

Basic Principles for Equity Literacy

An important aspect of equity literacy is its insistence on maximizing the integrity of transformative equity practice. We must avoid being lulled by popular “diversity” approaches and frameworks that pose no threat to inequity—that sometimes are popular *because they are no real threat to inequity*. The basic principles of equity literacy help us ensure we keep a commitment to equity at the center of our equity work and the broader equity conversation.

1. The **Direct Confrontation** Principle: The path to equity requires direct confrontations with inequity—with interpersonal, institutional, cultural and structural racism and other forms of oppression. “Equity” approaches that fail to directly identify and confront inequity play a significant role in sustaining inequity.
2. The **Equity Ideology** Principle: Equity is more than a list of practical strategies. It is a lens and an ideological commitment. There are no practical strategies that will help us develop equitable institutions if we are unwilling to deepen our understandings of equity and inequity and reject ideologies that are not compatible with equity.
3. The **Prioritization** Principle: In order to achieve equity we must prioritize the interests of the students and families whose interests historically have not been prioritized. Every policy, practice, and program decision should be considered through the question, “What impact is this going to have on the most marginalized students and families? How are we prioritizing their interests?”
4. The **Redistribution** Principle: Equity requires the redistribution of material, cultural, and social access and opportunity. We do this by changing inequitable policies, eliminating oppressive aspects of institutional culture, and examining how practices and programs might advantage some students over others. If we cannot explain how our equity initiatives redistribute access and opportunity, we should reconsider them.
5. The **“Fix Injustice, Not Kids”** Principle: Educational outcome disparities are not the result of deficiencies in marginalized communities’ cultures, mindsets, or grittiness, but rather of inequities. Equity initiatives focus, not on “fixing” students and families who are marginalized, but on transforming the conditions that marginalize students and families.
6. The **One Size Fits Few** Principle: No individual identity group shares a single mindset, value system, learning style, or communication style. Identity-specific equity frameworks (like group-level “learning styles”) almost always are based on simplicity and stereotypes, not equity.
7. The **Evidence-Informed Equity** Principle: Equity approaches should be based on evidence for what works rather than trendiness. “Evidence” can mean quantitative research, but it can also mean the stories and experiences of people who are marginalized in your institution.