A Process for Examining and Addressing Systemic Inequities within State Education Agencies

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One of the ten regional EACs funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Great Lakes Equity Center provides assistance to state education agencies and public school districts in the areas of race, gender, and national origin equity.
Today we will

Discuss the importance of cross-departmental dialogue to explore the extent to which existing patterns of beliefs and practices, as well as established policies, procedures and structures contribute to the marginalization of students and their families, thus limiting students’ opportunities to access quality learning experiences and outcomes.

Outline elements of an equity-focused process of practice and policy review and strategic planning to redress systemic inequities and advance culturally responsive educational systems.
Challenges faced by Pre K-12 Systems

- Performance Gaps
- Opportunity Gaps
- Disproportionality
Educational improvement efforts should focus on transforming school systems into equity-oriented learning organizations.
What is Transformative Change Towards Equity?

Systemic change that disrupts and dismantles historical legacies of normative assumptions, beliefs, and practices about individual characteristics and cultural identities that marginalize and disenfranchise people and groups of people.
Transformative change is enacted through...

People:
- State, district, and school leaders
- Educators
- Families and community members
- Students

Policies:
- State
- District
- School
- Classroom

Practices:
- Curricular Material
- Instructional Decisions
- Social Interactions
Equity-oriented learning organizations examine the extent to which patterns of beliefs and practices, and established policies, procedures and structures contribute to the marginalization of specific groups of students and their families and engages in continuous improvement efforts to redress these inequities by ...

- Participating in cross-department dialogue about race, equity and education
- Focusing on systemic change efforts
- Utilizing critical collaborative inquiry
- Engaging in equity-oriented strategic planning
ENGAGING THE TEAM IN CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL DIALOGUE

What we bring

• our perspectives, beliefs, assumptions, questions and expectations relating to student learning and adult practice.

What we see

• patterns by asking questions about the data in order to find patterns, discover surprises, and add new thoughts.

What we think

• together and create or revise a plan of action based on the shared understanding of the collected data.
Collaborative inquiry provides a shared context for the process on on-going dialogue, identifying issues related to equity, proposing and testing solutions, and (de)constructing individual and collective knowledge.

Rogoff, 2003
Critical Collaborative Inquiry: Building Capacity for Systemic Change
Critical Inquiry Questions

- Whose interests are being served well by our system and whose are not?
- What is it about our people, policies, and practices that is advancing some and not others?
- What can we do differently to better serve all people within our system?
- How do we ensure the voices and perspectives of historically underrepresented groups are included?

Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009
Systemic Change Framework

Ferguson, Kozleski, & Smith 2003; Kozleski & Smith, 2009; Kozleski & Thorius, 2013
Arenas of Systemic Change for Achievement & Equity

- Leadership for Equity & Outcomes
- Culture of Renewal & Improvement
- District/Community Connections & Partnerships
- System Infrastructure & Organizational Support
- Inquiry on Equity & Outcomes
- Equitable Resource Development & Distribution
Leadership for Equity & Accountability

• Agency leadership understands the ways decisions are made has a strong impact on agency culture, its potential to support LEA achievement, and that the interaction between leadership and accountability help determine success. Leadership asks, “How is input from diverse perspectives elicited in the achievement planning processes and in decision-making, in general?”

Kozleski & Thorius, 2013; Thorius, 2014
Culture of Renewal & Improvement

• The agency is explicit in its professional development initiatives informed by the current context of state-wide supports and challenges, and driven by the way things could be if all children and families had equitable access, participation, and outcomes. To do so, they utilize current data about how LEAs, children and families are served, and to what outcomes, to inform professional development improvement plans.

Kozleski & Thorius, 2013; Thorius, 2014
SEA/Community Connections & Partnerships

• The agency forms mutually beneficial relationships with community and family organizations, to ensure that they represent and incorporate the knowledge and resources of all those they serve.

Kozleski & Thorius, 2013; Thorius, 2014
System Infrastructure & Organizational Support

• The functions of agency structures/departments are organized in such a way that efficiency and individualization are accommodated. Thoughtful supports provide coherent, continuous opportunities for improved practices.

Kozleski & Thorius, 2013; Thorius, 2014
Equitable Resource Development & Distribution

• The agency considers how the allocation of financial and human resources are distributed not equally, but equitably and flexibly, so that all professionals are provided with what they need to provide high quality curriculum and instruction that result in favorable and proportionate educational access, participation, and outcomes for all learners.

Kozleski & Thorius, 2013; Thorius, 2014
The agency supports inquiry on equity, which uses real data as a source of information and makes explicit the links between data, policy and services, to improve these data. Three essential questions ground work in this area:

~Who benefits from the way things are?
~Who does not?
~What needs to change to balance power and privilege for all students and families?

Friere, 1970; Kozleski & Thorius, 2013; Thorius, 2014
Mapping Your Efforts

- Reflect
- Discuss
- Note
EQUITY-ORIENTED STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

CONTEXT ANALYSIS:
Critical, Technical & Contextual

HYPOTHESES STATEMENTS

Great Lakes Equity Center, 2013
Equitable Educational Experiences for Historically Underserved Students
• Related to solving specific and direct programmatic or problems of practice in the organization

Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009
• Related to the underlying beliefs, patterns of practice, traditions and norms.

Mulligan & Kozleski, 2009
• Underlying beliefs and practices that marginalize specific groups and privilege others.
Maximizing Efforts: Integrating Initiatives

**Alignment**
- Purpose
- Goals
- Targets

**Coherence**
- Combining Efforts
- Logical Connectedness


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EQUITY LEADERS INSTITUTE
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September 19 & 20, 2013
Indianapolis, IN

Podcasts

STEM Education Needs All Children: A Critical Examination of Equity Issues – Part I

Start Time
May 9, 2013 - 3:30 pm, EST

Session Goals
Part One of this two part series surfaces and addresses broad equity issues in STEM education. We will:
• Examine through an equity lens the relationship between K-12 STEM education and STEM-related careers;
• Explore equity issues in STEM education, including issues of access, representation, and rigor of STEM curricula and instruction for underserved populations; and
• Critically examine systemic structures, policies, and practices that affect student participation in STEM-related courses and co-curricular activities

Download Presentation Materials
Want us to host a repeat session of this webinar so you can participate live? Click here.
For questions regarding the tool and or process contact:

Website: www.greatlakesequitycenter.org

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