Centering Equity and Transforming Education

Thursday, October 4

3:40 – 4:25 | Grand Ballroom

Facilitated By
Veronica Keiffer-Lewis, Ed.D.
Allied Path Consulting, LLC
alliedpathconsulting@gmail.com
My Beloved Community

I'm no longer accepting the things I cannot change...
I'm changing the things I cannot accept.

— Angela Davis
A Time of Opportunities ...
And A Time of Challenges

“EQUITY is the truth in action.”
- Joseph Joubert

equity

Just and fair inclusion. An equitable society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goals of equity must be to create conditions that allow all to reach their full potential. In short, equity creates a path from hope to change.
Building An Equity-Centered Community

- Value
- Trust
- Fairness
- Trust

Equity

Equity - Value - Trust - Fairness - Trust

Adapted from Peck’s Community Process; A Different Drum (1987)
Effective Change Initiatives Require Whole Systems Thinking

WHAT DOES WHOLE SYSTEMS THINKING MEAN? by UBC

→ Systems thinking is a method to understand how things are related, and how they influence one another within a whole. An example of systems thinking is how elements like water, sun, soil, air, plants, animals and human beings interact and support one another as a system.

→ Systems thinking focuses on cyclical rather than linear cause and effect. It can be applied to understand linkages among elements, cause and effect, feedback loops or to identify leverage points, which are places in a system that can be influenced or changed.

→ Leverage points are most often:
  (1) points where key choices, decisions, rules, and policies are made, determining system structure;
  (2) places where information is flowing (or not flowing) and affecting those decisions; or
  (3) places where one can intervene to break, or make, or change the causal linkages between system elements of any kind.

→ When we understand the components of a system and relationships between them we can begin to understand what affects them, and how to shift them into better patterns. **Process Fairness Matters**

Source: Lovins et al., 2010, p. 7, Factor 10 Engineering Design Principles; https://sustain.ok.ubc.ca/whole-systems-plan/what-is-it/
Effective Change Initiatives Require Conflict Transformation

By John Paul Lederach

CHANGE GOALS IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION understands social conflict as evolving from, and producing changes in, the personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions of human experience. It seeks to promote constructive processes within each of these dimensions.

- **Intrapersonal/personal**: Minimize destructive effects of social conflict and maximize the potential for personal growth at physical, emotional and spiritual levels.
- **Interpersonal/Relational**: Minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize understanding.
- **Institutional/Structural**: Understand and address root causes of violent conflict; promote nonviolent mechanisms; minimize violence; foster structures that meet basic human needs and maximize public participation.
- **Cultural**: Identify and understand the cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent expressions of conflict; identify cultural resources for constructively handling conflict.
Conflict transformation, therefore, is the process whereby conflict is both resolved and used to build the capacity of groups to develop alliances that value equitable relationships, promote harmony, and effect systems change.
Are We Addressing Episodes or the Epicenter of Inequity?

By John Paul Lederach
**Resolution and Transformation: A Brief Comparison of Perspective**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITY GAP AS SOCIAL CONFLICT</th>
<th>Resolution Perspective</th>
<th>Transformation Perspective (Let’s keep asking different questions…)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The key question</strong></td>
<td>How do we end something not desired?</td>
<td>How to end something destructive and build something desired?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The focus</strong></td>
<td>It is content-centered.</td>
<td>It is relationship-centered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The purpose</strong></td>
<td>To achieve an agreement and solution to the presenting problem creating the crisis.</td>
<td>To promote constructive change processes, inclusive of -- but not limited to -- immediate solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The development of the process</strong></td>
<td>It is embedded and built around the immediacy of the relationship where the presenting problems appear.</td>
<td>It is concerned with responding to symptoms and engaging the systems within which relationships are embedded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time frame</strong></td>
<td>The horizon is short-term.</td>
<td>The horizon is mid- to long-range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>View of conflict</strong></td>
<td>It envisions the need to de-escalate conflict processes.</td>
<td>It envisions conflict as a dynamic of ebb (conflict de-escalation to pursue constructive change) and flow (conflict escalation to pursue constructive change).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is an abridged version of John Paul Lederach’s longer *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, published by Good Books. Michelle Maiese selected the excerpts to create this version, with the permission of John Paul Lederach and the publisher.
“Because guided pathways reforms are relatively new, their full potential has yet to be determined. Even if they increase success for most students, colleges committed to equity cannot assume that they will close gaps in outcomes.... Thus, as guided pathways reforms mature, colleges will need to monitor for unintended outcomes.”

“The choices colleges make as they implement guided pathways may help some students while leaving others behind, so colleges need to scrutinize them carefully and think through their implications for equity.”

