

Equity Literacy Principles for Educators of Students Experiencing Poverty

Equity literacy is a framework for cultivating the knowledge and skills that enable us to be ***a threat to the existence of inequity*** in our spheres of influence. More than cultural competence or diversity awareness, equity literacy prepares us to see even subtle ways in which access and opportunity are distributed unfairly across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, and other factors. The following principles refer to the *knowledge* dimension of equity literacy as it pertains to educators' and schools' efforts to ensure equitable educational opportunity for families experiencing poverty.

Principle	Individual and Institutional Commitments
1. People experiencing poverty are the experts of their own experiences.	Equity literate educators recognize people experiencing poverty as partners in any effective approach to address class-based school inequities.
2. The right to equitable educational opportunity is universal.	Equity literate educators believe every student has a right to equitable educational opportunity and have the will to fight policy or practice that denies this right.
3. Poverty and class are intersectional.	Equity literate educators know class is an intersectional identity and poverty is an intersectional condition informed by other identities and conditions. We cannot understand how class inequities operate without understanding how inequities related to race, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, immigrant status, (dis)ability, and other identities operate.
4. People experiencing poverty are diverse.	Equity literate educators recognize the diversity among people experiencing poverty. Studying a singular "culture" or "mindset" of poverty will not help us understand individual students or families better and instead could strengthen our stereotypes.
5. What we believe about people experiencing poverty informs how we teach, interact with, and advocate (or fail to advocate) for them.	Equity literate educators know teaching practices are driven in part by our beliefs. In addition to relying on practical strategies for creating more equitable schools, we are willing to change fundamentally what we believe about poverty, educational outcome disparities, and their relationships with inequity.
6. We cannot understand the relationship between poverty and education without understanding the inequities people experiencing poverty face in and out of schools.	Equity literate educators also are committed to developing deeper understandings of biases and inequities endured by families experiencing poverty in and out of school and how they affect school engagement.

7. Test scores are inadequate measures of equity.	Equity literate educators acknowledge that equity or its absence cannot be captured by standardized test scores because test scores, which as much as anything measure levels of prior levels of access and opportunity, cannot capture student experience. Raising test scores is not the same as creating equitable learning environments.
8. Educational outcome disparities are the result of inequities, of unjust distributions of access and opportunity, not the result of deficiencies in the mindsets, cultures, or grittiness of people experiencing poverty.	Equity literate educators understand that educational disparities result, not from mindset mismatches or cultural deficiencies, but from inequities. Eliminating disparities requires us to eliminate inequities rather than changing students' mindsets or cultures.
9. Equitable educators adopt a structural view rather than a deficit view of families experiencing poverty.	With the understanding that outcome disparities result from inequities, equity literate educators reject deficit views that implicitly blame families experiencing poverty for their poverty and embrace a structural view that puts disparities in a bigger context of structural inequity. We reject strategies and initiatives for eliminating disparities based on fixing economically marginalized people and focus instead on initiatives that fix the conditions that marginalize people.
10. Strategies for creating and sustaining equitable classrooms, schools, and school systems must be based on evidence for what works.	Aware of the magnitude of inequity against people experiencing poverty, equity literate educators base policy and practice decisions, not on what's popular or easily implementable, but on evidence for what works.
11. Simplistic instructional strategies are no threat to inequities absent a commitment to more intensive institutional change.	Educators know creating equitable classrooms and schools requires multiple layers of strategies and initiatives. Simple instructional strategies represent only one of those layers.
12. There is no path to educational equity that does not involve a redistribution of access and opportunity.	Realizing inequity is an unjust distribution of access and opportunity, educators also realize equity requires a redistribution. This might include the redistribution of anything from access to classes with high academic expectations to access to validating school cultures.