educational challenges that have been compounded by institutional racism that have permeated education for several decades and generations
2. Identify causal factors over which the school has some degree of control
 - Instructional quality and delivery (pedagogy: hiring teachers with high aptitude)
 - de-tracking students
 - instructional materials (curriculum) and teaching methods
 - deploying a more conceptual approach to learning
 - implementing more collaborating and problem solving

- using sense-making strategies (less memorizing)
 - culturally relevant teaching
 - rigorous content
 - authentic/relevant instruction
 - student interest and motivation
 - individual interest
 - situational interest
 - culturally relevant content
 - feedback/communication/guidance during learning
 - improving positive relationships with peers to enhance classroom learning (SEL)
 - an emphasis on multiple ways of learning, multiple ways of knowing, and multiple ways of demonstrating knowledge (giving students more choices and how they learn and how they demonstrate what they have learned)
 - informal and formal assessment
 - students can identify with their teachers
 - learning facilities, resources, and equipment, and particularly their distribution
 - movement, physical activities, and interactive learning
 - positive communication with family/parents/caregivers and community
 - student preparation for the next grade level content
 - course offerings in middle school and high school (and the preparation to succeed in those courses)
 - student attitudes about math and self-efficacy in mathematics
- 3.** Identify causal factors over which your school can influence, but does not control:
- technology deficiencies in the home
 - parent involvement at home
 - class sizes
 - instructional time
 - enrichment experiences (e.g., STEM)
 - student mobility and the background knowledge they bring to school
 - a teacher's bias

In recent years, identification of root causes has been highlighted as important for school improvement planning efforts.

In environments where students feel they are included and they belong, higher levels of student engagement, cooperation, and achievement are commonly the results. Each school, school district, or organization should craft its own "To Do" list, putting these D²EBIES suggestions into practice.



An Equity Self-Assessment for Principals: Leading with Equity (addressing and disrupting past inequities)

While this improvement of instructional practice is one of the most important tasks of a school principal, equity-centered leadership in a school building is essential to the success of every teacher and student. Part of the job of today's principal is to rally everyone on campus around equity and to remove any barriers to equal educational access for all students. Please answer the following questions or respond to the statements below about your equity leadership:

- Would my teachers, staff, students, and parents describe me as an equity-centered instructional leader? How would my administrative colleagues describe me?
- Would the faculty and staff in my building consider the culture, practices, policies, programs, processes, and instruction "equity-centered"?
- Is a robust equity plan mentioned as part of our mission statement or as a long-term vision for our school/school district? Have programs and funding been aligned to make that vision a reality? Is there someone else on my campus responsible for equity or is it just me? Do we have an equity agenda?
- What are the varying needs of students in your school? Are they considered a priority? Are funds allocated equitably to prioritize their needs?
- Do the most vulnerable students in my school still succeed academically? Are the appropriate resources (specialists, instructional expertise, interventions, funding, support, etc.) allocated for them to be successful?
- Are the opportunity and achievement gaps in my school "acceptable" or are we working to eliminate them? There is tangible evidence available to support my answer.
- Recent research indicates that a principal spends an average of only 8-17% of his/her time involved in instruction. Would parents and community members say that students in my school are receiving a high quality instructional experience?

- Is everyone in my school building committed to promoting equity and delivering instructional excellence for every child?
- Would the parents of students from special needs populations agree to a statement declaring that their children are receiving the best education possible?
- My school has developed a plan to minimize educational disparities for all student populations.
- Are my faculty members culturally competent?
- When I notice a disparity in resources allocated to students of poverty/students of color compared to the students in wealthier (and “whiter”) areas, do I remain silent, or do I disrupt the conversation?
- When I recognize a teacher who is unwilling to abandon his/her biases, I work with that individual for improvements.
- Among all of the factors that a school building, teachers are considered the most influential on student achievement, and the principal is the second most influential factor (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom 2004). Less competent teachers in my building know that they will be rewarded, replaced, or helped when their students do not succeed?
- The black-white achievement gap in my school is statistically negligible. What measures are we using for determining achievement?
- My students are doing well academically whether or not there are “adjustments” made for poverty?
- Members of my faculty and staff are regularly reminded of the economic and social impact of academic disparities that can develop in our schools.
- My school building has regular professional development opportunities related to the D²EBIES? All faculty and staff members attend. Noticeable progress (defined by the students and parents) is being made.
- My faculty and staff members recognize that they have a legal and moral responsibility to ensure that every student in our school receives the knowledge, skills, competence, support, and access to educational excellence that they need to succeed in college or a career.
- Are standardized test scores the sole measure of achievement used by our school? Are we using other means of defining cognitive growth and academic achievement? What combinations of data are we using? (Collecting and analyzing data as a collaborative process should be championed by the equity-focused principal.)
- Do student test scores play a role in teacher evaluations at my school building?
- What do I do to make certain that teacher expectations are high for students in my school? Do I promote the position that every child can be an excellent learner if given the proper learning support?

