Stand in the Moment: Using Your Voice to Lead for Equity

“Always speak the truth even if your voice shakes.”
Anonymous

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By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Examine the nuances of pursuing an agenda of educational equity in a context of racially and culturally charged moments.

- Describe how to disrupt status quo practices by using your voice.
1. Who are you?
   - Teacher
   - Professional School Counselor
   - Equity Coach/Liaison
   - Principal
   - Central Office Staff
   - Higher Education Representative
   - Non-profit Representative

2. Who am I?
   - My background and perspective for the work.
Our work will be the most collaborative if you:

• Allow yourself to be challenged.

• React openly to cognitive dissonance.

• Acknowledge your own great expertise.

• Acknowledge your need for even greater expertise.

• Challenge yourself to think deeply and critically.
My Primary Arguments, Warnings, and Considerations

**MY PRIMARY ARGUMENTS**

1. Much of the work that goes into eliminating inequities in education is misguided and creates more inequity than equity.

2. Some educators fail to stand in the moment due to lack of knowledge of equity issue(s) and/or the perceived fear associated with presenting equity issues for review in a tentative work space.

**WARNINGS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

1. I *do not* have the following:
   - “The formula or workbook to inform you how to stand in the moment, or
   - A tidy set of activities for you to implement in order to lead for equity.

2. I *do have* the following:
   - Some difficult, sometimes even uncomfortable, ideas about what you should consider as you attempt to engage in this work.
   - A process for thinking critically about how to use your voice to lead for equity.
Moral of the story is...

THIS WORK IS NOT EASY

THIS WORK IS NOT POPULAR

THIS WORK IS UNCOMFORTABLE

BUT
THIS WORK IS NECESSARY
Nuances of pursuing an equity agenda
The data reveal concerning yet consistent trends relative to Black and Brown scholars.....
As Black and Brown scholars enter the PreK-12 space....
Differences in cognitive skills on the first day of kindergarten

Math scores by race/ethnicity

Source: EPI analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 2010-2011 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics), reflecting standard deviation differences in scores. For more details see inequalities at the Starting Gate at nopapers.org/startinggate.
Many factors influence education opportunity, starting in preschool.
Over 8,000 toddlers were suspended from preschool in 2011 school year. 70% were minority.

**Disparity in Discipline Starts in Preschool**

- **Overall Enrollment**
  - White: 43%
  - Two or more races: 29%
  - Hispanic/Latino: 18%
  - Black or African-American: 12%
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 1%
  - Asian: 1%
  - American Indian or Alaska Native: 1%

- **Out-of-school suspension (single)**
  - White: 26%
  - Two or more races: 42%
  - Hispanic/Latino: 25%
  - Black or African-American: 48%
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 1%
  - Asian: 1%
  - American Indian or Alaska Native: 1%

- **Out-of-school suspension (multiple)**
  - White: 36%
  - Two or more races: 20%
  - Hispanic/Latino: 32%
  - Black or African-American: 48%
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander: 1%
  - Asian: 1%
  - American Indian or Alaska Native: 1%

As Black and Brown scholars exit the PreK-12 space....
Students Receiving Suspensions and Expulsions by Race/Ethnicity

Minority students represent a smaller percentage of enrollment, but the highest percentages of students disciplined.

Out-Of-School Suspension (Multiple) ▼

- Black: 42
- White: 31
- Hispanic: 21
- Two Or More Races: 3
- American Indian: 2
- Asian: 1
- Native Hawaiian: 0.30
- Other: null

U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2013
High school graduation and racial inequality

- White
- Black
- Hispanic

Source: Building a GradNation 2014; US Education Department
Black and Brown scholars enter and exit the higher education space ....
College completers and dropouts

- **Drop out without any credential**
  - White
  - Black
  - Hispanic

- **Complete at least a bachelor's degree**
  - White
  - Black
  - Hispanic

Source: Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce
A COMMON LANGUAGE
Establishing a Common Language: Turn and Talk

- What is equity?
- What is race?
- What is culture?
Establishing a Common Language

Race:
- Three dimensions

Culture:
- One dimension of race

Equity:
- Principle of fairness
- Equity a process while equality is an outcome
A Few Data Points to Ponder……

• About six-in-ten Americans say the country needs to making changes to assure that Blacks have equal rights with whites (86% Blacks as compared to 53% of Whites concur—this is an increase from the previous year when only 39% of Whites stated such).

• A growing share of Americans say that racism is a big problem (75% Blacks, 58% Latinos, and 44% Whites).

• Americans largely supported South Carolina’s removal of the confederate battle flag (in total, 57% agreed with the most respondents citing the reason for removal was the flag represented racism and slavery – 76% Blacks and 56% Whites citing this reason).

