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RECOGNIZING WHITENESS & DISMANTLING RACISM IN SCHOOLS:
DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES TO PREPARE A
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE TEACHING FORCE TO TEACH AND REACH STUDENTS
OF COLOR

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

by

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June 2024

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Antioch University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

RECOGNIZING WHITENESS & DISMANTLING RACISM IN SCHOOLS: DEVELOPING A PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES TO PREPARE A PREDOMINANTLY WHITE TEACHING FORCE TO TEACH AND REACH STUDENTS OF COLOR

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This dissertation presents research pertaining to how classroom teachers can become more effective in teaching their students of color. Through an examination of literature pertaining to critical whiteness studies, critical pedagogy, antiracist education, and transformative leadership, a professional learning program has been designed to offer space for educators to recognize their roles within the school system pertaining to whiteness ideologies and racist policies and practices. Backward design and Understanding by Design were applied to develop a professional learning program and allows for flexibility in the learning process. It is the goal that this program be delivered for the participants to critically reflect on their current teaching practices and how they may be unintentionally harming their students of color. Furthermore, the professional learning program will offer opportunities for implementation of new learning that will lead to changes in instructional practices that create equitable learning experiences for all students. Included in the program design is formative assessment as well as impact assessment questions to determine the merit and worth of the program. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA (<https://aura.antioch.edu>) and OhioLINK ETD Center (<https://etd.ohio.link.edu>).

Keywords: equity, antiracist education, critical whiteness, professional learning, professional development, backward design, K-12 schooling, transformative leadership

Acknowledgements

I am forever thankful to my dissertation committee, my fellow doctoral candidates, my colleagues, friends, and family for their unwavering support throughout this journey. Thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Lesley Jackson, for your expertise, insightful feedback and understanding as I grew throughout this process. Thank you to Dr. Heidi Oliver-O’Gilvie for providing me with a space to discover the antiracist within me as well as for quietly serving as a mentor along the way. Furthermore, I want to acknowledge the unwavering support of my fellow doctoral candidates through obstacles, frustrations, and triumphs over the past three years. I will treasure your friendships for life. To my district colleagues and friends: I would not be who I am today without you. Your camaraderie and encouragement have been a source of strength and inspiration. Thank you to my dad, Peter Nelson. You are forever proud of who I am and I am so grateful to have grown up in a home where you and Mom understood the importance of celebrating the humanity in others. Of course, I extend my most heartfelt thanks to my husband, Steve, and my children, Eli and Dia. I have missed countless hours by their sides, but their unconditional support has been the cornerstone of my academic success and I am forever grateful to have them in my life. Lastly, I thank my students. Without you I would never be the human I am today. Your authenticity, beauty, and innocence are why I go to work every day with hope in my heart that you will receive the education you deserve from every adult that crosses your path. This dissertation is dedicated to each and every one of you.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

King (2018) claims, “Racism is a heart disease. How we think and respond is at the core of racial suffering and racial healing. If we cannot think clearly and respond wisely, we will continue to damage the world’s heart” (p. 4). Racism has always been a word that makes people squirm in their seats, look the other way or exclaim, “I’m not racist!” In recent years, the United States has gone through a racial reckoning that seems to have no end in sight. As educators of a rapidly increasing population of students of color, it is time for the teaching force of the United States to come to terms with the reality of racism in order to reach and teach all of their students.

As teachers, “we have the autonomy to design learning to create relationships and to change the trajectory of students’ lives” (Chardin & Novak, 2021, p.ix). In order to create life-changing opportunities for our students, we should understand how our educational system is broken by not providing a quality education to all of its students. Students of color are tracked, grouped, policed, given a whitewashed curriculum, and disciplined with racist policies and procedures (Dunn et al., 2021). Educational systems are steeped in racism and whiteness which creates an inequitable educational experience that treats our students as a number on a data table, not as a human being. Teaching is humanizing work that demands we develop our students in mind and spirit as well as acknowledge the ways racism and whiteness in education cause harm to our students of color.

Statement of Problem

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006), the leading scholar of critical race theory in education, concludes that instead of the misnomer achievement gap, we have an education debt. She explains the necessity of addressing this lack of opportunities and resources for our students of

color as well as acknowledging the impact the debt has on the current educational system. Rather than simply implementing short-term solutions to the achievement gap, it is crucial to confront the history of public education in the United States and acknowledge the moral obligation to challenge inequities in the classroom. Furthermore, scholars such as Bettina Love (2019) argue, students are essentially pushed aside because of teacher biases and prejudices as well as the racist policies that run rampant through the educational system. These biases, prejudices, and racist policies have stemmed from historical factors that have characterized our white dominance-based society for years and have further compounded the education debt. Shields (2004b) contends educators must understand how our school systems benefit the middle-class and disadvantage others. Inequities based on race continue to pervade our educational system due to a history of legal apartheid, poor learning conditions, and ideas of inferiority among our people of color (Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, as Shields (2004b) adds, we must not accept these inequities but work towards removing the barriers to student achievement. We owe this to our students. This is our debt as educators.

Much of the teaching force in the United States is white and monolingual while teaching a multiethnic and multilingual student body that continues to grow (Muhammad, 2020). Because white women comprise roughly 80% of the teaching force in the United States, it is their moral and professional obligation to confront the ways in which their hidden biases, racist assumptions, and contributions to white supremacy impact their students of color on any given day. It is any teacher's responsibility to reflect on their racial identity as well as to understand the identity of their students of color in order to become more prepared to educate all students to their fullest potential (Dunn et al., 2021). We cannot continue to accept the status quo of having our

marginalized students grouped and tracked via quick-fix slogans such as No Child Left Behind or mandated, performative professional development.

