



The Scholar First

Equity as the Foundation

Student-Centered, Systems Leadership for Equity: Building a Culture

WASA Winter Conference

December 6, 2022

Dr. Tammy Campbell, CEO, The Scholar First, Inc.

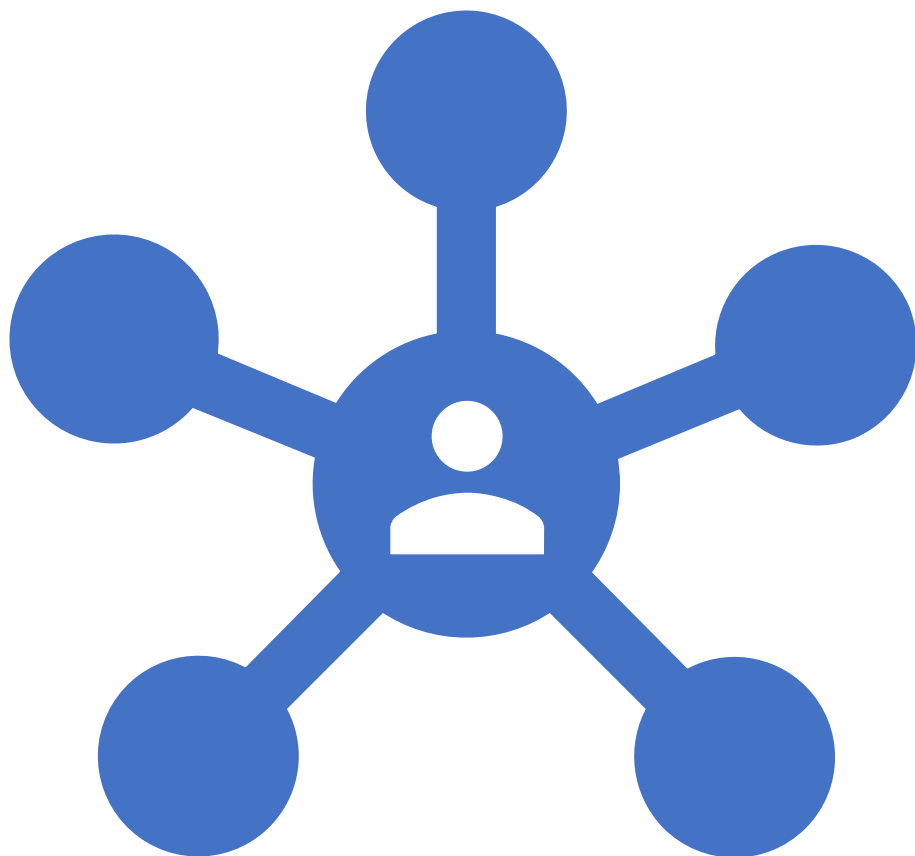
It Starts with CULTURE

“If you get the culture right, most other stuff will take care of itself.”

Tony Hseih

Learning Goals for Our Time Together

Make	Make the case that building a culture for equity and excellence is ESSENTIAL to embedding EQUITY across the organization
Outline	Outline indicators of cultural shifts
Experience	Experience learning activities that contribute to a culture of Equity and Excellence
Gain	Gain clarity and skill in building a culture for equity



Agenda for our Learning Lab

- Part I—Outlining a Framework for Student-Centered Equity
- Part II—Examining Self and the Community
- Part III—4 B's of Equity Work with a Focus on Belonging

Break—15 minute

- Part IV—Co-construction of a Vision of Excellence and Equity
- Part V—The 4 B's of Equity Work with a Focus on Scholar Voice
- Part VI—Crafting Success Criteria

Norms for Our Learning Together

Come assuming
positive intent

We are pushing on
ideas, not each other

Accept non-closure

Expect to be in a
dangerously-safe space

Stay engaged and
present

Stay open to new ideas
and new perspectives,
this is not about being
perfect

Keep the focus of this
work on our
STUDENTS!