“Guided pathways involve not just major institutional decisions about policy and practice but fundamental changes in organizational culture. These reforms are enacted on the human level, day in and day out, and it is up to colleges to make sure they work in a way that is consistent with their equity-driven mission, and with the central belief embedded in guided pathways - that all students can succeed in the right environment and with the right supports.”
1. Systematically advising lower income students or students of color into programs that lead to lower paying jobs.
2. Limited engagement and input from students on messaging and the resulting misinterpretation of alerts, mapping, and advising (from faculty, counselors, and classified educators/professionals).
3. Limited attention paid to what components of the model are implemented and effective thus, who is helped, how, when, etc. is not fully understood or brought to scale.
4. Unclear equity informed short-term and long-term focus is articulated; specifically, a commitment to increase the rate at which low-income students and students of color earn higher level degrees in high-value fields.
5. Lack of agreement on defined skills, concepts and habits of mind students’ needed to successfully move along a given pathway.
6. Faculty and staffs’ inability to collaboratively engage within and between departments.
7. Limited opportunities to address, and mitigate the impact of, distrust among administrators and faculty and staff, the divide between faculty and student services, and the disruptive role played be dissenters.
8. Limited training on equity-centered meeting facilitation and conflict transformation.
9. Inability, fear, and lack of time spent on embedded politics, ideology and the complex daily dynamics created by status, rankism, power, turf, and elitism.
Are We Addressing Episodes or the Epicenter of Inequity?

Opportunity Gap as “Crisis”
Focus on Access, Retention, Completion, etc. -- Solution is often task-oriented

Historically-Embedded Institutional Bias
-- Solution is often Relationship-oriented

A Process Structure: Equity Literacy provides Adaptability and Structure
“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.”
Equity Literacy
Reframing Examples

The following is from “Imagining Equity Literacy” by Paul Gorski; April 10, 2014

“Equity literacy moves us beyond cultural competency, allowing educators to create and sustain equitable and just learning environments for all... students.”

**Cultural “Competence”:** I learn about Latinx culture so that I can communicate effectively with my Latinx students.

**Cultural Proficiency:** I acknowledge the tremendous diversity among Latinx students; I learn about the cultures, identities and home lives of each individual student in order to design curricula and employ pedagogy that are relevant to each of them.

**EQUITY LITERACY:** I engage students in conversations about the absence of Latinx voices in their ... classrooms, textbooks, etc. and fight to ensure that Latinx students are not placed unjustly into lower academic tracks.
Equity Literacy As Our Transformational Platform

“An important aspect of equity literacy is its insistence on maximizing the integrity of transformative equity practice. That means not being lulled by popular diversity approaches and frameworks that pose no threat to inequity. The principles of equity literacy help us to ensure we keep a commitment to equity at the center of our work and conversation.”

By Paul Gorski; Imagining Equity Literacy | Teaching Tolerance

The core principles of Equity Literacy serve as a guide for our collective systems change work, keeping us grounded and focused on the long-term goal; an equitized institution for all.
The following information is from the Equity Literacy Institute. Please consider how you’re doing within your spheres of influence, as well as at the institutional level:

● **Direct Confrontation Principle**: There is no path to equity that does not involve a *direct confrontation* with inequity.

● **“Poverty of Culture” Principle**: Inequities are primarily power and privilege problems, *not* primarily cultural problems, so equity requires power and privilege solutions, not just cultural solutions.

● **Equity Ideology Principle**: Equity is more than a list of simple practical strategies; it is a lens and an ideological commitment.
Equity Literacy Principles

Adapted from The Equity Literacy Institute
https://www.equityliteracy.org/equity-literacy

● **Prioritization Principle**: Each policy and practice decision should be examined through the question, "*How will this impact the most marginalized members of our community?*"

● **Fair Distribution Principle**: Equity is about shared access and opportunity, so equity initiatives should be about repositioning access and opportunity.

● **Fix Injustice -Not Students- Principle**: Equity initiatives focus, not on fixing marginalized people, but instead on *fixing the conditions that marginalize them*.

● **One Size Fits Few Principle**: Identity-specific equity frameworks (like "the culture of poverty" or group-level "learning styles") almost always are based on stereotypes, not equity.

● **Evidence-Informed Equity Principle**: Equity initiatives should be based on *evidence* of what works for *each* select population rather than trendiness.
Summary: We can do this!
(Just stay focused on EQUITY...)

Equity Literacy
(Hold equity as the transformational platform; we all must serve as a threat to the existence of inequity)

Whole Systems Thinking
(Include everyone, especially students; ensure process fairness)

Student-Centered & Equity-Driven

Conflict Transformation
(Focus on the Epicenter, not just episodes of inequity)
Thank you, My Beloved Community

I AM ONLY ONE, BUT STILL I AM ONE.
I CANNOT DO EVERYTHING, BUT STILL I CAN DO SOMETHING.

AND BECAUSE I CANNOT DO EVERYTHING
I WILL NOT REFUSE TO DO THE SOMETHING THAT I CAN DO. HÉLEN KELLER