Teachers need to identify and understand how many of their current beliefs may lead to barriers to the success of their students (Shields, 2010). Creating meaningful change within every classroom provides space for dialogue to make teachers aware of such barriers. This allows them to restructure their learning environments to teach and reach all students. In addition, there is a need for them to become racially literate which “means that teachers learn and teach about the contributions, assets and richness of BIPOC cultures, not only their struggles” (Martinez, 2020, p. 41). Furthermore, it is imperative teachers avoid deficit thinking which assumes our Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) struggle in school due to their circumstances. As a result of this train of thought, the onus is placed on the students to work harder instead of recognizing it is the teacher’s responsibility to ensure the success of every one of their students (Shields, 2019). Therefore, there is a need for professional development for current teachers that is transformative and empowering for them to become aware of how they may be unknowingly impeding the success of their students. In Chapter IV, I present a professional learning program designed to prepare a predominantly white teaching force to teach and reach students of color by recognizing whiteness and dismantling racist practices and pedagogies.

Personal Relationship to the Topic

I work in a large public school district that is very segregated due to a history of redlining. We reside in a state that essentially legalized apartheid in the early twentieth century through a housing ordinance which was the first of its kind in the United States (Hylton, 2024).

I have spent just over 20 years in education only to find myself frustrated and disappointed with the current leadership's failure to provide their student body with equitable teaching practices and discipline policies. I have also struggled working with teachers that need to overcome deficit thinking and instead, take responsibility for the success of their students. Currently, in my district, central office leadership is not prioritizing the training necessary in order to create transformative leaders that will not only attend to academic achievement but also to social justice. Educational leadership itself is struggling to keep up with the increasing demands our students and teachers face every day and that leaders remain stuck in their old ways and the status quo (Shields, 2004b).

As a white woman teaching predominantly students of color, I have dedicated my professional life to reach all of my students, create a space for them where they can thrive as adolescents, and prove them capable of learning. In addition, as a career teacher leader at the district, state, and national levels, I have worked in teacher development with hopes to create positive change within educational practice and pedagogy. Over the past several years, and directly in response to the latest Black Lives Matter movement of 2020, I participated in an after-school social justice space for educators within my district. These virtual conversations provided me with the space I needed to embark on my journey towards becoming an antiracist educator. It was within this opportunity I scratched the surface of the history of public schools, antiblackness and implicit bias, the pathology of white supremacy, and inequitable teaching practices. As a result, I continued my journey both with my own, personal continued education as well as entering the doctoral program at Antioch University.

After embarking on my doctoral journey, through research and participation in the courses, I realized I would have the most impact on classroom teachers as opposed to trying to reach leadership in my district. Although I have sat at many leadership tables both building and district wide, I have had very limited impact in school policy or procedure. It is only when I find myself in a room of fellow classroom teachers I create meaningful change through dialogue, the sharing of best practices and collaboration. Therefore, I plan to mirror my lived experience within this professional learning program in order to give teachers like me a community in which to begin (or continue) their journeys towards becoming antiracist educators. Whether my participants are white educators, Black colleagues, non-teaching staff or administrators, it is my hope each will find an entry point within the PD series regardless of where they may fall on the spectrum of antiracist education.

Consequently, it is with a grassroots effort from the bottom up, I may be able to directly impact more students by creating space for educators to come to terms with their own biases, learn the history of critical race theory in education, as well as create and advocate for antiracist spaces and curriculum. As educators, we must “open our curriculum, our policies, our hearts, and our minds to challenge inequities, to eliminate pathologies, and to ensure inclusive and respectful education for all students” (Shields, 2004b, p. 128).

Purpose Statement

My research question, *How do we prepare a predominantly white teaching force to teach and reach students of color?* gives me the knowledge necessary to design and deliver a professional learning experience where participants recognize whiteness within the school system as well as recognize and dismantle the racist policies and practices in education.

Throughout the experience, participants come to terms with their own racial identities along with gaining an understanding of Black Joy and struggle (Emdin, 2021; Kendi, 2019, 2021; Love, 2019). In addition, it will offer the tools needed to effectively deliver a culturally responsive, antiracist education within an educational system permeated by racist policies and white supremacist ideologies (Allen & Liou, 2019; Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Matías, 2013). Working towards this ultimate purpose of the professional learning program, teachers will have the opportunity to work towards the following goals:

- Identify their own cultural biases;
- Recognize how racist policies and whiteness in the educational system causes harm to their students of color;
- Understand the lived experiences of their students of color;
- Apply a culturally responsive, antiracist education;
- Develop transformative leadership skills and;
- Advocate for meaningful change.

Chardin and Novak (2021) emphasize the importance of committing authentically to the work in order to develop as expert teachers. However, if I am to expect the participants to be respectful of one another, authentic in their responses and open to personal growth, I must give them a space for transformative learning by providing opportunities for emancipatory learning. Cranton (2016) explains that in emancipatory learning “the reformer sees education as a means of helping individuals and groups exercise their own power, which may result in personal and social change” (p. 82). To create change, it is essential to provide opportunities for educators to make meaning through dialogue, community, and action. Within this space, deep learning can

occur. A learning in which we dialogue, stop, reflect, question our assumptions, and entertain fresh questions that might lead to a change of perspective. As teachers, it is our duty to discover within ourselves the roles we play in the policies, practices and pedagogies that are harmful in order to create true social change.

Educational equity should be at the core of all professional development. As we normalize conversations around white supremacy and racism, we can start pushing back against the unjust systems created through its practice. By doing so, we become more responsive to the needs of our students and teachers of color. Through collaboration and community, white teachers can transform education for their students of color. Through a critical examination of the history of inequities in education as well as coming to terms with the hidden biases and prejudices that all white people possess, it is my hope teachers will make better decisions for their student body and for their faculty. We must work in community.

Significance of Professional Learning Program

As a predominantly white teaching force, the time is now to spend our white privilege on ways in which we can eliminate the barriers that exist in harming our students of color. The antiracist buzzwords have run rampant over the past years and often, equity practices are used as checklists. We must avoid falling into these equity traps and tropes of “doing” equity or blanket equity (Dugan, 2021) and dig deeper to recognize where and how whiteness and racism show up within our own school buildings and districts. “The tensions between the rhetoric of equity and the reality of the visceral, daily experiences in the world of education clearly demonstrate the power of schooling to disenfranchise, marginalize, and alienate individuals” (Morris et al., 2011, p. 128). White supremacy characteristics permeate the educational system with value placed on

perfectionism, quantity over quality and individualism. As Love (2019) asserts, our educational system has continued to exist on white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and sexism. Our current political climate is only intensifying the need for educational reform. What other place to start than in the classroom?