Defining Equity

In the chat box, in a sentence, define equity.

What is Equity?

A way of being, seeing,
thinking

It is everyday,
everywhere and
EVERYONE leads for it!

It involves both
technical and adaptive
strategies

Placing students at the
center and providing
what they need, not
the same thing

Goes beyond the
individual, it is
structural, institutional
and systemic

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



Consider This...

*LEADERSHIP and EQUITY are one and the same.
There is no equity without leadership, and you
are not a leader if you are not fiercely
advocating for equity.*



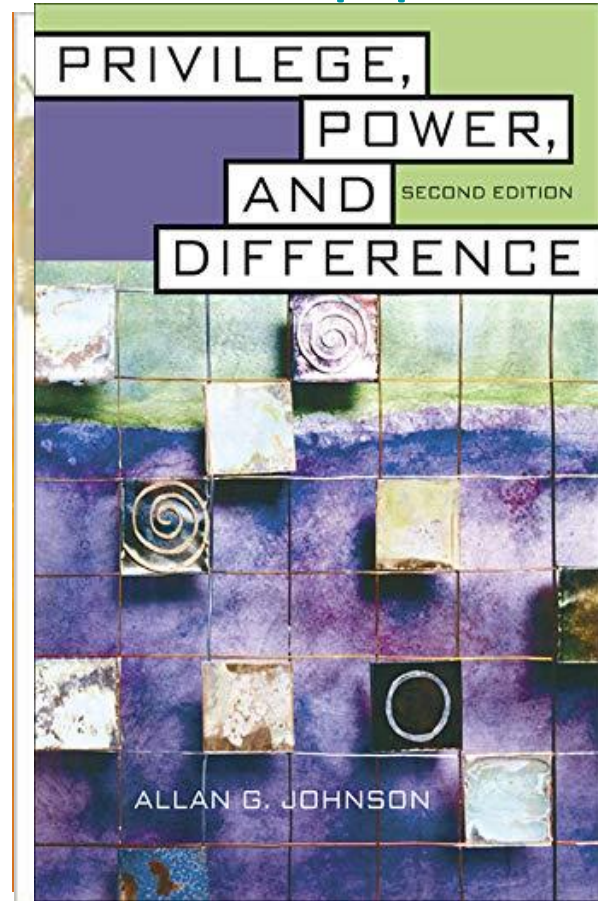
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We must focus on approaches to equity that go beyond the work of a single individual in an equity office and/or professional development and anti-bias training... we will never reach every student, every classroom with this approach. We must take a whole district approach that is tethered to our structures, systems and embedded in our culture.

