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Equity Teacher Dispositions

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping our future citizens. Thus, they have more power than they often realize in promoting a socially just and equitable society because they can leverage the power of their pedagogy to transform our world. What we chose to teach, how we interact with students, and how we treat families, all play a critical role in how children come to see the world and interact with it. The following six research-based equity dispositions form the foundation of our “Transformative Pedagogy” philosophy and are vitally important for teachers committed to building a culturally and linguistically responsive classroom community by, with and for every child.

1

Reflect on personal assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors. *

Personal beliefs determine how an individual sees the world, other people, and oneself. Our beliefs and unconscious biases determine our actions and practices, and these actions inform how systems develop and operate, including our current education system. For Teachers to feel comfortable addressing issues of bias, inequity, and race, they first need to have a heightened understanding of their own identities, values, assumptions, and biases. In addition to this self-exploration, Teachers must cultivate and maintain a deep understanding of how privilege, power, and oppression operate, historically and currently in school and society. Without a firm self-examination of their own identity and role in historically inequitable structures, teachers risk reproducing inequities inside and outside their classrooms. As Teachers of diverse students, such critical self-reflection should be an ongoing, lifelong process.

2

Act with cultural competence and responsiveness in interactions, decision-making, and practice. *

Racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students and families experience school differently, making it essential to examine the norms and interactions around race, ethnicity, and diversity within the classroom environment. Equity-centered environments are responsive to and inclusive of the cultural identities of



students, staff, and the surrounding community, and teachers play an integral part in developing the school environment by holding themselves accountable to meeting the needs of diverse students and families. Teachers must, therefore, exhibit culturally responsive practices, including communicating high expectations for all students; designing curriculum that incorporates students' backgrounds, languages and learning styles. This includes delivering student-centered instruction via multiple modes of instruction (cooperative learning, project-based learning, etc.) and allowing students to demonstrate mastery of content through multiple modes (tests, papers, presentations, artistic performances, etc.). This also includes working with parents and families as valued and respected partners. Stronger partnerships and collaboration between teachers and families improve family engagement and increases the sense of trust between students, families, and schools. It can also reduce cultural misunderstandings and further understanding of the diversity of beliefs and values in the community.

3

Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with minoritized populations. *

If schools are to evolve, the organizational structure of schools must be transformed. To do this, Teachers must review policies, practices, and structures and remove potential barriers that disadvantage students on the basis of race or ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. Students that embody one or many of these characteristics have been minoritized by society and individuals telling them that they are less than and incapable of the skills and abilities of white dominant culture. Confronting these long-standing beliefs and practices requires a collaborative effort, where stakeholders engage in intentional conversations about who benefits from current policy and practice and who is being minoritized or disadvantaged. Teachers can initiate the process by examining individual, school and district data that have been disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other characteristics; conducting a classroom equity audit; and engaging in a process of collaborative inquiry.

4

Cultivate self-love and knowledge and develop an appreciation and respect for others. **

Teachers provide students opportunities to learn about who they are. A sense of dignity and pride in students' culture, heritage, ethnicity/race, religion, skin tone, and gender is cultivated in the classroom, (e.g., through supplementation



of the curriculum to ensure that students' racial or ethnic identity and historical background is incorporated). Students learn about different aspects of their identity, the identity of others, and the history, strengths, and resilience associated with it. Teachers also provide opportunities for students to share their knowledge about their own cultural background with their classmates. The goal is to create a climate of respect for diversity through students learning to listen with kindness and empathy to the experiences of their peers. Negative stereotypes about students' identities are deconstructed.

5

Teach about issues of social injustice, social movements, and social change. **

Teachers move from “celebrating diversity” to an exploration of how diversity has been used as a justification and means to impact various groups of people differently and disparately. Students learn about the history of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and religious intolerance, and how these forms of oppression have shaped people's lived experiences today. Teachers make links that show how the historical roots of injustice impact the lived experiences and material conditions of people today. Teachers also share examples of movements of people standing together to address the issues of social injustice. Rather than leaving students feeling overwhelmed and defeated, teachers help students understand that working together, ordinary people have united to create change.

6

Encourage students to exercise their voice in the promotion of social change. **

Teachers provide opportunities to move beyond raising awareness to empowering and supporting students to take action on issues that affect them and their communities. Students identify issues they feel passionate about and learn the skills of creating change firsthand. Students should also learn how to improve the material conditions of their lives by learning how to do research, analyze who has the power to change particular situations, actualize ways to engage our democratic process to effectuate change, and learn skills with which to advocate for justice (e.g., write letters and speeches, use social media and blogs, etc.)

This document was created by Dr. Tauheedah F. Baker-Jones, Ed.L.D. based on the work of:

** Adapted from The Leadership Academy's Equity Leadership Dispositions*

*** Adapted from Bree Picower's Six Element of Social Justice Curriculum Design for the Elementary Classroom*