Limitations and Delimitations

Throughout my career as a teacher leader, I have consistently run into issues with pushback, incompetence, and lack of follow through when it came to whole school improvement initiatives. Therefore, as a department chair, I have often focused my efforts on my sphere of influence and worked towards growth and transformation on a small scale. In addition, I have taken my expertise on the collaborative classroom, the importance of brain breaks, and the use of kinesthetic learning structures outside my department at the district, state, and national levels. As a result of my former experiences, I have chosen to focus the professional learning program on the classroom teacher. As a result, there may still be some limitations anticipated during the development of the professional learning experiences. These include permission issues I may face when adding content, lack of interest within a teacher community that is working on equity exhaustion, and ensuring an experience that is welcomed by all the educators in the district regardless of race.

Despite my previously mentioned struggles with school-based leadership, I have still managed to create a strong support system of district colleagues that will continue to support me on my journey towards becoming an antiracist leader. I understand my teacher colleagues are operating on equity exhaustion, and many are ready to leave this latest ‘trend’ behind. However, after engaging in hundreds of conversations over the past few years it is my understanding that

there is simply a lack of understanding of what equitable teaching practices and pedagogy are. We have been inundated with mandated professional development that loses its value because it is viewed as just another requirement that takes us away from the daily grind of teaching. However, this professional learning series will have a ripple effect as participants will create an action plan at the end of each learning module in order to apply new learning to their classrooms and with their colleagues.

Implications of Professional Learning Program

With active participation in this professional learning program, participants will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to modify and adapt their current teaching practices and pedagogies in order to create antiracist spaces for learning. By providing educators with a space to speak freely of the wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973) in education, such as school disconnectedness and racist school policies, we are giving them ownership over the solutions they discover and with the goal of putting them into action. Moreover, top-down initiatives are sometimes harmful especially when not delivered with integrity.

Throughout the professional learning program, participants will recognize the inequities our students face regarding discipline procedures, school policies, standardized testing, and pedagogies, all which are characterized by white supremacy and injustice which includes the hidden biases and microaggressions that white teachers bring with them into the classroom. Bartolomé (2008) determines that teacher education programs are lacking in necessary self-reflection opportunities where future educators come to terms with their unconscious biases. Therefore, the school systems end up with educators that do not understand how they are contributing to a socially unjust and inequitable educational experience for their students. By

coming to terms with how all of us play a role in the whiteness of the educational system, we can begin to dismantle the harmful policies, practices and pedagogies within our school buildings and districts.

Definitions of Key Terms

Critical whiteness studies: A look into how the education system operates on racial privilege as well as how teachers must come to terms with the racial history of the United States.

Implicit bias: Negative attitudes and viewpoints teachers hold towards their students of color often causing them harm. This then leads to a belief that these students are “threatening, arrogant, disdainful of authority, and uncontrollable except by force or removal” (Love, 2013, p. 293).

Critical race theory: The belief that race is a social construct and not only a product of individual human beings but also deeply embedded in our systems, structures, and policies (Sawchuk, 2021). Includes how racism has shaped the educational system and focuses on the persistent inequalities within our school buildings which results in schools continuously failing our students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006).

Antiracist education:

Antiracist education is a theory of learning and action to help us do the important work of dismantling racism in schools. It explicitly highlights, critiques, and challenges institutional racism. It addresses how racist beliefs and ideologies structure one-on-one

interactions and personal relationships. It examines and challenges how institutions support and maintain disadvantages and advantages along racial lines (National Museum of African American History and Culture, n.d.)

Transformative Leadership: Within the educational realm of working towards equity in education, leaders engage their participants in critical self-reflection that may change perspectives of equitable and inequitable schooling and challenge assumptions they may have about their students of color (Brown, 2004). Transformative leadership is achieved by leveraging “both leaders’ and followers’ mutual morality, motivation, and aspirations to accomplish goals, demonstrating a more profound effect on followers by raising their levels of consciousness to transcend self-interests” (Dugan, 2017, p. 190).

Conclusion

The United States has a history of educational inequity that has continued to harm its students of color. The diversity of the nation is not mirrored in its public-school teaching force which leads to racial and ethnic gaps among teachers and students. Throughout my 20 years as a public school teacher and leader, I have dedicated myself to being a lifelong learner which led me on my journey towards becoming an antiracist educator. As I move forward, I wish to take others on a similar journey to challenge a racist system and policies, deliver an inclusive and respectful education for all students, and encourage my colleagues to affect meaningful change within their spheres of influence.

Our education debt is due to the systemic injustices embedded within the educational system and it is imperative that we address this legacy of inequalities (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

As a white woman teaching predominantly students of color, I have seen these inequities firsthand through poor teaching and biased discipline policies. Although I have faced resistance mainly with school-based leadership I have also been met with passionate colleagues who have committed to repaying their debt.

The culmination of my research surrounding *how to prepare a predominantly white teaching force to teach and reach students of color* has become the capstone of my personal and professional journey in antiracism. Without knowing it, I have been working for years to provide an equitable education for my students and have been a fierce advocate for creating learning spaces that are welcoming, safe, and brave. The design of this program is informed by the current theories and themes in education as well as influenced greatly by my own lived experience as a white educator of predominantly students of color. Through a professional learning series that responds to the immediate need of an equitable education for our students of color, educators will refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system.

The following chapter presents a literature review that further examines how whiteness and racism are woven into the fabric of our education system. Additionally, it explores a critical antiracist pedagogy that impacts both educator and student as well as delving into the need for transformative leadership that creates a community working towards meaningful change in our classrooms.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

During the global pandemic and the racial reckoning of the United States, schools across the nation made promises to emerge stronger and created vision statements centering equity and inclusion. After the world slowed down for a year, teachers were eager to get back in the classroom, re-energized and excited to see what the new school year would entail. However, instead of finding solutions to the real problems revealed during the pandemic, the school system applied band-aids that only gave temporary aid to a student population struggling to find a new normal. Research shows Black students have suffered the most due to the impact of COVID, racism, white supremacy, and racial violence as well as job insecurity of family members, mental health issues and an erosion of trust in schools (Horsford et al., 2021).

