Western Educational EQUITY Assistance Center

Equity Tools and Artifacts for Districts and Schools
Colleen Toomey & Dr. Darlene Sampson

Introduction
The Western Educational Equity Assistance Center (WEEAC) utilizes multiple tools and artifacts to support school leaders and educators in embedding equity in policies, procedures, and consciousness.

This document will provide you with equity tools to start, continue, or embed equity in your district or school. Each tool has a specific set of entry points that are imperative in embedding equity thoughtfully. Suggestion are grounded within best practices. Artifacts and activities require some pre-work to successfully integrate Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) work.

<u>Pre-work Definition</u>
Pre-work is defined as the infrastructure that supports equity. It is not recommended that EDI work proceed without integrating the following components:
- **Communication of an equity commitment; coupled with the "why" of embedding equity work. This should be communicated by superintendents and school leaders prior to implementation. In some cases, members of school boards and superintendents simultaneously commit to EDI work. In school buildings, principals and assistant principals would anchor the work in this area.**
- **Courageous leadership that supports a trajectory is built into the equity commitment. This provides a road map for the work to begin; although the specifics of the work are individualized to educators, teams, departments, etc. The goal is to communicate that EDI work is imperative, expected, and will be integrated.**
- **Data-anchored equity focus points are shared that align with the "why" of the work.**
- **Acknowledgement of inequities, marginalized spaces, and vulnerable students, families, and communities is also stated.**

This pre-work is often delivered at staff meetings, via a position statement, in a face-to-face meeting, or some combination of all these options.

> **Caution!**
> **Pre-work advice: Thoughtfully and developmentally build the pre-work stage, as this provides the foundation of authentic EDI work.**

Each artifact is shared on the following pages. The following order of use is advised:

Beginning Awareness	Emerging Awareness	Advanced Awareness
Cultural Café	Naming Me	Louisiana 27 Equitable Classroom Practices
Lindsey's Cultural Proficiency Continuum	Social Group Membership	Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials
	Culturally Responsive Leadership Assessment	

Beginning Awareness: These artifacts are an important entry into the work. Regardless of people's experiences, we recommend starting here and then scaling to the exercises in the emerging and advanced categories. Cultural Café and Lindsey's Cultural Proficiency Continuum are tools to begin conversations, raise awareness, and can assist in building competency in how to discuss and engage in equity work.

Emerging Awareness: The three artifacts in this category are exercises that can be used with groups who have done some baseline equity work. This category is focused on inside out work, which is imperative to furthering one's equity commitment. Without understanding our own identities, biases, and backgrounds, it is challenging to engage in any meaningful equity work. These exercises will greatly assist participants in deepening their understanding of how they show up in classrooms and in working with students and colleagues.

Advanced Awareness: Once members of your school, district, or organization have committed to their inside out work and developed a level of understanding of terminology and how inequity can emerge, introduce these artifacts. The checklist of equitable classroom practices and tool to assess bias in materials will assist educators in evaluating personal practice and understanding components of equity and culturally responsive curriculum.

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Cultural Café
Dr. Darlene Sampson

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Purpose of the Tool
*The Cultural Café is an informal way of beginning the conversation about equity, diversity, and inclusion. (Having refreshments also helps to break the ice/uncomfortable feelings).

*Choosing groups carefully is important to maximize collaboration

*Calming music in the background can also be utilized

Pre-Work
Courageous conversations are the foundations of preparing for equity work when very little has occurred. This is an entry point for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) work when carefully crafted.

How to Utilize *(A sample of the handout for table groups is attached)*

Suggestions
- Start with the "why" of the work
- Inform the faculty, department, group, or team that everyone is learning together
- Acknowledge that this work can be difficult and intrusive
- Ask for collaborative agreements regarding the flow of the conversation before beginning (i.e.. What agreements shall we have today as we begin discussing equity, diversity & inclusion)
- Record the agreements on large sticky paper before the conversation-refer to them as needed during the exercise or have those who are willing write agreements on large sticky pads around the room. A google doc can also be utilized to record agreements.
- Explain the concept of the Cultural Café: It is designed to begin the conversation about diversity. There is no "gotcha." The goal is to normalize equity language and prepare the group for other ways in which the work will be embedded.
- We will divide into groups and begin our discussion based on the questions you will receive. Please discuss the questions as a group. Please assign a recorder and the individual who will provide share-out's to the larger group. *Provide markers and large sticky paper to the group. Everyone should weigh in on the questions.
- Let's begin. Share how much time participants will have to answer questions.