Influences on our Approach

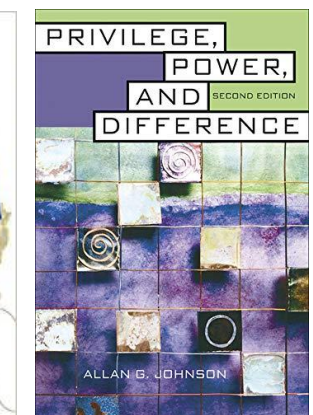
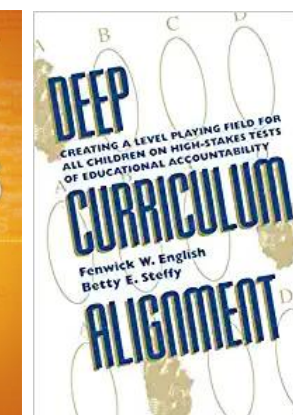
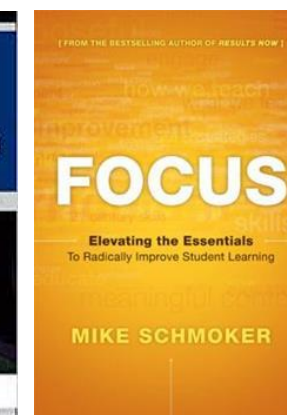
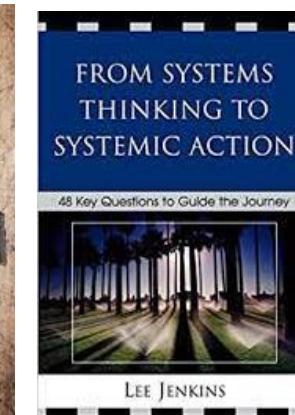
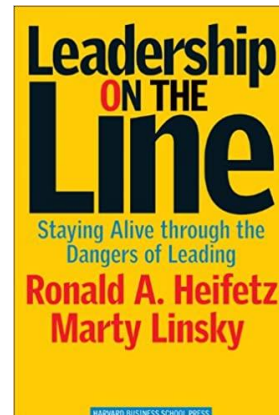
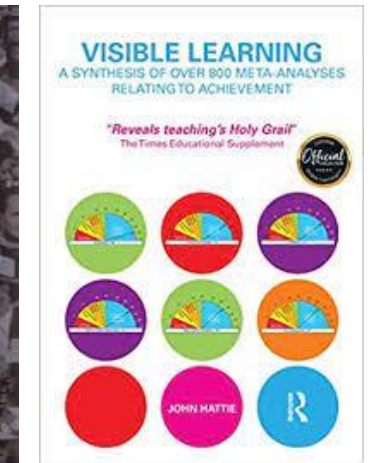
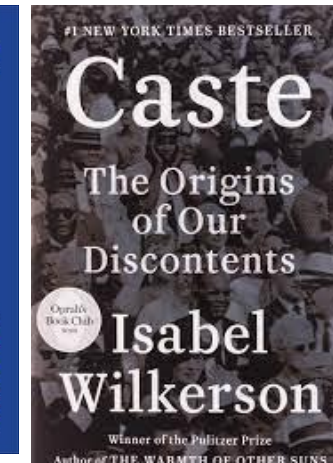
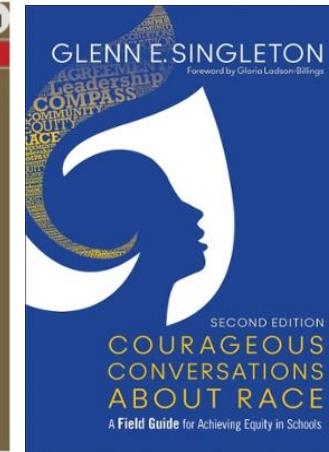
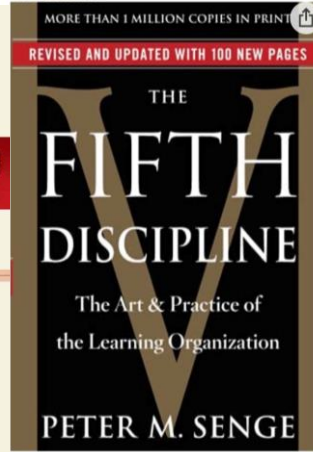
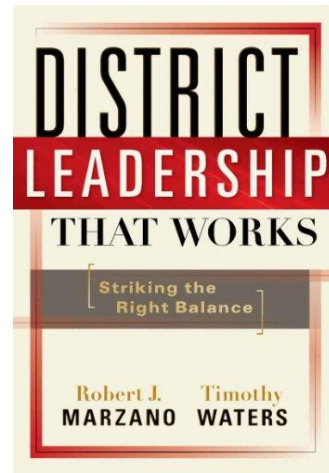


Allan Johnson

Privilege, Power, and Difference

;

Influences on Our Approach



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.

Pair-Share: What things lurk beneath the surface and in the foundation that might be causing gaps in student opportunity and achievement for our students?

Transforming the HOUSE Requires...

- A systems approach
- The WHOLE team
- Coordination with a clear Vision of a new and better house
- A RELENTLESS focus on ALL students
- You can't tear the house down—we don't have the luxury of pausing/stopping the work, but we can layer in NEW systems over time so that the house is transformed.