- My school serves the most vulnerable students: students of color, students living in poverty, and English language learners, and students from the majority group. There is little or no disparity in the achievement scores for each of these groups.
- Do faculty members and parents feel comfortable discussing institutional practices of racism and how they might be mitigated to decrease the negative impact on my students? Do we discuss the historical root causes that have created challenges for my students and their communities?

Staffing for Equity

Achieving equity cannot take place without the proper staff members in place and adequately trained.

- Establish school and community mentorship initiatives to enhance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, (DEI). (Research indicates that the “opportunity gap” can be attributed more to who students know, instead of solely what they know. Equity leadership includes linking students with mentors and experts in the local community, including local colleges and universities).
- Hire/appoint an individual on each school campus who will be responsible for taking the lead on DEI. If everyone is responsible, then no one is responsible in reality.
- Review hiring practices that have resulted in staffs that do not represent our schools, our communities, or our society. Recruit teachers early in the hiring season to get the “in-demand” candidates and investigate alternative non-traditional teaching programs (e.g., HBCUs) that may not be your routine avenues of recruitment.
- Arrange professional development workshops on DEI and establish professional learning communities within a school or school district to further the work.
- Consistently train and engage employees on DEI. While some conversations may be difficult, there are consultants available to guide faculty and staff members through a possibly bumpy novel terrain. Guidelines for success include:
 - all faculty and staff members at a school site will participate.
 - use Stephen Covey’s recommendation for communication: “Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”
 - do not lean exclusively on the people of color present in the room to guide the conversation through a sharing of their own lived experiences.
 - be candid and open to any honest feedback.
 - emphasize that those present are not responsible for America’s problematic past but are the architects for a brighter future as we pursue equity together.
- Scrutinize school and district teams for inclusive representation to involve all people and diverse viewpoints
- Acknowledge if there is a lack of diversity in the first place. Then, ask “Why?” and devise a 1-3 year plan to improve diversity both in numbers and inclusiveness.

- Eliminate bias in the teacher and staff evaluation processes, and in promotion opportunities.
- Become advocates for DEI and keep leaders accountable for DEI.
- Take advantage of opportunities to learn about (1) diverse groups within your school community, as well as their culture and their history, and (2) the history behind the opportunity gaps that have impacted those groups.
- Join a national dialogue on the history of racism and its lingering effects on people of color.



Equity for all students:

- All students are engaged based on their learning needs rather than “lectured to” in a one-size-fits-all instructional model.
- Include in-school and at-home technology needs in your equity goals.
- Vigorously address issues of social, economic, and educational inequality in your classroom with students.
- Establish a sense of belongingness for each student. Use language that embraces equity for all.
- Select curriculum materials that help students feel represented and included in instruction. Establish a school or school district committee charged with reviewing teaching and learning materials annually.
- Get to know each of your students and their personal assets on an individual basis (not as a member of a particular “group”).
- Connect instruction with diverse groups of people, local families and communities. Doing so improves self-efficacy in learners and fosters richer classroom discussions related to content.
- When there is only one student of color in a classroom, do not rely on him/her to become the spokesperson for their race, religion, and or ethnic group.

- Create a classroom culture where every voice is welcomed, heard, and respected which fosters diversity in thinking.
- Post pictures, illustrations, and artifacts in the classroom that reflect the wide range of diversity found around the world. This communicates a message to each child that “You belong here.”
- Review disaggregated student performance data as often as possible and ask, “Are we eliminating disparities at our school, reinforcing them, or creating more?”

Equity-driven Leadership in your school

In their book, *Five Practices for Equity-Focused School Leadership*, Radd, Generett, Gooden, and Theoharis, suggest that school leaders should:

- Practice I - Prioritize equity leadership: adopt a transformative approach
- Practice II - Prepare for equity: the ongoing emotional and intellectual work of equity leadership
- Practice III - Develop equity leadership teams: essentials for leading toward equity together
- Practice IV - Build equity-focused systems: identifying needs and planning systemic change
- Practice V - Sustain equity: preparing for the long haul

Equity is not an optional philosophy, but instead encompasses codes of practice that allow every student an opportunity to receive a high-quality educational experience. All principals can provide equity-driven leadership at their school site by considering the following:

