



# Student-Centered, Systems- Designed, Equity Driven Leadership



The Scholar First

*Equity as the Foundation*

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Focus of the  
Conversation..

What is Equity?

Why Leading for Equity in  
Special Education is  
Essential?

The inspector trained his infrared lens onto a misshapen bow in the ceiling, an invisible beam of light searching the layers of lath to test what the eye could not see. This house had been built generations ago, and I had noticed the slightest welt in a corner of plaster in a spare bedroom and had chalked it up to [coincidence]. Over time, the welt in the ceiling became a wave that widened and bulged despite the new roof. It had been building beyond perception for years.

America is an old house. We can never declare the work over. [...] When you live in an old house, you may not want to go into the basement after a storm to see what the rains have wrought. Choose not to look, however, at your own peril. The owner of an old house knows that whatever you are ignoring will never go away. Whatever is lurking will fester whether you choose to look or not. Ignorance is no protection from the consequences of inaction.

*Adapted from Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson*

**Consider America's "Old House" as the American schooling system.**

**How might this quote connect the focus on equity and our work as educators serving our scholars within special education programs?**

# The Why Of Our Equity Work Can Be Found in Our Data

## Identification

- Students of color, with the exception of Asian students<sup>1</sup>, are identified for special education at a higher rate than their White peers.<sup>2</sup>
- American Indian and Alaska Native children receive special education at twice the rate of the general student population.
- Black students are 40 percent more likely to be identified with a disability versus all other students.

## In Program

- White Students with disabilities on average will spend 55% of their time in class
- Black and brown students with disabilities will spend on average 33 % of their time in the general education classroom.

# What is Equity?

A way of being,  
seeing, thinking

It is everyday,  
everywhere

Everyone leads  
for it—it is  
systemic

Providing  
students what  
they need, not  
the same thing

Students are  
placed at the  
heart of the work

It is hard

Equity is NOT...

- A pair of glasses you can put on or take off when it is convenient
- A one-off or sparked by conflict or isolated incidents
- A single person in an equity office
- A single “strand” that operates in isolation
- Adult interest driving decisions and the work
- Easy answers that results in everyone agreeing or supporting the work



Four Benefits  
(4 B's) of  
Embedding  
Equity for our  
Scholars

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Create a Deep Sense of **Belonging**

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**Broadcasting** Scholar Voice

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Demonstrate a **Belief** in the limitless potential for EVERY Scholar

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Removal of **Barriers**



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# Gap Closing Strategies

## All Classrooms

- Access to Core Instruction for ALL scholars
- Applying the principles of UDL in all classrooms
- Classrooms where **belonging** and **belief** in all scholars are the norm
- Robust and comprehensive MTSS Systems
- Curriculum and materials that provide mirrors and windows for scholars
- District-wide process for problem solving and referrals

## Gap Closing within Special Education Programs

- Classrooms where belonging and belief in all scholars are the norm
- Standards-Based instruction, standards-aligned IEPs
- UDL, co-teaching, close collaboration with the general education teacher, and inclusive practices
- Curriculum and instructional materials that provide mirrors and windows for scholars
- Monitoring of entrance and exit rate data by race and program and highlighting promising practices across the district

## At its Core, This is what Equity Work is About...

Leaders for equity are most often on the RIGHT side of these actions that Ginott so eloquently describes.



**“I’ve come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess tremendous power to make a student’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a student humanized or de-humanized.”**

~HAIM GINOTT