Think About This...

Equity Minded Leader +
No Systems Approach



equity

Varying results across the
district

Low Equity Focus +
Systems Approach



equity

Systemically aiding
institutional harm

**Equity Minded Leader +
Systems Approach**



EQUITY

**Gaps close, ALL scholars
benefit**

Getting Clearer

Dugan Article—Spend the next 7 minutes reading the article. Next in your break out room come prepared to share two “traps” that you believe are the biggest threat to Equity in your district.

Come prepared to share themes and patterns from the discussion.

Stitching the Red Thread of Equity Across The Organization



DEI Learning

- ✓ Individual
- ✓ Interpersonal

Schools

Finance

Teaching for Learning

Communications

Operations (Trans/Nutrition

Human Resources

Finance

Policies

Lasting Change

- ✓ Individual
- ✓ Department
- ✓ School
- ✓ Structural
- ✓ Systemic
- ✓ Institutional
- ✓ Policy

Technical and Adaptive Changes



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Reflecting on our Work...

Year 1: Focus on Culture

Learning

- ✓ Racial Equity, diversity, inclusion (Individual/Interpersonal)
- ✓ Personal Experiences
- ✓ Blind spots
- ✓ Fostering Belonging

- ☐ Racial autobiography
- ☐ Analysis of regional history of social justice
- ☐ Consistent PD on DEI
- ☐ Consistent micro-sessions with all staff and departments

Visioning

- ✓ Vision of Equity and Excellence (structural)
- ✓ Threading Equity
- ✓ Setting the stage for shared vision of the future

- ☐ Create a Vision of Equity and Excellence
- ☐ Using the Vision of Equity and Excellence, create Classroom Look-fors
- ☐ Socialize the vision with all staff and community

Strategic Action

- ✓ Scholar Voice
- ✓ Leading with Your Why
- ✓ Modeling Signaling the Centrality and Importance of Equity to District Improvement
- ✓ TOA Creation

- ☐ Scholar Voice
- ☐ Outlining the data, the gaps, perception data, scholar voice
- ☐ Leaders front and center on the work
- ☐ TOA Creation
- ☐ Phase I Success Criteria and revisit

From Caste...

“There developed a caste system, based upon what people looked like, an internalized ranking, unspoken, unnamed, unacknowledged by everyday citizens even as they go about their lives adhering to it and acting upon it subconsciously to this day. Just as the studs and joists and beams that form the infrastructure of a building are not visible to those who live in it, so it is with caste. Its very invisibility is what gives it power and longevity.” p. 23



*Leading for Equity Requires LEARNING—
Making the invisible and subconscious,
visible, seen, and understood.*

Learning

Learning about YOURSELF

Learning

Learning about your blind spots

Learning

Learning about our students' stories, the district's story, the community's story and our nation's story

Looking Within...
*Racial/Cultural
Autobiographies.*

A critical activity to engage in with your leadership team, department team to identify your filters, what shapes them and your blind spots.

Think about your K-12 experiences, what did you learn about the contributions of people of color? People who identify as LGBTQ? Books, histories, etc. Implications for your work as a leader for equity?

Discuss in your breakout groups. 15 minutes

Large group share out.

Reflecting on our Work...

Year 1: Focus on Culture

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- ✓ Racial Equity, diversity, inclusion (Individual/Interpersonal)
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- ☐ Racial autobiography
- ☐ Analysis of regional history of social justice
- ☐ Consistent PD on DEI
- ☐ Consistent micro-sessions with all staff and departments

Visioning

- ✓ Vision of Equity and Excellence (structural)
- ✓ Threading Equity
- ✓ Setting the stage for shared vision of the future
- ✓ Student learning is central to the vision

- ☐ Create a Vision of Equity and Excellence
- ☐ Using the Vision of Equity and Excellence, create Classroom Look-fors
- ☐ Phase I Success Criteria

