

# Educational Equity

## Distinguishing between Culturally Responsive Teaching and Critical Race Theory

### Culturally Responsive Teaching...

- is a way of teaching that recognizes the importance of including students' culture in all aspects of their learning. We all have culture, which includes our beliefs, values, behaviors, traditions, language, celebrations, food, and so much more. Culturally Responsive Teaching views the culture of each student as an asset, and teaches to and through each student's strengths. (Ladson-Billings, 1994.)
- is all about building meaningful, authentic relationships with every student. It means facilitating learning through a deep understanding of each student's strengths, as well as their individual needs, so that all learners may thrive and achieve at high levels.
- is a student-centered way of teaching that can benefit all students.

### Critical Race Theory...

- is an academic concept that was founded over 40 years ago.
- According to the American Bar Association, Critical Race Theory is the “practice of interrogating the role of race and racism in society that emerged in the legal academy and spread to other fields of scholarship.”
- is connected to such fields as philosophy, history, sociology, and law. It examines the intersection of race and the laws that have been passed and upheld throughout our legal system.
- also emphasizes the importance of finding a way for diverse individuals to share their experiences.

Document created in partnership:

Sebastian Witherspoon  
Executive Director  
Equity Alliance MN  
switherspoon@ea-mn.org

Katie Pikel, Ed.D.  
Principal in Residence  
University of Minnesota  
kpekel@umn.edu

# Reframing and Reclaiming the Equity Narrative in Your District

## **Keep the Main Thing the Main Thing**

At its very core, equity is about providing each student what they need to succeed. Whether you're responding to an email from a community member, or answering a phone call from a parent - keep the focus on students at the beginning, middle and end of every conversation and encourage your staff to do the same. Much of the current discourse has more to do with adult issues than the needs of our young people. Time and energy are precious and finite resources that our students need and deserve.

## **It is a Privilege to Serve Our Young People**

As servant leaders in public education, we proudly serve and welcome each and every child. Each student who we have the opportunity to know, teach, love and support is a gift. When speaking with people about why equity is good for all kids, approaching this work with an attitude of gratitude helps remind us why we do what we do.

## **Clearly Articulate Your District's "Why, What and How" for Equity**

When explaining the meaning and importance of educational equity to our various stakeholders, it is important we can articulate the following: the why, what and how of our work. Why are we invested and committed to this work?, What are the goals we are striving to achieve for our students?, and How do we intend to accomplish these goals? Shared language and understanding between the School Board and Administration of the why, what and how, is essential to moving your equity efforts forward.

## **What We Communicate Matters. So Does HOW We Communicate**

When we talk about equity in our district, the language we use and the manner in which we speak sets the tone for others. Remember, equity work is about serving all students. We have the ability to influence and inspire others when the language and energy of our message is grounded in authenticity, optimism and an unbridled sense of enthusiasm of what is possible for every student we have the honor to serve.

## **If Not Now, Then When? If Not Us, Then Who?**

It is incumbent upon all of us, as advocates for our young people, to operate with an acute sense of courageous urgency - without apology, without excuses, and without fear. As we are all too aware, Minnesota is home to some of the most significant educational gaps in the United States, often ranking last in achievement of our black and brown learners. Our moral imperative requires us to provide the best educational experiences for all of our students. The time is now.

## How Educational Equity Can Positively Impact Students, Teachers, Districts, and Communities:

- Enriches relationships & communities
- Strengthens the economy
- Changes the balance of power and privilege between all
- Promotes broader representation
- Supports better outcomes for ALL students
- Reduces the impacts of prejudice and bias
- Improves health outcomes and quality of life

### Resources for Additional Learning

*All resources listed are hyperlinked*

#### **Read**

Constitutional Amendment Proposed to Close Minnesota's Achievement Gaps  
Due North

From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt  
Joint Equity Statement

MDE - Ten MN Commitments to Equity

MDE Q&A: Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies

MN Students of Color Lead Movement for Equity in Schools

Time to Act: How School Superintendents Keep Equity at the Center of Their Leadership

*A Good Time for the Truth*

*Culturally Responsive School Leadership*

*Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain*

*Coaching for Equity: Conversations That Change Practice*

#### **Listen**

AASA Leading for Equity - A Superintendent's Mission to End Systemic Racism

Ezra Klein Interviews Ta-Nehisi Coates and Nikole Hannah-Jones

Southlake Podcast

Race in the Classroom: Seeing Color