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Equity Assistance Center

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Moving From Awareness to Action: Equity Detours and the Equity Literacy Framework

WEEAC Webinar 4



Technical Assistance

Professional Learning

- By request—school boards, governmental agencies
- Through equity-centered capacity-building to better serve students who have experienced ongoing inequities in our educational system because of race, national origin, sex, or religion

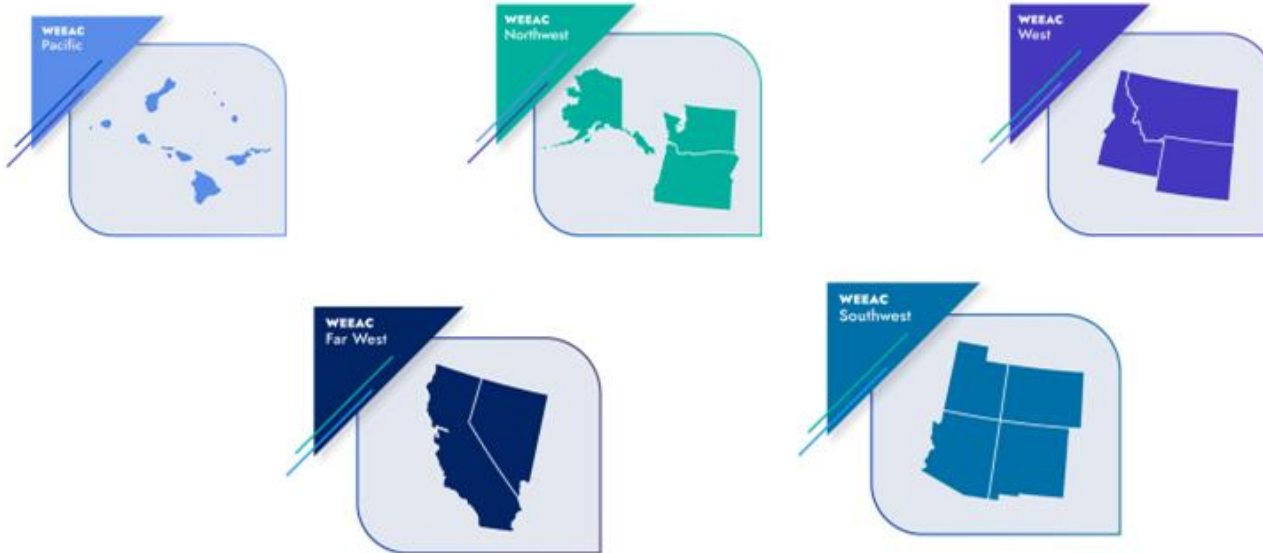


Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC) Objectives

- Reduce chronic absence.
- Reduce bullying and harassment.
- Improve high school graduation rates.
- Strengthen high school course enrollment.
- Improve discipline equity.
- Address disproportionality of students served under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Address discrimination cases and desegregation orders.



WEEAC Subregions



Pacific

American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawai'i

Northwest

Alaska, Oregon, and Washington

West

Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming

Far West

California and Nevada

Southwest

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, and Utah



Five-Part Webinar Series

- Webinar 1 Pt. 1—Beyond Diversity: Achieving Racial Equity by Addressing Systemic Beliefs
Wednesday, November 1
- Webinar 1 Pt. 2—Beyond Diversity: Achieving Racial Equity by Addressing Systemic Beliefs
Wednesday, November 15
- Webinar 2—Foundations of Culturally Responsive & Sustaining Education
Thursday, January 18
- Webinar 3—Culturally Responsive Data Literacy
Thursday, February 22
- **Webinar 4—From Awareness to Action: Equity Detours & the Equity Literacy Framework**
Thursday, March 21
- Webinar 5—Family and Community Engagement
Thursday, April 25



Expertise of the WEEAC Team



Rawlin J. Rosario
Senior Equity Associate



John Jacobs
Senior Technical Assistance
Specialist



Objectives

- **Identifying Common Detours to Equity:** Delve into the common roadblocks that often impede progress toward achieving equity in education. Participants will learn to recognize and understand these detours, enabling them to navigate and overcome challenges effectively.
- **Strengthening Educators' Equity Literacy:** Equip educators with the necessary tools to enhance their equity literacy.
- **Case Studies for Deeper Understanding:** Explore relevant and impactful case studies that highlight successful equity actions, providing participants with tangible examples and practical takeaways.

Session Agenda



- Setting the Stage to Discuss Equity
- Equity Literacy
- Equity Literacy Framework
- Racial Equity Detours
- Case Studies on Equity and Social Justice



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Setting the Stage to Discuss Equity

Our Starting Point



- Equal educational opportunities are a civil right.
- Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Education and equity are the plate.
- Refocus our gaze: We need to fix systems and adult practices, *NOT children and families/communities.*
- This is a journey, not a destination.