Strategic Action

- ✓ Artifacts of practice
- ✓ Co-construct a coherent Theory of Action (structural)
- ✓ Scholar voice/panels (structural)
- ✓ Launch or revise strategic plan to align with vision and TOA

- ☐ Central Office TOA Creation
- ☐ Belonging artifacts and classroom look-fors
- ☐ Assess progress against success criteria at least three times during the year

Regional influences on Equity work

- Consider events that have occurred in your community that would have influence on how your families and scholars are showing up.
- What are the stories, events, histories that either hinder or support your equity work
- Share in your breakout rooms? 15 minutes
- Are there themes?

Harvesting Our Ideas

In your breakout groups, draft 8-10 activities focusing on the individual and interpersonal aspect of Equity work that you would include in a professional development series to uncover bias/blind spots.

Be prepared to share with the whole group.



Eliminating Blind Spots and Creating Belonging

When we engage in the individual work of uncovering bias and narrowing our blind spots, we are more likely to create classrooms and schools where scholars belong.

Belonging is one of the major outcomes of Equity work.



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Why Focus on Racial Equity? Or Equity?

- This is about student learning.
- Most of our students are white.
- Our challenges are really about poverty.
- We don't see color.
- We treat all of our kids the same.



Schooling is
about a
Collection of
Thousands of
Interactions
...

***Dependent on our biases and
our beliefs about our young
people...***

- In an instant we can inspire or suppress.
- In an instant we can elevate or deflate.
- In an instant we can push/challenge or lower the bar.
- The collection of instances of highly effective instruction that elevate ALL/EACH scholar in your system is the goal of continuous improvement.



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

Create a Deep Sense of **Belonging**

Broadcasting Scholar Voice

Demonstrate a **Belief** in the
Limitless Potential for EVERY Scholar

Removal of **Barriers**



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Belonging



Belonging...

When You Do

- You can be yourself
- You are seen by other students and your teacher
- You feel welcomed and comfortable
- You see yourself in the curriculum and in other elements of the classroom and school
- Learning is easier

WHEN YOU DON'T

- You feel out of place and isolated
- You are not seen and you feel like you do not matter
- You are not comfortable
- The curriculum and classroom spaces do not reflect varying cultures and perspectives
- You find belonging in other places
- Learning is more difficult

What Does Belonging Looks Like

Classroom and Surrounding Spaces

- ✓ Feeling accepted, respected and support by staff and peers
- ✓ Being in community, feeling seen and welcomed
- ✓ Being accepted linguistically, racially, culturally
- ✓ Taking time to pronounce a student's name correctly

School

- ✓ Sense of safety and being included
- ✓ Fewer instances of discipline
- ✓ School is a home game vs. away game
- ✓ Evidence of student work and cultural representation

District

- ✓ Data from student surveys conveys a sense of feeling welcomed and included
- ✓ Major publications in home languages





Overt Actions that Foster Belonging

- Shine a light on each student
- Foster student identity building
- Always leave one desk empty
- Make sure that each child feels chosen
- Weave social and emotional practices throughout the day

The Research: The Connection between Belonging and Achievement ...

- According to international [research](#), when students feel they're part of a school community, they ***will actively engage in academic and non-academic activities.***
- Improving feelings of belonging in school can support both student ***engagement and achievement.*** [Research](#) shows students who report a high sense of belonging in school generally ***put in more effort and are more motivated.***
- A low sense of belonging is associated with negative, possibly antisocial or delinquent, behaviors. These could include ***misbehavior, drug and alcohol use at school, violence and dropping out of school.***

Research on Belonging and Equity

Teachers and schools must plan for ALL students

Importantly, [some groups](#) of students may feel lower levels of belonging. This includes students with different cultural or language backgrounds, students with disabilities or students who identify as [LGBTQIA+](#).