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CULTURAL CAFÉ SAMPLE QUESTIONS

*Choose approximately five questions for a 45-60-minute exercise including share-out's
- What are our greatest fears/what are our greatest triumphs in regard to EDI work?
- How are we doing in maintaining a culture of equity and inclusivity at our school? In our district? In our team?
- What are some of the barriers preventing leading for equity in our school/district/team?
- How would you describe a school environment or school district that is culturally diverse and equitable?

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- What does diversity look like in a school that is majority white?
- What does diversity look like in a school that is majority Black, Indigenous, & or linguistically or culturally diverse? What differences make a difference? (i.e., learning style, socioeconomic status, size, religion, etc.)
- How can we make diversity and equity a priority at our school?
- What student populations have we supported well/what student populations need additional support?
- What personal commitments can you make that will assist our equity work?
- What are your recommendations for next steps?

Small/Large Group Processing
Share-outs

Allow each group or select individuals to share out their perspectives. After one group shares …ask that only additional answers that differ from the first group's answers are shared.

<u>Closing</u>

- Summarize what you have heard across the groups
- Indicate this is just a beginning of the work that must be done to continue our skillset
- Ask for feedback from strategic educators around the room
- Thank the groups for participating

Follow-up
Check-in with select individuals, teams, and departments to determine reflections and suggestions for next steps.

Lindsey's Cultural Proficiency Continuum
Lindsey, Robins & Terrell (2009)

Purpose of the Tool
To assist educators in assessing their emerging cultural competence utilizing a well-known continuum.

Pre-Work
Lindsey's continuum should not be utilized as a stand-alone tool. Educators should engage in this tool as a part of reflection and professional development emanating from the "why" for assessment and ongoing equity work. Utilizing the Cultural Café as a starting point, followed by the continuum would be appropriate.

How to Utilize
Lindsey's continuum can be utilized in multiple ways after leaders have indicated via data, equity challenges, or a stated commitment the importance of EDI work. Collaborative caring and empathy for where educators fall along the continuum is reiterated before the activity.

Participants are asked to individually choose where they fall along the continuum. Participants should know that truly being competent around all areas of diversity is not possible; however, they may have high or low levels of competency in different areas and under different circumstances. Ultimately, establishing a general level of consciousness and cultural humility is important. Allowing participants to review the continuum and providing time for assessing where they fall along the continuum is preferable. Leaders or facilitators can model the process by identifying where they fall along the continuum first. This can be followed by pairs sharing their assessment.

Small Group Processing
- Individuals assess their own competency first
- Allow time for pairs or table groups to share where they fall (referring back to established collaborative agreements)
- Ask participants to consider what would be helpful in increasing their competency
- Participants share what supports would be needed in schools and within their current role to increase competency. *Stress that competency is a lifetime of activities and behaviors coupled with continuous commitment*
- Small table groups can share out group processing once the whole group convenes
- Facilitators can take note of what is needed for participants to increase their competency
- Individual assessment can inform professional development plans

Large Group Processing
Participants can identify where they individually fall along Lindsey's continuum initially. After identification of individual competency, table groups or large groups are asked to share at their tables or in large groups.

Table or large group processing:
Think organizationally and more robustly regarding Lindsey's continuum.
Question:
1) Thinking about your school, team or district, where do they fall on the continuum?

2) How does your individual assessment align with your school, team or district's cultural competency?
3) What activities or behaviors would need to occur to increase the competency of your school, team or district?

<u>Follow-up</u>
Participants should not be asked to complete this exercise in a performative way, as assessing oneself can be intrusive. Referring to the results, and the need for professional development, or other supports should be the goal. Follow-up must occur to honor the honesty of the participants and to maintain emerging trust.

Naming Me
Dr. Darlene Sampson

Purpose of the Tool
Naming Me is designed to support participants in identifying who they are, how they were socialized, what biases they may hold, and what commitments they may need to make.

