



EDUCATION^{FOR} LIBERATION

SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT
TOOLKIT

August 2020



IUPUI
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

 **Indiana**
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



School Improvement Toolkit

This collection of tools, resources, and guides is intended as a complimentary toolkit to the Equity Audit your school submitted as a part of the Equity strand of the “Cultural Competency: Leading Radical Change” initiative. After your team has identified your equity priorities, we encourage you to continue the conversations using the tools below. While creating a school grounded in equity is a long and sometimes fraught road, we hope these tools in combination with your work in “Cultural Competency: Leading Radical Change” will pave the way for courageous conversations and strategies for true improvement in your schools.

A. Physical Environment

In creating a physical school environment with equity at the center, educators prioritize the safety, learning, and identity of all students. The same applies to creating a virtual school environment, which we have seen exacerbate already stark inequities in our schools this year. The tools below focus on how to engage all learners in a welcoming space, whether remotely, in person, or a combination.

1) [Google Teacher Center](#)

Focused on Google Suite products, this site contains a myriad of high-quality remote learning resources. Educators can take self-guided training courses or access topic-specific resources. One popular module is “[Inspire Creativity through Learner Engagement.](#)”

2) [Learning Keeps Going, a collaboration of the International Society for Technology in Education \(ISTE\) and EdSurge](#)

This website contains two useful features: a help desk that serves as discussion board for educators navigating remote learning and a comprehensive collection of quality remote learning resources (including teacher PD, lessons and activities, equity resources, and free tech options).

3) IDOE's remote learning guidance for English Learners and Students with Disabilities

These guides provide protocols and resources to ensure that all students are receiving a quality education during these unprecedented times.

- [Office of Special Education COVID-19 Resources & Information](#)
- [eLearning Resources for English Learners](#)

4) [Self-guided learning module: “Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education: Classroom Culture”](#)

This collection of readings, self-guided reflections, and tools encourages teachers to think about how to make their classrooms safe spaces—emotionally, socially, and physically—for all of their students.

B. Teacher Quality

A school with equity at the center hires and retains teachers and staff that reflect the diversity of their student population, who have a range of experiences, and who possess expertise in their teaching areas. These teachers have access to regular professional development opportunities that promote anti-bias thinking and practices, and they hold each other accountable to improving together. The resources below cover a range of traits that define the anti-biased teacher, from developing a professional identity to growing in anti-bias knowledge/ practices.

1) [Self-guided learning module: “Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education: Teacher Leadership” from Teaching Tolerance](#)

This online module guides teachers working alone or in cohorts through a series of activities to help them reflect on their own professional identity and culturally responsive pedagogical practices.

2) [Educator Professional Organizations & Conferences](#)

This list includes both general interest professional organizations as well as organizations specific to supporting liberatory schooling practices.

3) [Building Antiracist White Educators Blog](#)

BARWE is an educator-driven action group centered in Philadelphia. Their website offers reading groups and resources for educators. See “Inquiry Resources” for how to start a BARWE group in your own community.

4) [Equitable Distribution of Effective Educators: Systems Analysis Tool from the Great Lakes Equity Center](#)

This facilitation guide takes a school team through a series of activities to help them see the current state of educator distribution in their schools and how to create a context for improved recruitment and retainment of effective educators.

C. Leadership/ Organization Quality

Strong, equity-minded leaders create a culture of growth, courage, and critical reflection for their educators to ask hard questions and improve together. They put into place policies and procedures that create a clear vision of educational equity. The tools below help leaders create action plans and analyze current policies to create a clear message of equity in their schools.

1) [Guide for Racial Justice & Abolitionist Social and Emotional Learning from the Abolitionist Teacher Network](#)

Appropriate for both school leaders and team members, this guide places SEL in the context of education for liberation (rather than as another policing technique). The guide provides additional resources as well as opportunities for reflection and action.

2) [An Equity Toolkit for Inclusive Schools: Centering Youth Voice in School Change from the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center](#)

This toolkit takes school leaders through a process of involving students in problem solving and school change. Working with a team of stakeholders including youth, school leaders go through indicators of youth voice and formulate a plan to increase youth voice in decision making.

3) [Tennessee Leaders for Equity Playbook from the Tennessee Department of Education](#)

This guide helps school leaders develop evidence-based action plans in these key areas: chronic absenteeism, reducing suspensions, increasing postsecondary opportunities, equitable access to diverse and effective teachers, increasing cultural competence, and partnering with the community.

4) [Policy Equity Analysis Tool from the Great Lakes Equity Center](#)

This tool takes school or district leaders through six analytical domains to help review policies and procedures with educational equity in mind. Each domain includes a graphic organizer to help analyze and improve school policies.

D. Curriculum

Equity-centered curriculum goes beyond simply adding “diverse” texts and lessons; instead, educators wholly reevaluate their curricular approach to center perspectives from people of color, those with disabilities, and other minoritized voices. The resources below help educators assess their current curriculum for implicit bias, provide specific text and lesson suggestions to refocus curriculum on multicultural learning, and provide teaching guides to incorporate anti-bias learning.