1. In concert with the district office, faculty, parents, and staff (an inclusive approach), develop an Equity Strategic Plan identifying where the school publishes an equity mission identifying where it would like to be in the next 3-5 years. Clarify the action plans, racial equity benchmarks, the milestones, checkpoints, self-assessment instruments, and backup plans should they become necessary, following an annual review of your equity goals. Post the vision for equity in a prominent place for all stakeholders to see. Ultimately, this is a collaborative process led by the equity-focused leader.
2. Use the Root Cause Analysis strategy to identify the major educational challenges facing your school, as well as their causes. Analyze any issue that is keeping your students from succeeding. Establish the mindset where equity is a priority and that all students on campus will learn with exceedingly high expectations and comparable support (especially those from marginalized populations that have been underserved historically) and will be taught by culturally-sensitive classroom practitioners who are committed to equity.
3. Establish priorities and trade-offs recognizing that together we can do anything, but not everything at once. Some resources may require trade-offs based on priorities.
4. Identify and establish a budget for the necessary resources (stable funding, time, and

staffing), distribution to deliver equity for all student groups including strategies for both place-based intervention (for the highest-needs students) and acceleration in learning. The culturally relevant curricula should reflect your commitment to equity. Include D²EBIES activities and anti-racist lessons to your school curriculum so every student feels like they belong. Students of all colors prefer and enjoy the lessons that are personally interesting, culturally relevant, developmentally appropriate, and challenging.

5. Provide professional growth opportunities for teachers and staff members with specific strategies for establishing a climate and culture where excellence and equity for all students becomes the norm. An orderly classroom where learners are both challenged and engaged constitutes one of the strongest predictors of annual learning gains. These efforts should be driven by “reciprocal accountability” wherein equity leaders have an equal responsibility of assuring that teachers know how to do what they are expected to do.
6. Implement a commitment to each of the D²EBIES components throughout the school. Encourage students to speak out against unfairness when they see it. For beginning teachers and/or teachers new to pursuing an equity mission, provide staff development opportunities on breaking down traditional racial barriers. These efforts can be completed with colleagues (synchronously) or independently (asynchronously).
7. Identify one individual as the Equity Leader (preferably the principal as the equity leader), because if everyone is responsible for the diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda, then no one is truly accountable. Identify the equity leader or build a cohesive and effective equity leadership team as early as possible.
8. Equity-focused leaders can do more, when they learn more. Leaders cannot expect others to understand what they themselves have not learned. Continue to digest the latest research on best practices for educational equity (What does it look like day-to-day, in real-time on a school campus?) Read about and learn how to conduct courageous conversations focused on “race, power, privilege and inequality,” which is one of the greatest barriers to fulfilling equity. Provide mentorship and lead by example, which will help to cultivate future equity leaders.
9. Hire faculty and staff members who reflect the diversity of the community, and the state. Staffing should be a statement of the commitment to equity. The most important aspect, however, is hiring teachers committed to meeting the needs of all of their diverse students.
10. Make certain that all parties to the Equity Plan feel included, valued, safe, and visible in the planning, implementation, and the evaluation of progress towards achieving the established goals. The needs of those who may not be present in the room at any given moment during decision making still deserve a voice and must be included for the Equity Plan to succeed.

What picture comes to mind when you envision educational equity? The 10 challenging recommendations above should figure prominently in that vision. Collectively, they not only assure equity, but they are key factors in assuring social justice for both the students and the institutions that serve them. Most importantly, as each recommendation is under discussion, ask the question, “What impact will this decision or action have on students from historically marginalized groups?”


Do not plan to answer that question for them, make sure they (a) are in the room, (b) are part of the conversation, and (c) have a voice/vote in the final decision that will impact their child and their family. It's

In February 1968 (two months prior to his assassination), Dr. Martin Luther King stated during a Washington, DC address, "We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." Equity-driven leadership in an equity-centered framework will deliver both, but every African American student will benefit in the long run.

Field Guide #11

Video #2: Introduction to the Lifting Our Voices interviews:

It is our job as educators, administrators, and parents to help African American children identify their strengths and assets in order to maximize their academic achievement. Although obstacles abound, the support we can give our students of color is boundless.