Working Agreements



Expect and accept non-closure

Notice patterns of power by interrogating the self and systems

Focus on impact rather than intent

Stay engaged even when uncomfortable

Keep confidentiality

Grant permission for collective breath



**Which working
agreement(s)
can you commit
to uphold in this
session?**

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Educational Equity

“Raising the achievement of all students while (1) narrowing the gaps between the lowest and highest performing students and (2) eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories” (Singleton & Linton, 2006).



Addressing racial inequities requires **moving beyond** acknowledging gaps or disparities between racial groups and toward creating a deliberate and intentional racial equity strategy aimed at combating racism in all of its forms” (Singleton, 2015).



Collective Equity

“**Collective equity** is a shared responsibility for the social, cultural, academic, and emotional fortification of students and adults that enables learners to achieve their goals and aspirations on their own terms.”

(Hollins-Alexander et al., 2022, p. 13)



Equity Literacy

The foundations of equity literacy are

- a commitment to deepening individual and institutional understandings of how equity and inequity operate in organizations and societies, and
- the individual and institutional knowledge, skills, and will to vigilantly identify and eliminate inequities, and actively cultivating equity.

(Gorski, 2019)



Equity Literacy Framework

- According to the equity literacy framework, equity is not merely about *giving every student what they need to succeed* in an individual sense.
- Instead, equity is a process through which we ensure that policies, practices, institutional cultures, and ideologies are actively equitable, purposefully attending to the interests of the students and families to whose interests we have attended inequitably.
- By *recognizing* and deeply understanding these sorts of disparities, we prepare ourselves to respond effectively to inequity in the immediate term.

(Gorski, 2019)



Racial Equity Detours

Paul Gorski, 2019



As you advance equity or culturally responsive practices in your context, what are some challenges you face or what are things that get in the way?

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What are Equity Detours?

Those actions and approaches that schools often adopt in the name of equity that might create the **illusion** of equity progress, but that **do not cultivate** more equity.

(Gorski, 2019)



Sometimes Equity Detours . . .

- stem from misunderstandings about what equity means,
- stem from misunderstandings about the level of transformation needed to achieve equity, or
- are adopted purposefully to avoid more meaningful equity work.

(Gorski, 2019)

Racial Equity Detours



- **Pacing for privilege:** prioritizes the comfort of those not invested in racial justice
- **Poverty of culture:** we blame “culture” for problems but don’t talk about racism
- **Deficit ideology:** we see the source of disparities located within students’ homes and communities and try to “fix” students (e.g., more grit! better mindset!)
- **Celebrating diversity:** superficial appreciation of diversity without addressing inequities

(Gorski, 2019)



Pacing for Privilege

- approaches that defer to the interests of those in power and who are privileged or otherwise enfranchised by the system at the expense and continued disenfranchisement of those oppressed by the system—this is accomplished via
 - catering to their feelings and fears
 - avoiding challenging information or topics to protect their comfort
 - slowed pacing (e.g., “with all deliberate speed”)

(Gorski, 2019)



Poverty of Culture

- attributing educational disparities to students' cultures
- interpreting racial disparities in which students are suspended or expelled not as the result of racial bias, as research shows it primarily to be (Rudd, 2014) but as a cultural defect in communities of color.
- Attempting to solve these disparities by adjusting the behaviors, mindsets, or emotions of students rather than by adjusting educators' biased presumptions or schools' inequitable practices.

(Gorski, 2019)



Deficit Ideology

- strategies locate the source of educational outcome disparities within the students, their families, and communities while often ignoring the role of racism and other biases
- shifts the onus of responsibility for both cause and change away from adult professionals and onto the students and their families
- obscures structural conditions with which marginalized communities contend
- offers students of color coping mechanisms rather than correcting in-school conditions—like inequitable policy or racially tinged tracking practices—that exacerbate racism’s traumas

(Gorski, 2019)



Celebrating Diversity

Diversity celebrations generally

- do not provide opportunities for authentic multi-racial, -ethnic, -linguistic, or -cultural interactions and exchanges;
- do not promote deep learning and understanding across groups; and
- are limited to performance with “representations” of culture via food, costuming/regalia, music, and/or dance.

(Gorski, 2019)



Sample Detour Statements

- Speaker A: “These students are failing because of the communities they come from. Our role in schools is to teach them how to be successful or else they will never make it.”
- Speaker B: “We need to make sure we meet folks where they are before we begin to address racial inequities.”
- Speaker C: “We need to talk about cultural competency, not racism.”
- Speaker D: “ We have a diversity day at our school, so our students of color can feel included.”
- Speaker E: “Those families just don’t value education as much as other families.”