Students of color are suffering within the public educational systems without regard given to the importance of nurturing their well-being. Love (2019) defines this social disregard for our students of color as antidarkness. This antidarkness results in what the Southern Poverty Law Center refers to as “a set of seemingly unconnected school policies and teacher instructional decisions that over time result in students of color not receiving adequate literacy and content instruction while being disproportionately disciplined for non-specific, subjective offenses such as defiance” (Hammond, 2015, p. 13). Students of color continue to fall behind academically as they lose instructional time and do not receive the support they need to succeed in their classrooms due to a constant comparison to a white middle-class norm to which they differ (Emdin, 2012). Furthermore, poor instructional decisions continue to underserve our diverse

student population as our educational leaders continue to struggle with elevating student achievement (Hammond, 2015).

Educational systems are steeped in racism and whiteness which creates an inequitable educational experience that treats our students as a number on a data table, not as a human being. Students of color are tracked, grouped, policed, given a whitewashed curriculum, and disciplined with racist policies and procedures (Dunn et al., 2021). White supremacy characteristics such as perfectionism, individualism, binary thinking, and worship of the written word (Okun, 2021) permeate the school system. As many educators are made aware of their own contributions to white supremacy culture in schools, they can begin to dismantle it. By becoming actively antiracist, educators recognize, identify, and confront their role in and their ability to take part in the struggle against racism in education. “Like fighting an addiction, being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination” (Kendi, 2019, p. 23). To prepare a predominantly white teaching force to teach students of color, educators need to confront how whiteness impacts classroom practices, grasp the concept of becoming an antiracist, and utilize their new knowledge to influence and impact fellow educators, fostering meaningful change one classroom at a time.

The aim of this literature review is to provide insight into how racism and whiteness have impacted the public education system as well as how there is a need to apply an antiracist lens on professional learning experiences, classroom practices and pedagogies. Furthermore, it points out how a transformative style of leadership is imperative when working with adult learners towards real, meaningful change.

The Effect of Whiteness on Students of Color

The characteristics of white supremacy permeate the policies, practices, and pedagogies of the educational system. Roger Simon's definition of pedagogy "refers to the integration in practice of particular curriculum, content, and design, classroom strategies and techniques and evaluation, purpose and methods" (cited in McLaren, 1994, p. 169). Wilson (2021) contends pedagogy is centered in whiteness which pervades teaching practices and curriculum choices as well as influencing discipline policies. Wilson (2021) continues to argue essentialism maintains white supremacy in education through the beliefs and values of the dominant culture. Therefore, it allows social injustices such as inequitable discipline rates in schools to seem natural in the Black community (Mahoney, 1995). Brookfield and Hess (2021) maintain we must normalize the identification of white supremacy in our educational spaces in order to begin to push back against it. Welton et al. (2015) conclude addressing race-related issues is crucial to meeting the needs of all students. Therefore, by coming to terms with how educators play a role in the whiteness of the educational system, they can begin to identify and dismantle the harmful policies, practices and pedagogies within their school buildings and districts.

As Allen and Liou (2019) assert, our school system is created in ways that privilege whiteness. Our students of color are at a disadvantage the minute they walk through the front doors of the school building. Because of the permeation of whiteness within its four walls, "schools and teachers treat the language, prior knowledge, and values of African Americans as aberrant and often presume that the teacher's job is to rid African American students of any vestiges of their own culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2000, p. 206). The influence of whiteness on discipline policies has led to higher rates of suspension among Black students than white

students (Morris, 2016). These policies have grave consequences that include a loss in classroom engagement and achievement as well as increased absenteeism and poor behavior which often lead to an increase in drop-out rates and incarceration (Lustick et al., 2020). To decrease the number of students of color being sent out on discipline infractions, classroom teachers should become culturally responsive to avoid stereotyping classroom behaviors as less than.

Black students consistently receive explicit and implicit messages they are inferior and incapable of high expectations (Ladson-Billings, 2000). More concerning is how student dreams, hopes, and futures are often tied to teacher perception (Love, 2013). We are measuring our students of color based on accountability standards and conformity to the dominant white culture. Schools perpetuate the ideals of white supremacy through a focus on standardized tests, whitewashed curriculum, and a rigid discipline structure (Wilson, 2021).

Bartolomé (2008) reports most educators view a white dominant ideology as the position to which all students must strive, the culture to which they must assimilate. Since schools act as a microcosm of society, behavior is classified subjectively based on one's positionality (Love, 2013). Furthermore, John Ogbu's work explains the dilemma Black students face when it comes to "acting white" and how it is often perceived as a betrayal of their race (Emdin, 2021; McLaren, 1994). Our students of color are being forced to forfeit their own identities in order to survive within the school system due to a racialized society; a society in which white supremacist sentiments are disguised as "nationalism, patriotism and family values" (Delgado, 2010, p. 552). We should resist the protection of whiteness, which frequently manifests itself in the values placed on schooling. Schools are places of assimilation, power struggles, biased

discipline, individualism, and tokenism (Truss, 2019). Consequently, when not fitting into this mold or behaving within this so-called standard, students of color are viewed as being disobedient simply by expressing themselves freely in the classroom (Emdin, 2021). As a result, students of color are held to high expectations despite the heavily biased system (Wilson, 2021).

The Effect of Whiteness on Teaching Practices

Politeness, social harmony, and unity are often the prioritized values handed down from leadership for how teachers should operate within their professional roles regarding the state of injustice at any given moment (Wong, 2019). Whether it be another Black person killed on the streets by a police officer or a state government banning any discussion of critical race theory in local education districts, we are often told to stay positive. However, the rhetoric of the message by passing down these values only hinder the dialogue and goals needed to eliminate systemic racism in schools (Castagno, 2013). As Wilson (2021) contends, whiteness is the standard, its characteristics valued, mainstreamed, and rewarded. It is common for the white teacher to overlook biases and stereotyping that may cross their paths. White privilege allows for white people to disengage from uncomfortable topics such as racism and white supremacy. In order to create real change, one must be willing to engage in uncomfortable conversations. As Acho (2020) asserts, “everything great is birthed through discomfort” (introduction). It is time to get comfortable with being uncomfortable which is a crucial part of growth as a human being (Ajayi Jones, 2021).

