Establishing an Equity Team

Note: *The following information is intended to guide you through the process of creating an Equity Team within your organization. It is influenced by the work of Glenn Singleton.*

Purpose: (Come up with a purpose statement).

Through increased cultural competence of all staff, significant improvement in policies, procedures, decision-making processes, allocation and use of resources, community engagement, and other important areas related to the mission of your organization, will be made—particularly for those community members, officials and staff that have historically been underserved.

Goal: (Connect to your organization's mission statement or strategic plan)

The goal of the Equity Team is to promote institutional change within the organization in order to better serve the community.

Strategy:

Establishing an Equity Team provides direction and leadership in culturally relevant professional development (CRPD), policies, and practices. The Equity Team becomes the lens of the organization and aims to institutionalize change.

Equity Defined:

"…. [Equity] deals with difference and takes into consideration the fact that this society has many groups in it who have not always been given equal treatment and/or have not had a level field on which to play. These groups have been frequently made to feel inferior to those in the mainstream and some have been oppressed. To achieve equity, according to Young (1990), 'Social policy should sometimes accord special treatment to groups' (p. 158). Thus, the concept of equity provides a case for unequal treatment for those who have been disadvantaged over time. It can provide compensatory kinds of treatment, offering it in the form of special programs and benefits for those who have been discriminated against and are in need of opportunity."

Krause, J. K, Traini, D. J., & Mickey, B. H. (2001). Equality versus equity. In J. P. Shapiro & J. A. Stefkovick (Eds), Ethical leadership and decision making in education (76-90). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time.
But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.
Lilla Watson

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A. **Before inviting people to join your Equity Team think through some of the planning. Following are some questions you will want to consider.**

1. Are there 1-2 people that can help you with the process of developing an Equity Team? These people will not necessarily serve on the Team. However, they can help you think things through and participate in the selection process.

2. What is the purpose or goal of the Equity Team?

3. What will be the focus of the Equity Team e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, etc.?

4. Determine who will lead the efforts and connect with that person. The Equity Team should include someone in a leadership position who is able to make decisions regarding the allocation of time and money resources.

5. How many people will be on your Equity Team? A minimum of two staff members and a maximum of 8-10, depending on the size of your organization.

6. What diverse representation should be on your Equity Team (e.g. office staff, maintenance, management, community members, racial diversity, gender, etc.)?

7. How long will members serve on the Equity Team?

8. What will you call your Equity Team?

9. When will you meet, how often and for how long?

10. When would the Equity Team first come together?

11. Are you able to pay staff for the additional work?

12. What funds do you have to support the ideas that the Equity Team comes up with e.g., CRPD?

13. Will you have an application process for selecting Equity Team members and if so, how will you ensure equity in the process and when are they due?

14. How will you select who gets chosen to be on the Equity Team? Think about an application process to include questions like…

    a) The purpose and goals of the Equity Team.

    b) What is your role within this organization?

    c) How long have you worked for this organization?

    d) Why would you like to be on the Equity Team?

    e) What experience do you have personally or professionally that helps you to understand issues related to diversity?

    f) What do you feel you bring that would support the efforts of the Equity Team?

    g) Example: The Equity Team will be meeting on the third Thursday of each month from 3:00-5:00p.m. Will this be a problem for you? If yes, please explain.

    h) If there are people who you know would be great serving on the Equity Team, consider encouraging them to apply. Be sure and tell them what skills they bring that you believe would make them a good fit. Also be sure to inform them that you cannot guarantee they will be selected.

B. **Invite Staff to Participate on the Equity Team Committee.**
Send out an announcement informing staff that an Equity Team is being established Include in the announcement any logistics they would need to know to determine if they want to apply to serve on the Committee e.g., the purpose, how often you will meet, when, how long they will serve, how many members you are seeking, etc. Consider having them submit in writing a statement as to why they would like to be on the Committee and what they believe they will bring to the process? You may want to limit how long their responses can be e.g., a set number of words or paragraphs so that you have time to read them all. Note: Applicants do not have to already possess an understanding of this work. They only need be committed to learning and care about this work. The Committee and should be intentional about learning and growing together over time.