[Research](#) suggests school strategies that increase a sense of belonging in under-served students could reduce school drop-out rates and lead to improved academic achievement.

**[Australian Council for Educational Research](#) (ACER)2018

Why is EQUITY WORK **Essential** in Building a Culture of Belonging?

- If you are human, you have biases.
- We must examine deeply held beliefs and biases through ongoing professional learning about race, diversity and inclusion.
- These many “instances” are what makes up the HOUSE that Wilkerson is describing - both at the individual and systems level.
- We are making split decisions that immediately convey whether a child belongs, matters, and ultimately SUCCEEDS.





Video...

- As you watch the video, consider what is familiar. How might the events portrayed in the video explain gaps in your district? Implications for your leadership? What will be different or more focused in your leadership as a result of seeing this video?
- Be prepared to discuss in your breakout rooms.





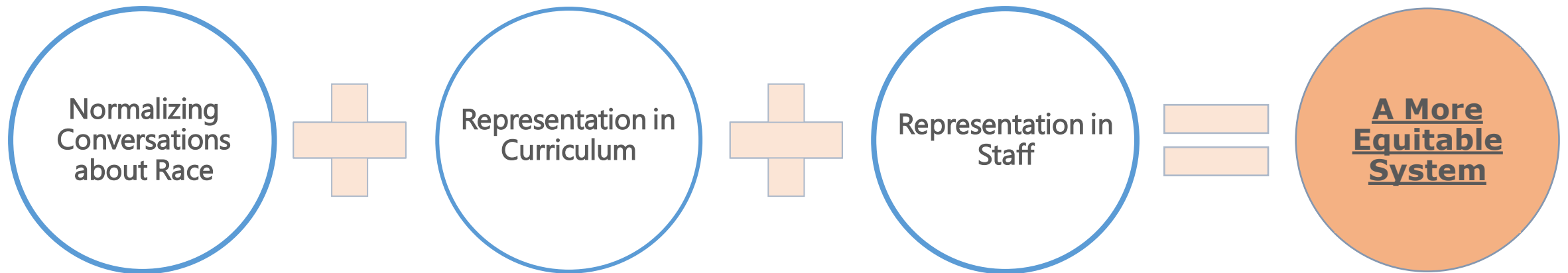
Break

- Take a 10 minute break

One Teacher's Approach to Belonging...



Scholar Voice – Scholar Vision for a More Equitable System



Position Student Insights and Voice as an Essential Component of Improvement

Scholar Advisory to the Superintendent and



Principal
Provost
Admin
School



Scholar Representatives serve on the school board and provide reports at each board meeting.



Engaging Scholars in Real and Meaningful Issues



Scholars are engaged to provide feedback on everything, including:

- Strategic plan
- School climate survey results
- School construction
- Hiring teams
- School year calendar

Scholar Voice: Teaching for Learning



Scholar Advisory:
What Really Good Teaching
and Learning Looks Like

How Do you Know You have Begun to Embed Equity in Your Culture?

Educators are ROUTINELY talking about race, equity, inclusion as they problem solve and create powerful learning spaces for students.

Scholar data is examined frequently and probed for gaps

Everyone is engaged in ongoing reading, learning about equity,

Scholar Voice is ACTIVATED and acted upon systemically.

Every department, school, team has a shared vision of what equity looks like and they are leading for it within their sphere of influence.

Families are valued and experience responsive support.

The central office operates in coordinated and responsive ways to enact the vision and support schools by developing and acting upon a coherent TOA.

Belonging measures indicate positive shifts for scholars

Revisiting Your Definition of Equity

- Now, in a sentence, define equity.
- Record in the chat box.
- What do we notice about how our definitions has “stretched”?
- What is clearer know?



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



Previewing our Cohort Work...

- Session I: Building on visioning, engage in practice of building an aligned Theory of Action
- Session II: Take a self-assessment to reflect on strengths and areas of focus for future work
- Session III: Artifacts, sharing of knowledge, problem of practice.