Despite the challenges it presents, many white teachers need to acknowledge their whiteness and its impacts on their classrooms as well as to challenge the white supremacist policies within the educational system (Love, 2019, p. 75). It is well-documented throughout

history that whites benefit from a system of white privilege through increased access to power and status over people of color (Allen, 2004; Allen & Liou, 2019; Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019). By coming to terms with the fact white educators work in an educational system built on white supremacy, they understand the role they play as the oppressor (Allen, 2004). Cabrera et al. (2022) argue that when asked to speak on issues of race there is often white resistance. Matías et al. (2016) report incidents of disbelief and deflection when discussing race that indicate a lack of emotional literacy. White educators should be careful in avoiding their compliance in and perpetuation of a system of white supremacy through the inability to engage in uncomfortable conversations.

Moreover, critical whiteness scholars understand the relationship between white supremacy and teacher emotions (Cabrera et al., 2022). Matías and Zembylas (2014) discern how racialized emotions of disgust are often disguised as pity or caring but truly result in being inauthentic. Teachers should be emotionally willing to develop their empathy skills towards students of color in order to be truly effective (Matías & Zembylas, 2014). Declarations of caring are not enough, especially when still holding pejorative views of students of color (Matías & Zembylas, 2014).

Furthermore, whiteness is also protected through a white saviorism mindset which is at the forefront of the minds of antiracist education advocates as they continue to fight against educators that are “fulfilling their own narcissistic need to ‘save’ [their students of color]” (Matías, 2013, p. 72). White saviorism allows for white teachers to act as if they know what is best for their students of color without acknowledging the real effects of their actions. These effects may include further marginalization or enabling the students in such a way detrimental to

their growth in learning. For example, many white educators view their students of color through a deficit mindset. They focus on their perceived characteristics and stereotypes such as having low ability levels, viewing them as possible discipline problems as aforementioned, and/or coming from families that do not value education. These white saviors feel it is their duty to save their students of color through enabling behaviors without realizing the harm they may be causing.

Educators too often subscribe to this biased narrative of “at-risk” students and “fixing” our students of color which may negatively impact the psyche of the child (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Due to teacher education programs lacking in necessary self-reflection opportunities where future educators come to terms with their unconscious biases, school systems end up with educators that do not understand how they are contributing to a socially unjust and inequitable educational experience for their students (Bartolomé, 2008). “Educators should examine their own implicit bias and beliefs, their power and privilege, and create classrooms and schools where all students have equal opportunities to learn, share their voice, speak their truth and work toward meaningful, authentic and relevant goals” (Chardin & Novak, 2021, p. 6). Instead, educators are abusing their power through misinterpretations of student behavior instead of learning about Black youth culture and looking inward at their own biases (Emdin, 2021). Ladson-Billings (2009) maintains educators must grow professionally and personally as it relates to their students of color. As a result of this investigation and self-reflection, teachers can begin the meaningful change within their lessons and instructional delivery (Almager, 2018). If educators do not engage in this work, the result often harms students of color through a deficit mindset that leads to blaming students for academic failure (Almager, 2018; Love, 2013; Shields,

2019). Furthermore, due to the lack of diversity in the teaching force, whiteness still finds itself at the center of curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher emotions (Matías et al., 2016).

In a case study by Johnson and Bornstein (2020), it was determined educators continued to support policies and practices that were supported by white norms. They were demonstrating an implicit bias that became synonymous with institutional racism. This is also known as the colorblind individualism dimension of racism (Leonardo, 2007) which further exacerbates the inequities in education due to it resulting in race-neutral policies and practices. A colorblind stance does not allow educators to critically reflect on their biases within their pedagogical practices. In addition, it causes schools to place onus of failure in achievement on their students instead of finding the root of the problem within the school culture itself as found in one study where school leaders concentrated on change within the students and their families instead of the school culture itself (Welton et al., 2015).

Teachers can examine their own biases within their classrooms through self-reflection or peer observation. Without this examination, no change can be made. Benson and Fiarman (2020) suggest taking a deeper look at both the teacher and student behaviors in order to ensure all students are receiving encouragement. Teachers are often unaware of their implicit biases and how they can cause harm and have a profound effect on our students of color. If not addressed, these biases become serious obstacles to academic achievement (Almager, 2018). Our students of color internalize oppression while being programmed to aspire to whiteness as well as experience a cumulative impact of daily anxiety simply because of the color of their skin (King, 2018).

Through this self-examination, educators will work towards continued learning and growth in order for them to identify and address the racial biases both within themselves and their school buildings (Benson & Fiarman, 2020). Without this critical inquiry, teachers will continue to make snap judgements based on stereotypes, assumptions, and fears that have absolutely nothing to do with the academic abilities of the child (Love, 2019). Students of color bring brilliance to the classroom, want to learn, and come from supportive families with whom we can work in order to connect them to their children's education. We should transition from saviorism to solidarity in support of disrupting the single narrative of our students of color (Gonzalez, 2017).

Critical Race Theory, Antiracist Education, & Critical Pedagogy

In 1989, scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw “coined the term ‘critical race theory’ to define race as a social construct and to provide a framework for understanding the way it shapes public policy” (Kolhatkar, 2022) as well as how systemic racism not only exists but permeates our everyday lives thus recognizing the reality of racism in our society today. Gloria Ladson-Billings, along with William F. Tate (1995) laid the foundation for Critical Race Theory (CRT) in Education. An antiracist education calls for the identification of and opposition to how racism affects the school system as well as affirms the responsibility of educators to be proactive in their educational spaces in order to develop critically conscious children (Stand for Children, 2023). Educators that implement critical antiracist pedagogy, which has been developed through the lens of CRT and antiracism, disrupt the practices, pedagogies, and policies that harm students of color.

