

Ten Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators

I will inform myself. I will find strategies for bolstering equity based on *evidence of what works*. I will look at this evidence in light of what I know about my own community. I will not limit “evidence” to quantitative data. I will seek the voices of local communities and stakeholders. I am not the expert of their experience.

I will understand the “sociopolitical context” of schooling. I will work to understand the bigger context of societal and global inequity. Even if I don’t feel I have the power to end global poverty or structural racism, these conditions have profound effects on students and families. I will work on understanding those effects.

I will work to recognize the conditions I’m conditioned not to recognize. The way privilege works, I’m least likely to recognize the inequities that privilege me. Learning to recognize them takes practice. I will practice.

I will refuse the master’s paradigms. I will not minimize educational inequity to standardized test scores, refer to people as “at-risk,” describe somebody who has been “pushed out” as a “dropout,” or call something an *achievement gap* that is actually an *opportunity gap*.

I will never reduce equity to cultural activities or celebrations. I will not settle for celebrating diversity or for “food, festivals, and fun.” Although they can be part of a bigger equity initiative, they do not in and of themselves make a school more equitable.

I will not confuse equity with universal validation. Equity is not about valuing every perspective. An equity view does not value heteronormativity or male supremacy *even when they are grounded in religion*. An equitable space—a school or university, for example—cannot be equitable while also validating oppressive beliefs.

I will resist simple solutions to complex problems. Simple solutions are tempting, but they distract me from finding serious solutions to complex problems. I will not buy into approaches that over-simplify complexities, regardless of how popular they are.

I will work with and in service to marginalized communities. I will practice the ethic of working *with* rather than working *on* marginalized communities. I will apply my commitment to equity and social justice, not just in the *content* of my equity work, but also in my *processes* for doing that work.

I will embrace a structural instinct and reject deficit ideology. I will refuse to identify the source of social problems as existing within the most marginalized communities. I reject the notion that people are marginalized due to their own “deficiencies.” I understand that educational outcome disparities are the result of structural inequities and have nothing to do with students’ grittiness, mindsets, or cultures. I will fix injustice, not students.

I will prioritize equity over peace. Although conflict resolution and mediation programs can be useful, they should not replace equity and justice efforts. Never, under any circumstance, should equity concerns be handled through processes that assume parties occupy similar spaces along the privilege-oppression continuum. In the end, peace without justice renders the privileged more privileged and the marginalized further marginalized; a condition that might be understood as the exact opposite of equity.