1) [Assessing Bias in Standards & Curricular Materials from the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center](#)

This guide identifies different types of bias that can be present in our academic standards and curriculum, then provides a scoring rubric to help educators identify bias in their own curriculum.

2) [Self-guided learning module: “Engaging Curriculum” from Teaching Tolerance.](#)

This series of reflections and videos helps teachers focus on what makes their curriculum relevant to their students, from considering student identity to subject-specific recommendations.

3) [The Facing History and Ourselves Resource Library](#)

This large collection of social justice resources ranges from multimedia tools to curricular units to teaching guides. Subjects include topics like “Activities for a Remote or Hybrid Start,” “Bio-poem: Connecting Identity and Poetry,” and “Teaching Holocaust and Human Behavior.”

4) [Subject-specific webinar recordings from Teaching Tolerance](#)

From “Indigenous Peoples’ History” to “Fun Activities for Anti-Bias Education,” this collection offers recordings of live webinars on professional development and curriculum topics, free after registration.

E. Programming

Programming (in and out of the classroom) with equity at its center means it is available to all students, regardless of need, ability, identity, and circumstances. The resources below help leaders and educators evaluate how their

current programming—whether for specialized services or for school-wide events—may inadvertently serve to marginalize and exclude some students, and what they can do about it.

1) [Beyond Diversity Day Planning Guide from the Great Lakes Equity Center](#)

While well-planned cultural celebrations can provide valuable learning opportunities, “diversity days” can often reinforce cultural stereotypes. This short guide provides a checklist for event planners to guard against representations or activities that might present a reductive view of different cultures.

2) [“Tools & Resources for Providing English Learners Equal Access to Curricular and Extracurricular Programs” from the U.S. Department of Education](#)

This document provides guidance to help LEAs ensure they are providing English Learners equal access to programming. Tools include a data collection guide, key principles for teaching English Learners, a guide to college/ career standards, and a guide to serving gifted English Learners.

3) [Dual Language Learners with Disabilities: A Visual Data Tool for the Critical Educator](#)

These three infographics are quick and accessible references on what educators should know about the intersections of language and disability in schools.

4) [Racial/ Ethnic Disproportionality in Special Education: Data Analysis Workbook from the NYU Metropolitan Center for Urban Education](#)

This comprehensive tool guides school leaders through analyzing special education and general education data to identify disproportionalities in classification and placement (5). It covers the intersections of special education with race/ ethnicity, disability type, and gender.

F. Discipline

Research shows that school discipline is highly affected by implicit bias, creating serious and long-term learning and social consequences for students of color and students with disabilities. Discipline with equity in mind means rejecting discipline as reactive punishment; instead, equitable educators prioritize positive interventions and proactive solutions, strengthen school culture, and build strong relationships with students. Below are some tools to help educators and leaders rethink school discipline in this light.

- 1) [Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools \(A Guide for Educators\) from the NEA, Schott Foundation, Advancement Project, and the AFT](#)

This guide explains the difference between inclusive, justice-oriented practices like restorative justice and zero tolerance policies that perpetuate cycles of injustice in school. Included are action steps for educators.

- 2) [A Guide to Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports from Teaching Tolerance](#)

This quick guide illustrates the benefits of PBIS, an alternative to traditional, reactive disciplinary models and school suspensions.

- 3) [Fix School Discipline: A Toolkit for Educators from Public Counsel](#)

This guide provides tools for school stakeholders to improve discipline practices and create safe, inclusive school communities. Tools cover implementing practices based in restorative justice, trauma-sensitive learning, and Social Emotional Learning.

- 4) [Quick guide on “Authentic Relationships” from Teaching Tolerance.](#)

This brief overview with video explains the importance of good relationships (among students and between teachers and students) to good classroom management.

G. Achievement & Assessment

While assessment data can be useful tools for identifying learning gaps, focusing on standardized testing alone can ignore the opportunity gaps that exacerbate achievement disparities for many minoritized groups. The tools below offer alternative perspectives for assessment that help educators reflect on how measuring achievement can better help all students learn.

- 1) The Assessment for Learning Project

[The Five Core Shifts](#): this website outlines the core shifts suggested to move assessment from accountability to learning: process, priority, product, purpose, and partnership.

[Request for Learning Self-Reflection Tool](#): this tool leads a team of educators through a reflection on their school's assessment practices based on the five core shifts.

- 2) [Make Assessment Work for All Students: Multiple Measures Matter](#), a report from Gallup and the Northwest Evaluation Association

This report includes helpful data visualizations and key findings for schools to better understand how families, students, and educators view the purpose of assessment, and what can be done to make assessments serve all students.

- 3) ["Justice, Not Grit: How Schools' 'Achievement Gap' Initiatives Often Recreate Economic Injustice"](#) from the Equity Literacy Institute

This one-page document provides a reflection on the notion of "achievement gaps" in the context of equity. It could serve as a jumping off point for discussions about the true gaps in your own school.