Recent attacks on CRT in education have been making headlines in the early 2020s. Critics of CRT feel it is dividing the country by promoting a racially biased history essentially aimed at blaming whites for racism thus causing negativity and shame among our citizens (Camera, 2021). However, it is quite the opposite. To truly educate our students of color, not only must white educators understand their own identities and contributions to white supremacy, but they also must work towards understanding the Black Joy (Love, 2019) and struggle that their students of color contend with every day of their lives. According to University of California Los Angeles' Black Bruin Resource Center (BBRC, 2023), "Black Joy is anything that inspires, supports and uplifts Black culture." To become an antiracist educator, one should learn about Black culture through books, podcasts, documentaries or by getting involved in the community in which they teach. "Teachers who understand Black Joy enter the classroom knowing that Black students knowing their history, falling in love with their history, and finding their voice are more important than grades" (Love, 2019, p. 121). Furthermore, they develop a deeper sense of empathy and willingness to advocate for their BIPOC students (Boske, 2014). White educators can use their privilege to advocate for their students by demanding a quality education that includes a curriculum that portrays Black Joy. A curriculum that speaks to the resilience, creativity, and humanity of the Black community (Love, 2019).

Quick fixes such as increasing surveillance, more testing, and zero-tolerance discipline are wrongly thought to be the answer to the achievement gap (Love, 2019). Educators may cause long-term damage to their students' well-being if they do nothing to ensure their students are adequately educated in a classroom that values them as people (Venet, 2021, p. 22) instead of classifying and organizing them into a statistical graph. This marginalization results in

emotional damage that may only exacerbate the generational trauma with which students of color suffer from daily (Venet, 2021). In addition to an appropriate curriculum, antiracist educators deliver a culturally responsive education to their students that offers space for student voice and success. Ladson-Billings' (1995) groundbreaking research in culturally relevant pedagogy demands educators to develop skills and competencies of their students through issues that were found to be meaningful to them. Muhammad (2020) adds a connection to curriculum through thinking across history and developing one's own perspectives. In addition, the importance of honoring, respecting, and allowing student voice in the classroom allows students to be their authentic selves instead of catering to the white norms of school culture as aforementioned. A pedagogy of voice allows for learning experiences that allow for student agency and connection as well as cognitive growth (Safir, 2023). As Christopher Emdin (2021) fervently argues, educators must honor the students that come before them or neither the student nor the teacher will be successful in that space. "Justice occurs when there is space created into which students may bring their lived experiences, their whole selves, inquisitive about the world and the words, when no voices are silenced or devalued" (Furman & Shields, 2005, p. 125).

As McLaren (1994) asserts, critical pedagogues share an objective of empowerment among the marginalized and transformation within current social injustice. They have spent the last half a century fighting for a just and equitable education for our marginalized and oppressed student populations. Paulo Freire, well-respected as one of the founders of critical pedagogy, created spaces of empowerment for the people of his home country of Brazil. He had noticed how many of his people were marginalized by inequitable policies and lack of opportunity (Kirylo, 2013). He aimed to create citizens that developed their knowledge through dialogue

towards a critical consciousness that would allow them to understand and dismantle the injustices that surrounded them. This organic evolution of criticality among academic education scholars has led to a critical antiracist pedagogy needed in classrooms today in order to give all students the education they need and deserve. Through the lens of CRT, an antiracist educator can begin to deconstruct how race manifests itself in educational thought (Matías et al., 2016).

Critical Antiracist Pedagogy

Not only is a critical antiracist pedagogy needed for students of color but it is also a required practice for students of power and privilege as “everyone benefits from this uplift” (Hagopian & Jones, 2020, p. xiii). All students should be given the opportunity to consider how race impacts the daily experience of every human being (Ahmed, 2018). Students’ personal relationships with both teachers and classmates play a key role in their education. Two-way dialogue based on trust and respect is where growth occurs and learning from each other continues (Ahmed, 2018, p. xxiii). It is absolutely necessary for our students to see the humanity in each other through engaging with other perspectives (Ahmed, 2018). All students need opportunities to discuss bias within the community, the curriculum or the world to understand how their words and actions may affect others (Ahmed, 2018). “Not only are Black adolescents encountering racism and reflecting on their identity, but their white peers, even when they are not the perpetrators (and sometimes they are), are unprepared to respond in supportive ways” (Tatum, 2017, p. 142). These white peers are socialized with the white racial frame and are not equipped to engage in uncomfortable conversations about race (Gooding, 2019). Therefore, by investing in each other we can all achieve through mutual progress towards an equitable and just

world (McGhee, 2021). As Simmons (2019a) asserts, in order to heal as a nation, we must educate our students to see the humanity of others.

Educators should engage themselves and their students in a pursuit of criticality that allows all involved to better understand the world in which they live. Muhammad (2020) claims teaching and learning must occur through a sociopolitical consciousness. Receiving an education is believed to be apolitical and disconnected from social injustices but this only exacerbates an already volatile racist society (Castagno, 2013). Students need to be involved in the sociopolitical conversation in order to gain the skills necessary to fight against injustice by challenging the racist power structures with which they come into contact and to work towards social transformation (Muhammad, 2020). In addition, it is the educator's obligation to give students opportunities to engage in dialogue that might disrupt their assumptions and inform them with different perspectives (Ahmed, 2018).

Racism is likened to metastatic cancer that has spread into every part of human society (Kendi, 2019). Young people today need to become aware of how racism shows up in every aspect of their lives in order for them to begin to dismantle it. Educators should apply an antiracist lens to their teaching to ensure that their white students are prepared to be supportive of their Black peers (Tatum, 2017). Whites live in the most racially homogeneous communities therefore often fail to empathize with their Black classmates (Tatum, 2017). Furthermore, Emdin argues (2021) that, especially post-pandemic, "we are teaching like pain and death aren't things that warrant our attention in classrooms, hiding inequity and injustice under the cloak of normal" (p. 14).

