

Coaching for Educational Equity: Placing Equity at the Center of New Coaches Trainings

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Daniel Baron and I co-facilitated a CFG Coaches training for the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) network schools in the CES Gates Small Schools Project along with Frank Honts and Greg Peters. The Co-Directors of the CES Gates Small School Project were clear that they wanted equity and the 10th Common Principle of CES to be the center of the CFG training. Daniel, Greg and myself were part of the Sonoma Coaching for Educational Equity Group last July. In crafting this CES CFG training, which was structured to be 2 ½ days followed by another 2 ½ days, we intentionally incorporated a lot of the strategies, readings and processes in the first block of the training.

In keeping with Coaching for Educational Equity (CFEE) theory of action, we, initially as facilitators and later with the participants, made a commitment to using Discourse II and using an equity lens to look at student work and in our practice of the protocols. We were also committed to opening a space and a place for the participants in the CFG training to do both the emotional and intellectual work required when you make a commitment to take up issues of equity.

This participant letter follows on the heels of the equity work we did during the first 2 ½ days. It also is the result of a close collaboration with the Co-Directors of the CES Gates Small Schools Project and Daniel, Frank, Greg and myself. We offer this letter to you as one example of what it might look like and sound like if we intentionally placed equity at the center of our work in new coaches trainings. We welcome your feedback.

Dear Colleagues,

It is hard to believe it has been almost two months since we began building our equity centered learning community. As we prepare for our time together in Minnesota we hope that you have found many opportunities to reflect on and put into practice some of the learning that we did together in San Francisco.

As you know, creating equitable schools is the heart and soul of our work. In an equitable society test scores, graduation rates, average incomes, and fair elections would not be pre-determined by race, class, or gender. Educational institutions mirror our society's inequities. Schools are used to reproduce a culture of inequality where many of the assumptions, values, and practices of the dominant culture serve to disadvantage the students of non-dominant

cultures.

If we do not intentionally and meaningfully interrupt the inequitable sorting practices that exist in our schools and replace them with equitable practices, relationships and learning conditions we will continue to deny children of color and poor children a quality education.

The 10th Common Principle of CES declares "that schools should model democratic practices, honor diversity, and deliberately and explicitly challenge all forms of inequity." Through our work together in the CES Small Schools Network we have the power to create equitable new small schools (start-ups and conversions) and to deliberately improve our existing small schools to reflect democratic and equitable practices.

In our CES Small Schools we have accepted the challenge to be the change we want to see. As Gandhi once said, "We must become the change we wish to see in the world." Consequently, we as teachers, administrators, and other educators must end the inequitable practices in our classrooms, schools, and districts and re-invent these institutions with equity of outcomes for all students. To do this work wholeheartedly we must ask ourselves: What are the moral issues and the sense of urgency that drives this work for me?

During the second half of the Coaching for Educational Equity training we will continue to develop the will, skill, knowledge, capacity, and emotional intelligence to teach, coach, and lead for educational equity. The seminar develops these traits by:

- Defining educational equity
 - Sharing an understanding of the historical and current inequities in the cultural, economic, political, and social communities of our nation and our schools and an understanding of oppression, power, privilege, and hegemony,
 - Creating the space for intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth to break the bonds of these inequities and reflecting privately and/or communally about our own complicity without fear or rushing to judgment,
 - Empowering educators to ally themselves within and across racial, gender, and class boundaries,
 - Interrupting and responding to denial, hostility, and other inequities in real time,
 - Spotlighting how these inequities are
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- perpetuated within our communities and schools,
- Creating the space for the participants to undertake the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual growth to eliminate their behaviors that support the cycle of inequity (i.e., fostering trust, increasing confidence, decreasing pretense and passivity).

By the end of our Seminar, we challenge you to be ready, willing and able to interrupt inequity and oppression in your school, build the alliances required to create that equitable reality, encourage new leaders to emerge, and to support these new leaders to reflect on the issues of equity that arise in their lives and work. All schools need to create safe opportunities for educators to share and reflect upon stories and experiences about how racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression have affected our lives as individuals, parents, educators, and citizens. In CES Small Schools it is our responsibility to do so.

Our work together will continue to be guided by these essential questions:

- What do I need to know and be able to do to interrupt inequities in my school?
- What do I need to know and be able to do to create, foster and sustain an equitable Professional Learning Community?
- How does a Professional Learning Community focused on equity and social justice increase student success in school and in life?

In order for us to attend rigorously to these questions, please come prepared to work hard, complete nightly assignments, and engage in a professional discourse that will renew our passion for teaching and learning. Please read and come prepared to discuss the two texts; “Hiphop In the Classroom,” and “What Do We Mean by Rigor.”

Because the work of this Seminar is tied so closely to our work as educators in our individual settings, we ask you to bring samples of student or adult work. If you are not currently teaching, then please bring a piece of your work for the purpose of receiving feedback or a dilemma you face as a leader for educational equity. We will make the time to honor all the work that you bring.

We hope you know how excited we are to continue our critically important work together. ■

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the Collaborative Assessment Conference would be useful here. This might eliminate predisposing the participants to a particular “view” of the class or students in question.

- Assignment or prompt that generated the student work
- Student learning goals or standards that inform the work

Potential clarifying questions might be,

“How are all students being served with this assignment?” or “How was it ‘differentiated’ for the members of this particular class?”

- Samples of student work — photocopies of work, video clips, etc. — with student names removed.

More questions to consider: How did the presenter select the work? Was it truly random? Does it represent not only the range of learning, but also the range of diversity in the class?

- Evaluation format — scoring rubric and/or assessment criteria, etc.

Questions here could focus on how evaluation is handled. Are clear, high expectations stated for all, using student-friendly language that guides the students to equitable outcomes?

- Focusing question for feedback
- Participants are silent; no questions are entertained at this time.

3. Clarifying Questions — 5 minutes

- Participants have an opportunity to ask “clarifying” questions in order to get information that may have been omitted in the presentation that they feel would help them to understand the context for the student work. Clarifying questions are matters of “fact.” The facilitator should be sure to limit the questions to those that are “clarifying,” judging which questions more properly belong in the warm/cool feedback section.

4. Examination of Student Work Samples — 15 minutes

- Participants look closely at the work, taking notes on where it seems to be in tune with the stated goals, and where there might be a problem. Participants focus particularly on the presenter’s

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