• The wealth gap between Blacks and Whites in 2013 reached its highest point since 1989. The wealth of White households was 13 times the median wealth of Black households in 2013.

Pew Research Center (2016)
And still today ....
This assignment was given to students in your school/school district. How would you use your voice to lead for equity?
TURN AND TALK REFLECTION

How would you use your voice to lead for equity?
Parents,

During the month of February, Western Union students have been studying Black History. On Tuesday, February 28, WUES will participate in a Black History Day. We will have speakers from 8-10 am. We are encouraging students to dress in “African American attire”. If you do not have this, students could wear animal print clothing or shirts with animals native to Africa (zebras, giraffes, lions, elephants, etc.).

This was sent to parents in your school/school district. How would you use your voice to lead for equity?
TURN AND TALK REFLECTION

How would you use your voice to lead for equity?
Is the “no opt out” technique an essential strategy to promote academic excellence for Black and Brown scholars?

I agree.....
(You may add to this agreement statement.)

I agree, but the manner in which the teacher implements the strategy must be done with care.

I disagree....
(You may add to this disagreement statement.)

I disagree, and the strategy could serve to exclude scholars from classroom instruction and devalue their contribution to the classroom community.
How would you use your voice to lead for equity?

How would you assist this teacher see herself?

How would you assist rebuild community in this classroom?
My Personal Narrative....
As an African American woman working in both predominately White and Black educational environments.....

• Recognizing White Fragility

AND

• The “Being Brown Dilemma” – a phrase I coined to capture my lived experiences

The “Being Brown Dilemma” - (1) Brown folk know the experience of ALL Brown students, parent, and communities and/or (2) Because I am Brown, there is no reason to question my work relative to Brown communities!
Lessons Learned

- Know your context.

- White fragility is real. With an understanding of white fragility, I must use strategies associated with how to engage in difficult conversations/courageous conversation to accomplish goals.

- The “Being Brown Dilemma” is also real. Typically, it takes an “event” to provoke action to do something different. An “event” could be an adverse report, an alarming incident in a school, a community uprising, change in leadership, etc. I fight everyday not to be influenced (internally or externally) by this dilemma. It is an ongoing pursuit as I engage my sisters and brothers in this work.

- I am learning to become a master at: (1) having difficult conversations and (2) analyzing data to tell “the” story. To move the work, I attempt to frame all of my in the context of the direct effect of data points on stakeholders.

- The organization does not develop if I do the work that others should be doing; therefore, I must seek allies to partner in this work.

- This is game of chess, I use strategy to move the work from theory (awareness and training) to practice (anti-racist praxis).
How will you use your voice to lead for equity?
Opportunities to lead for equity......

- A student writes the following message on another student’s flyer for class president....“Obama, was the first Black president, and he will be the last.”

- A lead teacher creates a blog entitled, “Navigating Ghetto Parents.” She uses this blog to assist new teachers in his/her building respond positively with parents in his/her school.

- A teacher wears a “All White Lives Matter” t-shirt to dress down day for spirit week at his/her school. The day of the spirit week was entitled, “Be Uniquely You.”

- At your home football game, your star football player pins/sews a small confederate flag on his back of this jersey as he runs out to the field.

- On an overnight field trip, a group of students creates a video discussing their derogatory views of Black and Brown students in their school and in the larger community. The video goes viral.
Use Your Voice to Lead for Equity!

1. Identify your context
   • Different entry point strategies for different contexts

2. Use your Voice
   • Systematically speaking on issues/top that benefit some more than others, challenging discrepancies in services, questioning policies that serve some while disserving others…..

3. Practice/Action
   • How do you ensure access and accessibility?
Guardians of Equity (sample questions for consideration)

• **Teachers**
  • Who is leading class discussions? Who do you call on? Who are you keeping in the classroom, and who are you sending out of the classroom? Who are you offering additional support to and then who receives no additional support? What have you done to build and live in ongoing relationship with students?

• **Principals**
  • How are you challenging practices of those in your building that serve some better than others?
  • What are you doing to ensure each student has an experienced teacher in his/her classroom?
  • How are you actively working to challenge the disproportionality in suspensions data?
Guardians of Equity (sample questions for consideration)

• **District Office Staff**
  - How do your policies serve some better than others? How are you analyzing all data points and using an equity stance to respond?
  - How are you training all stakeholders to understand the complexities of this work?

• **Higher Education**
  - How do your teacher/leadership education programs prepare future teachers/leaders to lead for equity?
As Guardians of Equity ..............

DO WHAT IS RIGHT, NOT WHAT IS EASY.
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