

Equity Literacy: An Introduction

By Paul C. Gorski for EdChange

Defining Equity Literacy

Equity Literacy is the cultivation of the skills and consciousness that enable us to recognize, respond to, and redress conditions that deny some students access to educational and other opportunities enjoyed by their peers. The Equity Literacy framework was constructed with an acknowledgement of both the strengths and limitations of existing frameworks for engaging the full diversity of youth in schools. Most particularly, it was constructed out of concerns with frameworks, such as “cultural competence,” that focus on “culture” instead of “equity” and as a result mask the inequities that plague schools and other organizations. It is based on the reality that equitable educators must be proficient, not just with culture, but with the skills necessary for creating an equitable learning environment for all students and families.

EQUITY LITERACY ABILITIES	EXAMPLES OF ASSOCIATED SKILLS AND DISPOSITIONS
<p>1. Ability to Recognize biases and inequities, including subtle biases and inequities</p>	<p>Equity literate educators: notice even subtle bias in materials, classroom interactions and school policies; know and teach about how notable people in their content disciplines used their knowledge to advocate for just or unjust actions or policies; and reject deficit views that locate the sources of outcome inequalities (like test score disparities) as existing within the cultures of, rather than as pressing upon, low-income families.</p>
<p>2. Ability to Respond to biases and inequities in the immediate term</p>	<p>Equity literate educators: have the facilitation skills and content knowledge necessary to intervene effectively when biases or inequities arise in a classroom or school; cultivate in students the ability to analyze bias in classroom materials, classroom interactions and school policies; and foster conversations with colleagues about equity concerns at their schools.</p>
<p>3. Ability to Redress biases and inequities in the long term</p>	<p>Equity literate educators: advocate against inequitable school practices, such as racially or economically biased tracking, and advocate for equitable school practices; never confuse celebrating diversity with equity, such as by responding to racial conflict with cultural celebrations; and teach, in relevant and age-appropriate ways, about issues like sexism, poverty and homophobia.</p>

<p>4. Ability to Create and Sustain a bias-free and equitable learning environment</p>	<p>Equity literate educators: express high expectations for all students through higher-order pedagogies and curricula; consider how they assign homework and communicate with families, understanding that students have different levels of access to resources like computers and the Internet; and cultivate a classroom environment in which students feel free to express themselves openly and honestly.</p>
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