C. **Area of Focus.**
We recommend that you narrow your focus in the beginning. Race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability and age are just some of the important areas in this work. But like a thesis, if you take on too much at once it will become overwhelming. Find a focus area and use it as a model to learn from as you engage your work community in addressing equity and social justice. You can expand into other areas later, once you feel like you know more about what you are trying to do and how to do it and after you have some measures of success to build on.

D. **Stay Organized.**
Put together Equity Team notebooks for the first meeting for each participant. It's important that when members leave the Committee there is documentation of the work you accomplished together and that you have information to pass along to Committee members that join later. Some ideas to include for each section are 1) Articles for them to read; 2) Agenda; 3) Minutes.

Already have an Equity Team:
1. What successes have you had?
2. What challenges have you faced?
3. Where are the opportunities for growth?
4. What work have you specifically done as a staff to address cultural competence?
   - Which area does your staff currently have the greatest need: Awareness, Knowledge, Skills or Action/Advocacy?
   - Having identified where your staff is at in their cultural competence, where do you see staff in the cycle of organizational change.
5. What support do you need to be successful?

Getting Your Equity Team Started:
Consider discussing the following in the first meeting with your Equity Team:
1. Have members introduce themselves and why they wanted to be on the Equity Team.
2. Review with the Equity Team the purpose of the Team.
3. Review the Equity Teams Roles & Responsibilities. The Committee may want to revisit this after you have been meeting for a while to determine if something needs to be added or removed.

4. Establish norms for your discussions with an eye toward equitable participation and addressing challenging issues as they surface. We use Glenn Singletons norms.

5. When, where, how often and how long will your Equity Team will meet? (Recommend at least once a month the same date and time each month for a minimum of two hours).

6. Who will chair/co-chair the Equity Team? It does not necessarily need to be the person who brought the Committee together.

7. Who will take notes?

8. Who will ensure that if organization leadership is not on your Equity Team they are updated on a regular basis as to the work and direction you are going in?

9. Who will report progress to the staff and when?

10. Discuss the importance of attending all meetings? Too many absences of members can hinder the process.

11. How will members of your Equity Team receive the professional development they need to lead this work (e.g., books, trainings, conferences, etc). Brainstorm ideas of what you might read or watch together and conferences or trainings you might attend.

12. What support does your Equity Team need to be successful?

13. How will staff know that an Equity Team exists, what they are working on and how they can offer input without being on the Equity Team?

14. Narrow your focus in the beginning. Race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc., are all important areas in this work. But, like a thesis, if you make it too big it will become overwhelming. Find a focus and use that as a model to work on and engage your staff. You can expand into other areas of focus later, once you feel like you know more about what you are trying to do and have had some measurable successes.

15. Some areas to look at addressing first might include one or two of the following: professional development for Equity Team members and staff, your mission statement, policies or procedures, client data, hiring practices, or the environment.

16. Identify 2-3 things to work on in the first year and begin developing a strategic plan.

Equity Team's Role is to…
Consider adapting the following roles to best fit your organization.

1. Provide leadership for creating a culturally responsive work environment.

2. Assess the needs of their program/department/school/etc. and the organization as a whole as it relates to both past, present and future race and equity work.

3. Lead staff in researching and developing/improving plans for ongoing CRPD.

4. Help to create a supportive learning environment whereby staff can have ongoing courageous conversations.

5. Lead staff in organizing efforts to infuse institutional change within their organization e.g., Learning Walks, questions posed in staff meetings, readings, discussing work through the lens of race, ethnicity, and culture, and reviewing policy and practice, etc.

6. Utilize the strengths and resources of your organization's staff to address this work. Think about people not on your Equity Team who can help with certain projects or areas based on their strengths.
7. Model engaging effectively across cultures e.g., on-going discussions, risk taking, self awareness, etc.
8. Keep issues of equity and social justice in the center of their organization's work.

Leadership/Administrator's Role is to…

Review your expectation of administrators with them to be sure they can support the process in these and other ways.

• Participate on Equity Teams or designate another decision maker in their place.

• Identify a process for getting members on the Equity Team.

• Assist Equity Team in creating the climate for doing this work.

• Participate in CRPD with their staff.