Love (2019) addresses the importance of involving our students and their families in fighting for a just education. Stakeholders should work collaboratively, in community, to dismantle racism in schools and involve themselves in the politics of school leadership and remove all from the racial status quo. Notably, Hammond (2015) finds school officials contribute the achievement gap to a “culture of poverty” as opposed to an actual examination of school policies and teaching practices and how they harm our students of color. Due to this misnomer, educators underestimate what their student of color can do therefore failing to deliver rigorous lesson that prepare them to think critically and creatively (Hammond, 2015).

The relationships between communities of color and their schools have long been strained (Dunn et al., 2021). Not only must this relationship be repaired, but there is a need to increase school connectedness and rid our white teachers of the prejudices and biases they place on our students and families of color in order for white educators to better understand the histories and identities of their students.

While critical antiracist pedagogy may not remove the barriers placed in front of students of color due to systemic and structural racism, these educational practices will provide them with the knowledge and skills to break down whatever walls they may face. Consequently, these walls exist within the school buildings in which they are educated, therefore, educators and students should understand the systemic racism and whiteness that create barriers within the educational system itself. For the same reason, it is a fundamental need in schools today to educate their students about the racial disparities that exist in order to create a more just world in which they can thrive as free human beings. However, to truly achieve meaningful change for students of color, it is essential to engage in community efforts through a transdisciplinary

approach within professional spaces where educators are encouraged to think laterally, imaginatively, and creatively with a demand for practical solutions (Bernstein, 2005).

Transformative Leadership

The profession of education is built on human relationships that thrive best when professional communities work together towards a common goal. As a result, adult learning is usually done in collaboration (Cranton, 2016). However, the great majority of professional development (PD) is mandated, which often leads to a belief among educators it is just another box to check. Many educators do not find the need to continue their professional learning and view it as one other top-down initiative they are required to do. When educators do not see the value of this experience, they lose a part of the learning process which includes intrinsic motivation and choice. Therefore, educators should receive professional learning that empowers them to apply new learning by engaging them in the learning process through a pursuit of transformation and intrinsic motivation. Wergin (2019) informs us that without an emotional component to learning in addition to the cognitive, learning won't stick. Furthermore, Cranton (2016) asserts that "motivation is the link between emotion and action" (p. 33) which in part means one must feel what they are doing matters. This self-discovery is often very difficult in school buildings where the pressures are often loaded on from the top without more time to adjust, ample support or a clear reason as to why.

In order to better understand how transformative leadership plays a role in the school system there must be a differentiation from the term, leader. Leadership is concerned with developing both the leader and the groups being led while a leader, who is not involved in the leadership process, often neglects the growth of its followers. Transformative leadership is a

bidirectional relationship where the leader is not only focusing on productivity or success but also on developing the follower into leaders in their own right (Dugan, 2017). Through recognition that any teacher can be a leader regardless of title, one's leadership efficacy and sense of agency grows thus resulting in potential growth within the system (Dugan, 2017). By leveraging both the leaders' and followers' mutual morality, motivation, and aspirations to accomplish goals, the professional community involves one another in their learning processes. This involvement leads to empowerment as the follower, now a leader, feels capable to affect change both within their classroom as well as among their colleagues.

According to Cranton (2016), empowerment through discourse along with learner involvement in the decision making are ways to engage all in the learning process. Delpit (1988) also argues that equitable schooling can only be achieved through rich dialogue among educators, students, families, and community members. Through creating opportunities for discourse during professional learning experiences, there must be strategies for encouraging equal participation as well as stimulating dialogue from different perspectives; developing discourse procedures; and encouraging quiet time for reflection. Furthermore, there should be an emphasis placed on putting one's leadership capacity into action leading to critical change (Dugan, 2017). Leadership theory often focuses on productivity, but a transformative leadership theory offers a more humanizing approach that couples goal attainment with individual and social advancement and how leadership positively influences systems (Dugan, 2017).

Critical reflection is an integral part of the transformative leadership process. As an educator increases their awareness of long-standing issues of marginalization within the school system, tensions may arise among their sense of self and school identity (Boske, 2014). These

tensions bring with them a need for emotional intelligence as the teacher leader finds the ability to manage their emotions, recognize the emotions of others and establish relationships (Cranton, 2016). “When we embrace vulnerability, we allow ourselves to sit with other people’s pain and struggle as well as our own. We learn to tolerate our mistakes and failures rather than anesthetize ourselves to them” (Safir & Dugan, 2021, p. 174). Through norms established during discourse, group support is encouraged when challenges arise. This creates a lifelong community of practice among peers where authenticity allows for relating with one another in meaningful ways and where there is courage to challenge assumptions and perspectives (Cranton, 2016).

Transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy thus critiquing inequitable practices and policies within the school setting (Dugan, 2017; Rivera-McCutchen, 2014; Shields, 2014). As educators continue to grapple with the impact of racism on the educational system, they should strive to create and pursue a shared vision within their professional spaces and communities. Vision requires imagination which, in turn, must be cultivated through critical and creative thinking in order to dismantle the racist policies and practices in our school system today. Visions of justice include goals of transformation, inclusion, and preservation which are dependent on the spheres of influence in which a team of educators is working (Dugan, 2017). Regardless of the goal, common actions include building a sense of interest convergence through discourse and bridging differences interorganizationally (Dugan, 2017). In addition, individuals are encouraged to find their own solutions through dialogue as they participate in group discussions (Cranton, 2016) but not without appropriate challenge and support in order to learn effectively (Wergin, 2019). Through warm demander

leadership, which is modeled after author Lisa Delpit's work, educators are called in and up to the work of equity through capacity-building and action (Safir & Dugan, 2021). We will only reach transformative change through discourse, critical reflection, and by freeing ourselves of the common rhetoric of recent diversity and equity statements.