Introduction
to the
Voices Videos

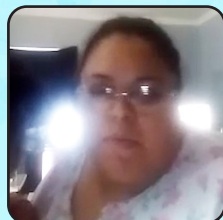
Dr. Lydia Hollie
Elementary Teacher

Click to Play

"Lifting our Voices" videos Interviewees



Akisha **Liggins**
Teacher



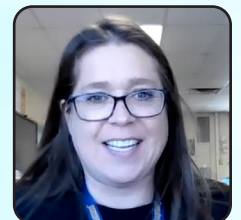
Melissa **Hendrix**
Parent



LaToya **Reid**
Parent



Mark **Neal**
Principal



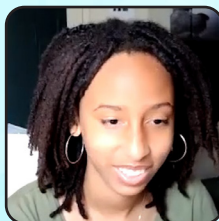
Ana **Filomia**
Teacher



Trinika **Barnett**
Teacher



Ghada **Moreno**
Teacher



Khensani **Pienaar**
Student



Marissa **Pienaar**
Parent



Amirh **Johnson**
Parent

Melinda **Hendrix**
Student (no photo)

Jacob **Hendrix**
Student (no photo)

Video #1 - What makes an equity leader? **Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/equityleaderguide11>

Video #2 - Equity is more than just Black History Month “heroes” **Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/morethanguide11>

Video #3 - The principal as the equity leader **Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/principalequityguide11>

Video #4 - Leading with representative demographics **Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/leadingguide11>

Video #5 - Teamwork for equity **Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/equityteamworkguide11>

Professional learning: Participant Responses

- a. The interviewees described the number of factors that make for an equity leader. What are some of those characteristics that stood out to you? How do they compare to your principal?
- b. When equity-centered problems surface on campus, how did the interviewees describe their principal’s response? What are two more effective ways to respond?
- c. Why might African American parents say that equity should extend throughout the school year rather than restricted to black history month?
- d. What role can professional development play in enhancing equity?
- e. What are the benefits of an equity leader asking questions when he/she doesn’t have an answer to an equity question?
- f. The participants note that “change” is difficult. How has our shared American history made moving towards equity so challenging for some?
- g. What message is sometimes communicated by the faculty, staff, and administrators’ demographics in a school?
- h. Are there advantages to hiring more black faculty members? What might some of them be?
- i. One school district created an equity department. What are some of the benefits described by faculty members, staff members, and parents?
- j. What would it take for your school district to implement an equity department?
- k. What role can teacher leaders play in leading the equity initiative?
- l. What are some of the barriers that stand in the way of promoting the D²EBIES in your school building?

Reflections and applications

- a. A The old instructional model of the mid-20th century was “Teach to the students who you can influence academically.” This strategy falls short of our equity goals today. How so?
- b. As an equity leader, how would you explain the distinction that should be made between equity and equality?

- c. Providing computers to every student in a school might be a laudable plan. However, how might this effort support the quality, but not equity?
- d. How can a principal establish equity as a school priority without “ruffling any feathers”?
- e. Why might student achievement data be a misleading metric for meeting diversity and equity goals?
- f. What leadership practices help a principal create conditions for equity in a school building?
- g. Think about your school site. List some of the biases and equity barriers that your students may face which affect their academic performance.
- h. Why is there sometimes a misalignment between equity goals and achievement goals? How might this dilemma be resolved?
- i. In what ways do you see a connection between equity and social justice?
- j. How did your personal experience with equity as a young student influence the ways in which you view equity in your school? What barriers did you see that were in the way of students of color when you were a child? Are they still present in your school?
- k. (The locus of control) What are some of the factors of equity that a school can control? What are some of the equity issues that impact student achievement, which the school has little or no control over?

(Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis - Session #17: Equitable Learning During the Pandemic Conducted by Dr. Tonikiaa Orange - Director for the Culture and Equity Project & Assistant Director for the Principal Leadership Institute at UCLA Center X)



LESSONS LEARNED

Dr. Tonikiaa Orange

Director for the Culture and Equity Project & Assistant Director for the Principal Leadership Institute at UCLA Center X)

[Click to Play](#)

Segment #1: Timestamp 10:03 – 12:04

Establishing equity priorities

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- What are the equity priorities that you have for your students?
- In what ways have you put African Americans students at the center of those priorities?
- In what ways would social emotional learning be considered an equity issue?

Segment #2: *Timestamp 13:55 - 15:37*

Dealing with external issues that impact classroom learning

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- How can we address issues of equity when students are struggling with issues like food and/or housing insecurities, family members and?
- How are these equity issues for students?
- When addressing equity issues, when does content sometimes become secondary?

Segment #3: *Timestamp 17:40 – 18:25*

Asset-based instruction

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- The pandemic put the spotlight on equity that should have been priorities for schools in the past for school leaders.
- How do we shift to an asset-based approach?
- Why does an asset-based approach to classroom learning work better for black students than the deficit-based strategies of the 1980s'-1990s?

Segment #4: *Timestamp 25:30 – 27:46*

Examining structures that limit progress towards equity

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- What role should education play in helping African American students understand the oppression of marginalized people? What should their instruction look like?
- How can principals and superintendents influence curriculum changes that make equity part of everyday classroom learning?