• Support the Equity Team's work. This can include, finding ways for the Board to hear about the work, allowing time during staff meetings for Equity Team members to provide updates, allow for a budget to purchase learning materials and for members to attend conferences.

• Encourage courageous conversations amongst staff.

• Model cultural competency in their leadership.

• Announce to staff why they are focusing on this work and why it is important to him/her.

• Make time during staff meetings for Equity Team to update staff on progress of their work.

• Identify times throughout the year for CRPD and a budget to support it.

• Hold staff accountable for attending CRPD. (In the event that a staff member is unable to attend a CRPD provided by their school or program, have him/her participate in CRPD offered through conferences and workshops open to the community.

A Few Suggested Introductory Readings & Resources

Having a library of resources helps support on-going equity work. You may want to purchase several copies of a book for a discussion group and have a system for people to check out books and videos to watch in small or large groups. Visit our website for more resources.

Books

Chou, R.S., Feagin, J.R. (2010). The myth of the model minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism. Paradigm.

Hollins, C.D., Govan, I.M. (2015). Diversity, equity, and inclusion: Strategies for facilitating conversations on race. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD.

Kendall, F.E. (2013). Understanding white privilege: Creating pathways to authentic relationships across race. Routledge. New York, NY. 2nd Ed.

Kivel, P. (2002). Uprooting racism: How white people can work for racial justice. New Society Publishers.

Singleton, G.E., Linton, C. (2006). Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools. Temple University Press.

Steele, C (2010). Whistling Vivaldi and other clues to how stereotypes affect us. W.W. Norton & Co, Inc.

Takaki, R. (2008). A different mirror: A history of multicultural America. Boston:

Trepagnier, B., (2006). <u>Silent racism: How well-meaning White people perpetuate the racial divide</u>. Paradigm.

Articles

DiAngelo, R. (2015). White America's Racial Illiteracy: Why our national Conversation is Poisoned from the Start. The Good Men Project.

McIntosh, P. (1998) White Privilege & Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women Studies or Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack, same author shorter version.

Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C.M., Torino, G.C., Bucceri, J., Holder, A.M.B., Nadal, K.L., Esquilin, M., Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Implications for Clinical Practice. American Psychologist. 2007

Websites

- **Asian Nation**: Asian American History, Demographics, & Issues. http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml

- **Mixed Heritage Center**: Information and resources for people of mixed heritage. www.MixedHeritageCenter.org

- **National Education Association:** www.nea.org

- **Native Appropriations** posts images and comments to counter stereotypes of Native people. It is a great resource for anyone seeking to better understand cultural appropriation. http://nativeappropriations.blogspot.com/

- **Project Implicit** a researched base test you can take on line that measures your unconscious attitudes and bias. www.implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/takeatest.html

- **The Racial Equity Toolkit** developed by the City of Seattle lays out a process for evaluating and implementing the racial impact of policies and practices. http://www.seattle.gov/rsji/docs/RacialEquityToolkit_FINAL_August2012.pdf

- **Racial Equity Tools** offers tips and resources for organizational change work. http://racialequitytools.org/home

- **Reducing Stereotype Threat**. www.reducingstereotypethreat.org

- **Rethinking Schools** provides articles and resources for teachers looking to infuse social justice in their practice. http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.shtml

- **Sociological Images** is a collection of visuals and critique helpful in developing a lens for seeing racism, sexism, heterosexism and other bias in media. http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/

- **Teaching Tolerance** has free resources including DVDs, CDs and publications for educators, parents, and kids. http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp

Videos

- **The Color of Fear:** This is about the pain and anguish that racism has caused in the lives of eight men. Out of their confrontations and struggles to understand and trust each other emerges a dialogue that most of us fear, but hope will happen sometime in our lifetime (90 min) Stir Fry Productions. http://www.stirfryseminars.com/

- **Unnatural Causes:** Consists of 7 short videos addressing how racism affects health. (4 hours) California Newsreel http://www.unnaturalcauses.org/

- **Race The Power of an Illusion:** This three-part series is an eye-opening tale of how what we assume to be normal, commonsense, even scientific, is actually shaped by our history, social institutions and cultural beliefs. http://newsreel.org/