

FIVE EQUITY SHIFTS

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5 Equity shifts

1. Read definitions to yourself
2. Free write a reaction OR respond to prompts:
Notice: What do you notice? Is this familiar or new?
Feel: How do you feel about this?
Question: What questions do you have?
Think: what do you think about this? Connection or challenges
3. With your group work on: This shift leads us to believe that....

SHIFT FOCUS FROM MAINSTREAM TO MARGINS

Educational systems - like all systems in the United States - were designed by, and for, individuals with 'mainstream' identities: white, male, English-speaking, middle-class or higher, Christian, neurotypical, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender etc.

Upholding the policies, practices, and culture that best serve students with mainstream identities systemically creates and reinforces marginalization.

Transforming educational institutions requires centering the experiences of people living through marginalization and oppression; they understand their experiences best and hold the greatest potential to envision new systems and generate solutions. Systems designed to serve students in the margins will serve all students well.

SHIFT FOCUS FROM COLOR BLIND TO COLOR CONSCIOUS

The myth of colorblindness functions as a tool to avoid confronting issues of race, racism, and white privilege and makes it difficult to examine implicit bias, structural racism, and to celebrate differences. Statements like, 'I don't see color', are scientifically and exponentially inaccurate, and erase important aspects of an individual's identity while denying that racial differences exist and impact people's lives and access to opportunities. Sustainable changes to the inequitable policies, practices, and patterns that create and maintain racially disparate outcomes becomes possible when individuals and systems commit to being conscious about racial differences and the impacts of racism.

SHIFT FOCUS FROM LOOKING AT SYSTEMS AS DEFICIENT, NOT INDIVIDUALS

Instead of addressing the root causes of inequities, initiatives to fix the 'achievement gap' rely on a deficit framework which places blame on students of color, low-income students, and students with other marginalized identities for their lack of educational attainment. In other words there's something wrong with the culture, values, or motivation of underperforming students and/or their families.

A systemic approach examines the structural barriers - like access to safe and affordable housing, health care, and living wages - created by racism, classism, sexism, etc along with the policies, practices, and cultural patterns that reinforce marginalization. Addressing the 'opportunity gap' requires us to remove those barriers to academic achievement.

Where the problem is positioned matters, because it will determine how solutions are generated.

Equality and equity

Equality: Everyone gets the same thing.

Equity: Everyone gets what they need to grow and thrive. In a society where injustice is present, equity may not feel fair. The legacies of indigenous genocide, slavery, colonization, white supremacy, patriarchy, etc have shaped the systems and institutions that uphold our current and equitable society.

People are born into different geographic locations and social positions with the mechanics and cultural patterns of oppression already in place. Given this context, shallow commitments to equality and a desire to treat everyone the same will produce different outcomes because the current status quo is inherently unequal.

Instead there must be a commitment to repairing, mitigating, and transforming the histories and current realities of inequity and injustice.

RACISM DEFINED: FROM INTENT TO IMPACT

Many understandings of racism inaccurately require an intent to harm a person because of their race or skin color; seeing racism as a moment, rather than a system. Racism does not require an active intent to harm people of color; instead, many racial inequities are unintended and remain in place by not acknowledging that racially disparate impact is an indicator of racism. Upholding specific policies or defending actions which create inequity, even if they were based on good intentions, contributes to marginalization and oppression. Educational systems marginalize Black and Brown students - by design and by default - a reality made invisible by colorblindness, reinforced by deficit thinking, and hidden behind and inadequate commitment to equality. In an equitable environment, all members of the community must take responsibility for the ways they contribute to patterns of racism while committing to address the many ways racism affects people of color, even when there was no intention to harm them.

THE FOUR I'S OF OPPRESSION

FOUR I'S