Pre-Work
Naming oneself can be a challenge for some participants, as it goes close to the heart of diversity and biases. Utilizing the Cultural Café and Lindsay's Culturally Proficiency Continuum or other less intrusive tools should be utilized prior to Naming Me. As indicated earlier, facilitators should indicate the "why" and importance of naming ourselves.

As an example, you could state: "As we think about who we are, how we grew up, and what our diversity and equity challenges and triumphs are; what do we need to remember, acknowledge and think about as we improve our competency?" "As we think about diverse students, families, and communities, what will we need to do to get in touch with who we really are. What messages did we receive, and how do those messages impact our current roles? This is not a 'gotcha!' This exercise is designed for us to think through embedded beliefs and practices that may impact our roles."

How to Utilize
- After the prework foundation and reiteration of collaborative behaviors, participants complete Naming Me individually

Small Group Processing
- Be thoughtful about asking participants to share Naming Me. Instead of asking participants to share aspects of their writing with peers; ask what commitments the individual may need to consider as a result of completing the activity. You can complete this part of the activity in pairs or table groups. Often some participants share aspects of themselves they have never considered before; which opens up the conversation for more authentic dialogue.

Large Group Processing
- Think about initially asking how completing Naming Me felt for the participants (*often participants state that the activity was too intrusive, and some participants state they did not like the activity). Allow participants to share their reflection/feelings before moving to the large group activity.
    - Possible Questions:
        - What did they learn, if anything, about who they are?
        - What, if any, commitments could occur as a result of completing the activity?
        - How can this activity inform your current role?

Follow-up: Facilitators have often followed up with random participants to check in after this activity. If this occurs, facilitators must be ready for honest feedback that could be challenging. Many participants enjoy Naming me because of its authenticity. Whatever the case, be ready to hear multiple perspectives.

> # *Social Group Membership*
> ## *Dr. Kathy Obear*

Purpose of the Tool
This tool is an important step in understanding personal identity in a United States context. This is a sample list of identities such as race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. which shows the members of the dominant or agent group and subordinate or target group. As your school or organization contextualizes equity work, this tool is a valuable artifact in personal inside out work. Exploration of personal identity and how that may show up in the classroom and as a leader can assist in better understanding and working across difference.

Pre-Work
This artifact should not be used in isolation. It is important that participants have a baseline understanding of identity and isms (racism, sexism, classism, etc.). Utilizing tools such as Naming Me are a suggested first step.

How to Utilize
Social Group Membership is a powerful addition to a PLC or professional development session. In the session:
- Introduce the artifact and share its role in your session
- Remind participants that this is a list of some group memberships, but not all, and it is important to remember that it is written from a US/American perspective
- This is not a comprehensive list of identities, but it is one of the more complete lists that was created by Dr. Kathy Obear and edited over time by many social justice educators
- Discuss fixed identities (identities that don't tend to change)
  - Some, such as age, religion, gender identity can change and evolve over time
- Ask participants to take a few minutes to read through the document and put a check mark next to identities that are true for them
- After participants have read through, ask them to tally their marks in each category

Small Group Processing
Invite participants to pair off. Some reflection questions you may consider:
- What did it feel like to see all these identities on paper?
- What are your initial reactions to this exercise?
- Were there any categories that surprised you?
- For areas you have privilege in, do you think about those social groups often? How about for areas you don't have privilege in?
- Would you add any additional categories or social groups?

Large Group Processing
Similar reflection questions are a great idea here. Additionally, you may ask:
- How does reflecting on these identities assist us in our work?
- What does it mean for the students, families, people we work with and for?
- What do we do with the privilege we have?

Additional Notes

- This tool can bring up some dissonance, particularly for folks who may fall into many privileged identities. Remind them that this tool is not designed to make anyone feel bad about themselves or the identities they hold, but rather, what they might do with the privileges they have.
- For folks who have several marginalized identities, this can be challenging as well. Craft reflection questions in a way that allows room for dialogue and discussion.

Follow Up

This is a great exercise to revisit a couple of weeks after introducing it. What have participants learned or considered since the social groups were discussed? How have they continued their own learning? How have they utilized what they learned and reflected on in their roles?