Segment #5: **Timestamp 27:50 – 29:56**

Connecting classroom experiences to the real world to promote engagement and equity

Synchronous Professional Learning: Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

Asynchronous Professional Learning: Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- What is the benefit of students making real-world connections to classroom content goals?
- How is equity served when students of color have opportunities to examine structural inequities seen in their local communities?
- How does student engagement support the notion of equity? What is the role of school leaders in influencing classroom practices that promote more engagement by students of color?
- In what ways can education be liberation for African American students and other students of color?

Conclusion:

In the Learning Policy Institute article, the authors list “An emerging focus on equity-oriented leadership has the potential to develop aspiring principals’ knowledge and skills to meet the needs of diverse learners” as a key feature of contemporary principal preparation. Becoming an equity leader is an essential characteristic of today’s successful school principal.

This field guide and its references provide a wealth of information that covers both the historical basis for inequities, as well as forward-thinking strategies that any educational leader can implement in his/her school or district at any time.

For decades, many principals and other administrators in our school districts sought a safe space rather than a brave place when matters of race and equity surfaced. For far too long, both black and white administrators found their careers in education considerably safer by “going along, to get along.” However, going along with policies and practices that damage the prospects of an equitable education for African American students is no longer acceptable. The problems addressed in this Field Guide have their roots in centuries of painful lived experiences that must end. Every child should expect an equitable education and is entitled to one.

Whether we call it equity, social justice, culturally responsive teaching, diversity, equity, inclusion, belongingness, equality, safety, disruption, or D²EBIES, our laser-focused attention on high-quality learning experiences and equity every day for every student should be the goal. Concerns about the terminology, should be replaced by our deep concern about the ongoing work to be done in the concerted efforts required knowing that can have an inordinate impact on African American students and other students from historically marginalized populations for decades to come.

The bottom line is that today's leaders who are not equity driven, must push themselves towards an equity mindset, and develop the skills and deploy tools that make equity and justice visible realities in their schools. Those who are unwilling or unable to deliver equity-focused leadership need to make room for those who are. Every child deserves a fair opportunity to flourish academically. History has shown that persistent inequalities make modest aspirations frustratingly unreachable and subsequently pose a danger to both public education for students of color and social order for everyone.

At the end of your career, when your grandchildren ask, "So, you were a principal during that tumultuous period. What did you do to support equity for African American students and other students of color in your school?" What will you have to say on your own behalf?

Resources:

- Barriers to Equity in Education | Teachers and Principals School Report. Scholastic Team. <http://www.scholastic.com/teacherprincipalreport/barriers-to-equity.htm>
- Cultivating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Education Environments. Resilient educator. <https://resilienteducator.com/collections/cultivating-diversity-inclusion-equity/>
- Developing Effective Principals: What Kind of Learning Matters? (May 2022). Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/developing-effective-principals-report?utm_source=LPI+Master+List&utm_campaign=c6e465657d-LPIMC_AB_WallacePrincipals_ReportWebinars_20220523&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7e60dfa1d8-c6e465657d-42334567
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging. Workforce Science Associates. <https://workforcescience.com/solutions/experience-accelerated/diversity-equity-inclusion-and-belonging/>
- Diversity and Inclusive Teaching. University of Delaware. <https://ctal.udel.edu/resources-2/inclusive-teaching/>
- Dortch, D., and Patel, C. (2017). Black Undergraduate Women and Their Sense of Belonging in STEM at Predominantly White Institutions. NASPA J. About Women Higher Education.
- How to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in Educational Settings: Behavior Change, Climate Surveys, and Effective Pro-Diversity Initiatives. (2021) Frontiers in Education. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/educ.2021.668250/full>
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- Why is it important for students to feel a sense of belonging at school? (2021). North Carolina State, College of Education News.
<https://ced.ncsu.edu/news/2021/10/21/why-is-it-important-for-students-to-feel-a-sense-of-belonging-at-school-students-choose-to-be-in-environments-that-make-them-feel-a-sense-of-fit-says-associate-professor-deleon-gra/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CA%20sense%20of%20belonging%20at.learning%20environment%2C%E2%80%9D%20Gray%20said.>

Evaluation-Survey for Field Guide #11

<https://bit.ly/FieldGuide11Survey>

CAAASA presents:

Lifting Our Voices:



Presenter:

Dr. Tonikaa Orange

Director for the Culture and Equity Project (CEP), Assistant Director for the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) at UCLA Center X

Field Guide #11:

The Principal as the Equity Leader



School Re-orientation for Post-COVID Learning: What to Know, Do, and Expect as In-Person Instruction Resumes

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