Reflection & Small Group Discussion



- How have you seen evidence of these racial equity detours in your own context?
- What has been the impact of these detours in your context?



Whole Group Debrief

I'm wondering about ...

I'm noticing ...

I'm challenged by ...



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Moving from Awareness to Action

Paul Gorski & Katy Swalwell, 2023



Recognizing how injustice operates and eliminating it

"You say you're committed to addressing racism, but it feels like you're gaslighting us."

Daron was the lead organizer of Black@Bluerose, a Facebook group where hundreds of current and former students discussed racism they endured at Bluerose High School. The group had requested a forum where they could share their concerns with school and district leaders.

"Show us evidence," Daron insisted. "What are you doing to stop racism?"

"We're improving our awareness and examining our biases," Justine, Bluerose's principal, answered. "For example, several of us are in a book group."

"We're telling you what's happening to us," Daron responded. "How many books do you need to read before you do something?"



Five Transformational Equity and Justice Skills

1. Recognizing inequity
2. Responding to inequity
3. Redressing inequity
4. Actively cultivating equity
5. Sustaining equity

(Gorski & Swalwell, 2023)



Recognizing Inequity

- Recognize injustice, even that which our identities shield.
- Ask yourself, “How is racism operating right here right now? How is ableism operating?” (insert almost any -ism)
- Listen to and believe marginalized communities when they tell you inequity is present.
- Normalize naming inequity.
- Listen for troubling ideologies in interactions with colleagues.
- Analyze policies and examine implicit school culture.

(Gorski & Swalwell, 2023)



Responding to Inequity

- Offer windows through which colleagues can interpret what they're observing.
- Ask questions and practice explaining as clearly as possible how particular ideologies, practices, or policies do harm.
- Eliminate or change troubling policies and practices to be more just.
- Ask those most affected by inequity what a just resolution for them would be.
- Act on the feedback; don't just listen.

(Gorski & Swalwell, 2023)



Pause & Reflect



- Have equity efforts ever stalled at your school? Can you identify the root cause of that inaction?
- How can educators better listen to and respond to student concerns about equity?



Actively Cultivating Equity

- Every action is informed by a commitment to equity.
- Make equitable decisions upfront rather than being reactive.
- Ask “How will this action impact the most marginalized people in our community?” or “How will it move us toward justice?”
- Prioritize in every decision and action the best interests, demands, and joys of the people whose best interests, demands, and joys have tended to be subjugated in schools.
- Create an equity team with decision-making power for ongoing equity efforts.

(Gorski & Swalwell, 2023)



Sustaining Equity

- Prepare for backlash, but don't center resistance.
- Work together to clarify your values.
- Develop language to support equity-based efforts aligned to your values.
- Practice and role-play.
- Publicly back and support folks actively sustaining equity.

(Gorski & Swalwell, 2023)



Pause & Reflect



- What steps has your school or district taken to "actively cultivate" equity in crafting new initiatives or policies?
- Which of these skills are you already good at?
- Where's your growth edge?



Five Transformational Equity and Justice Skills

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(Gorski & Swalwell, 2023)



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Case Studies on Equity and Social Justice

Paul Gorski & Seema Pothini, 2018



Activity: Case Studies

ODD: Case 6.3

Diverse Friends Day

EVEN: Case 8.4

Behavior Management Missing
the Mark

1. Individually: Read the case study.
2. Review the process for analyzing cases.
3. Use the steps in the process to guide your group discussion on the scenario.

Step 1: Describe

- What's the situation?
- Who is involved?
- What's the setting?
- What are the initial inequities and biases I notice here?



Step 2: Surface

- How do my experiences relate to the situation?
- Which aspects of my identity shape my view of the situation?
- Which emotions am I feeling right now?



Step 3: Consider

- Who are the key players in this situation?
- Who benefits? Who is disadvantaged?
- Who holds power and in what ways?
- How might different groups view this situation?



Step 4: Define

- What other inequities & biases are present here?
- What are the barriers to eliminating these inequities and biases?
- What opportunities for change present themselves?



Step 5: Imagine

- What approaches (small and big) can I imagine to address these inequities and biases?
- How will these approaches redistribute opportunity and/or access?



Step 6: Plan & Act

- What step(s) can I take in the short term & within my sphere of influence?
- What step(s) can I take to advocate for longer-term structural change?





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ODD: Case 6.3
Diverse Friends Day

EVEN: Case 8.4
Behavior Management Missing
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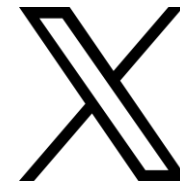
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Thank you

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Please complete the evaluation form and tell us how we did!

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