

Equity Literacy for Educators: Definition and Abilities

Equity literacy is a framework built to cultivate the knowledge and skills that enable educators 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 recognize even the subtlest ways access and opportunity are distributed unfairly across race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, language, and other factors. By *recognizing* and deeply understanding these conditions, we are prepared to *respond* effectively to inequity in the immediate term. We also strengthen our abilities to foster long-term change by *redressing* institutional and societal conditions that create everyday manifestations of inequity.

We built the equity literacy framework after considering the strengths and limitations of existing frameworks for attending to diversity in schools and other institutions. We were particularly concerned with popular approaches like “cultural competence” and their vague focus on “culture.” These approaches mask the inequities that cause educational disparities. Equitable educators should be proficient not only with cultural knowledge and appreciation, but also with knowledge and skills to eliminate inequity and advocate for equity.

Abilities	Examples of Associated Knowledge and Skills
1. Ability to Recognize even the subtlest biases and inequities	<p>Equity literate educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> notice subtle bias in learning materials and classroom interactions; remain curious about ways school policy and practice might disadvantage some students in unintentional (or intentional) ways; and reject the deficit view that outcome inequalities (like test score disparities) are caused by the cultures or mindsets of students of color, students experiencing poverty, or other marginalized-identity students.
2. Ability to Respond to biases and inequities in the immediate term	<p>Equity literate educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop 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 and inequity in classroom materials, classroom interactions, and school policies; and foster conversations with colleagues about equity concerns in their schools.
3. Ability to Redress biases and inequities in the long term	<p>Equity literate educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> advocate against inequitable school practices like racially or economically biased tracking and advocate for equitable practices; never confuse <i>celebrating diversity</i> with <i>equity</i>, such as by responding to racial conflict with cultural celebrations; and teach about poverty, racism, transphobia, and other forms of injustice.
4. Ability to Create and Sustain bias-free and equitable classrooms, schools, and institutional cultures	<p>Equity literate educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> express high expectations for each student through higher-order teaching; understand that inequities are operating <i>right now</i> in their spheres of influence and <i>proactively</i> advocate for the institutional change necessary to eliminate them at their roots rather than waiting for individual people to report, and then episodically responding to, individual manifestations of that inequity; and prioritize the interests of students whose interests historically have not been prioritized in all policy and practice decisions and in the cultivation of institutional culture.