Social Group Membership may be one in a series of tools you use in equity training and professional development. Consider following Social Group Membership with the Culturally Responsive Personal Assessment or another self-assessment tool to build on the knowledge gained around personal identity, privilege, and oppression.

> # *Culturally Responsive Leadership Assessment*
> ## ***Adapted from *the work of Dr. Lewis Madhlangobe/Texas State University, 2015 and* revised by Dr. Darlene Sampson, 2021**

Purpose of the Tool
The Culturally Responsive Leadership Assessment is designed to assist educational leaders in determining their equity knowledge, areas of triumph, and areas for growth.

Pre-Work
As with all artifacts and tools, there are important foundational behaviors that must be employed. As you think about this exercise, also keep in mind that leaders are often less likely to ask for assistance and support as they are held to a higher standard and may not feel comfortable asking for support. Acknowledging that leaders have a right to be vulnerable and questioning is key prior to completing this exercise.

Indicate that leading for equity is a process. Leaders may find that they have not mastered many of the areas within the assessment.

How to utilize
This tool can be utilized as a professional development tool. The results of the tool can assist leaders in thinking about additional professional development needed.   *There are many leaders who may not formally supervise others. This tool can be utilized for leaders who supervise employees and can be utilized for those in leadership positions.

   The process
- Leaders receive the assessment outlining the importance of knowing our strengths and areas of growth
- Facilitators indicate how the assessment can support leaders
- Facilitators acknowledge vulnerability
- Facilitators should reiterate leading for equity as a life-long process

Small Group Processing/Large Group Processing
Leaders complete the assessment. This usually takes about 5-10 minutes. Facilitators should provide some time for individual completion and reflection.

This tool can be utilized in either small or large group processing. Here are some ideas for utilization

After individual assessment, leaders can
- Write on sticky paper affixed to walls the number on the assessment that is most challenging, and indicate what professional development and/or support is needed corresponding to that number
- A google doc could be utilized for leaders to indicate in real time what are areas of triumph and areas of growth
- Table groups could discuss the activity in general and reflect on next steps and commitments
- Table groups could choose or be assigned 1-2 specific areas on the assessment to discuss and develop corresponding recommendations

- Table or whole groups could discuss leading for equity focus points and the challenges that prevent equity and culturally responsive practices within their current roles- AND ways in which to address these challenges
- Pairs, table groups, or whole groups could build a professional development plan based upon shared areas of growth identified by leaders
- Leaders could identify individuals, groups, and community-based supports to assist them in increasing leading for equity behaviors
- Leaders could identify specific numbers on the assessment that may contribute to district or school-based inequities, performance gaps, systemic challenges and access issues
- Identifying specific areas of challenge that can inform policy, procedure, and data could assist leaders in looking closely at areas for review

Follow-up
Developing a professional development plan for leaders aligned with their assessment of their leadership skills is important.

Louisiana 27 Equitable Classroom Practices
Louisiana Department of Education, 2010

Purpose of the Tool
The equitable classroom practices observation checklist is a way to focus on culturally responsive behaviors. It is a powerful way for educators to check in on practices that can empower all groups of students and to consider ways to incorporate more culturally responsive practices that can center student engagement. The tool was developed in 2010 by the State of Louisiana. The checklist is not a comprehensive list of best practices, but a way to highlight how classroom behaviors can assist in working towards equitable schools for all students.

Pre-Work
This tool should be introduced and reviewed by administrators and leaders as one way to enhance current teaching practices. It is not intended to be a "gotcha" of behaviors that teachers should be utilizing, but rather an opportunity to take a critical lens on small shifts that can create more equitable classrooms.

How to Utilize
There are multiple ways to utilize this tool, and we recommend first starting with self-reflection. Ask participants to check next to which practices they utilize frequently and to note which may be more of a challenge. This tool can also be utilized in classroom observations by building administrators.

In reviewing classroom observations after utilizing the tool, do you see any trends emerging? Are there practices that are heavily utilized? Any practices that are rarely being utilized? Analyzing these trends can help with goal setting for the school or department. Reviewing in PLCs or in staff meetings are an important way to process through and share best practices.

Small Group Processing
Invite participants to get into small groups and review their own reflections on the practices. Some questions to consider:
- How did it feel to do this reflection?
- What areas are you doing well?
- Where are some areas for growth?
- Were there any areas that seem unattainable or unrealistic? Why?

If reviewing school data, ask participants to review trends and pinpoint possible areas of growth and development.

Large Group Processing
As a staff, consider some of the following questions:
- What trends can help inform our teaching and learning goals?
- How do we look at this data in line with student surveys/data? Are there overlapping themes?
- How can we maximize areas of growth over the next month/semester/school year?
- What current tools support or hinder equitable classroom practices?

<u>Additional Notes</u>
Communicating why the school or district is using this tool will be important so educators can understand how it is being utilized. Data-informed practices allow us to take a closer look at our equity work – where we are excelling and where we are falling short.

<u>Follow-up</u>
Consider using the tool at the beginning and end of the school year, and potentially incorporate into goal setting for educators. If using multiple times, review what changes and what practices educators have implemented. This can be a great way to highlight staff and student success stories.

Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials
Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center
February 2017

Purpose of the Tool
This tool assists leaders, instructional supports, and educators in reviewing the components of equity and cultural responsiveness in curriculum and instruction.

Pre-Work
Pre-discussions around existing curriculum and cultural responsiveness would be important prior to utilizing the tool. Examining how curriculum is already responsive and affirming will also assist the process. What is the "why" for conducting an assessment of curriculum? Identifying who will conduct the assessment, what teams will benefit, and what outcome is expected is also important pre-work. Anchoring the importance and benefits of culturally responsive curriculum also supports the process. This tool could also support curriculum departments, districts, and schools in assessing new or current curricula.

How to Utilize
   (1) Teams, departments, content areas, or district or school employees can utilize this tool as a group. Specific areas can be assigned to pairs or individuals to assess and compare. Two groups can complete the assessment reviewing a specific unit, lesson, or curriculum, and compare notes and share feedback. The final results can be utilized to assess the "equity and inclusive quotient" of existing or current curricula
   (2) School-based teams can utilize the assessment to support them in reviewing the components of equity and culturally responsive curriculum, and create recommendations and augmentations based on the final review
   (3) Students and parents could utilize the assessment as a barometer for culturally affirming curriculum

Small Group Processing/Large Group Processing
Time for reflection and comparison of scores is important at every step during the process. Development of existing gaps or a need for additional professional development may also occur as educators review this document.

Additional Notes
This tool includes best practices in culturally responsive and equitable curriculum. This is a process that can be fragmented as districts, schools, teams or content areas build capacity. Look for areas of improvement that are obtainable; however, do not attempt every aspect at one time. Finding intersectional spaces to impact is preferable.

Follow-up
Completing this tool without discussions regarding the need for curricular augmentation and its benefits can be counterproductive. Step-by-step planning will assist educators in incorporating and mastering specific equity focus points in curriculum.

Supporting Information

(1) *5 ways culturally responsive teaching benefits learners*. New America. (2019, September 23). Retrieved April 20, 2022, from https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/5-ways-culturally-responsive-teaching-benefits-learners/

(2) Sampson & Garrison Wade (2011). Cultural Vibrancy: Exploring the Preferences of African American Children toward Culturally Relevant and Non-Culturally Relevant Lessons. *Urban Review,* 43(2): 27-309. Doi: 10:1007/s11256-010-0170-x

Closing

Thank you for taking the time to review these resources. In planning your work within your school or district, we want to remind you how important it is to start where you are and get everyone up to speed on language and definitions for the work. The pre-work really matters – these resources cannot and should not be used without proper introduction and planning.

We suggest going through the resources as a leadership team or equity team before sharing widely. Aligning these resources into a professional development series or trajectory is a place to start. The WEEAC offers a course on equity trajectory development that is free for all to access. We recommend using that course in tandem with these tools.

The WEEAC is here to support your equity work and can assist with consultation and professional development. Please do not hesitate to reach out to eac@msudenver.edu with questions or fill out a request for services on our website at www.msudenver.edu/weeac.