Educators should be expert learners who analyze educational challenges critically in order to become racial justice advocates for their students. Safir and Dugan (2021) argue there must be a culture of curiosity, agency, vulnerability, and exploration among teachers in order to foster real-time, dynamic learning. This learning is cyclical in nature as once one gains new knowledge, it must be applied in practice, reflected upon, and redesigned if necessary (Wergin, 2019). This learning includes the aforementioned awareness of biases and privileges and how they have affected their classroom practices as well as becoming culturally responsive and competent in their instructional strategies (Miller & Martin, 2015). Through transparency and a public-learning practice, educators feel comfortable sharing their uncertainties and engaging in collegial dialogue (Safir & Dugan, 2021).

Studies have found too many building leaders have succumbed to their assumptions that mirror deficit thinking and color blindness instead of subscribing to a culture of high expectations (Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Liou & Bornstein, 2019; Miller & Martin, 2015). "Leaders with great visions are not people who can solely critique the system, but they are capacity-builders and adaptive to bringing people together to form networks and coalitions to seek real solutions" (Liou & Bornstein, 2019, p. 108). Feldman and Tyson (2014) understand the enormity of the task in front of educators today of prioritizing the high academic success of the lowest achieving students. However, the time is now for educators to take control of their

own fate and that of their students to create brave spaces that are free of cultural bias and open to judgement-free dialogue where their students will thrive through academic achievement, culturally relevant curriculum, and equity of voice.

Practical Implications for Equity in Education

The main issues behind the so-called achievement gap are racism and white privilege. Many white teachers should learn to accept their whiteness and how it impacts their classrooms as well as to challenge the racist policies and practices within the educational system (Love, 2019). From disproportionate discipline policies, inequitable grading systems, and racist microinteractions between teachers and students, most white teachers are unaware of white supremacy culture's persistence in the school system (Safir & Dugan, 2021). As educators are made aware of their contributions to white supremacy culture in schools as well as their compliance in racist structures, they are better prepared to begin to dismantle these inequities. There is a "surprising lack of research documenting practical and effective implementations of critical whiteness pedagogies in teaching and learning contexts" (Tanner, 2018, p. 16). Although research is growing exponentially in antiracist education, there is little to be found regarding actual theory turned into action. In addition, ineffective leadership is often one of the biggest problems in education (Burkett & Hayes, 2023). Therefore, an intersectional approach through critical antiracist pedagogy, critical whiteness studies and transformative leadership is needed to support educators today. There is a need for high-quality professional learning experiences that gives educators time to plan, reflect, and build their practice in supporting their students of color. Additionally, educators need to recognize and strive to eliminate the barriers that keep our students of color from success which involves bringing school leaders into the conversation in

order to ensure equitable policies as well as to diversify the current curriculum. Our students need “a curriculum that focuses on social awareness, reclaiming lost and stolen histories, and the struggle for equity and racial justice” (de los Ríos et al. 2015, p. 93). Through this curriculum, students are given an education connected to their lives as well as a chance to meet their uninformed opinions with new information. We must change the narrative of teaching our students of color about Black suffering or smallness (Muhammad, 2020) and instead teach about Black excellence. Let us teach about how Black folks have thrived, their wins and humanity as well as honoring their history (Love, 2019).

Coming to terms with concepts such as white privilege, antiracism, and unconscious bias will require white educators to confront feelings resulting in negative emotions having to do with race and require them to decide between action or complacency (Bohonos, 2019). In the same way, we must commit to do what is right for our students of color who are suffering within the four walls of their classrooms because of antiblackness and biases which results in personal, psychological and spiritual pain (Love, 2019). As Tatum (2017) reports, “the growing racial awareness characteristic of [the] adolescent stage can be triggered by the cumulative effect of many small incidents—microaggressions—that the young person begins to experience” (p. 140). Addressing racism and how it affects the lives of our students as well as recognizing and leveraging the unique cultures students of color bring to the classroom is one step towards becoming an antiracist educator. Through the participation in a well-designed professional learning experience, educators can reflect on the impact their current teaching practices have on their students of color as well as commit to a lifelong process to improve their craft (Chardin & Novak, 2021).

Educators directly impact the lives of their students by improving their educational experiences through understanding their culture, building and leveraging relationships and proving students capable (Hammond, 2015). Through community and collaboration, white educators can realize their potential to create better learning experiences for their students of color. Chardin and Novak (2021) highlight the importance of committing authentically to the work in order to develop as expert teachers; one who is developed in community through a shared goal to grow and change, meets the needs of all their students, participates in self-reflection and is strategic about their own growth. Expert teachers in equity should be prepared to engage in challenging conversations about race, racism and injustice and how they impact their students' learning experiences. Given the internal drive and motivation involved in being an expert teacher, they should be counted upon to bring their new learning to their colleagues. Through their leadership, a ripple effect is sure to impact student learning school and district wide.

By implementing a critical antiracist pedagogy, teachers not only reexamine their current curriculum and classroom practices but also develop a critical consciousness in order to tend to the harmful practices and barriers prevalent in educational systems today (Pitts, 2020). As a community of practice within the professional development space, teachers will identify the problems and barriers their students face in order to eliminate the inequity in their teaching practices (Chardin & Novak, 2021) and call attention to the schoolwide policies harming their students of color. "The best teachers just don't keep teaching. Instead, they use their pedagogy as protest. They disrupt teaching norms that harm vulnerable students" (Emdin, 2020, para. 7).

Educational leadership is not prepared to take on this challenge and are at times, unintentionally complicit in perpetuating the inequities within their school buildings (Shields, 2019). Therefore, we must start with our classroom teachers to create a shared vision of what an equitable education looks like within their professional space. Teachers need to work within their own spaces and spheres of influence through a transformative learning process that will allow them to effect meaningful change in teaching practices and classroom culture. Research has shown that white teachers' failure to adequately educate their students of color is of significant issue (Douglas et al., 2008). Our current educational system is not working. We are failing our students of color through racist policies, biased teaching practices, and equity traps that have no effect on paying the education debt. Instead of focusing on multiple-choice tests, we must transform our classrooms to teach our students how to think critically and to use their knowledge in meaningful ways (Chardin & Novak, 2021). Through a critical antiracist pedagogy, not only are educators contributing to the emotional and intellectual development of their students, but they are also creating well-informed future citizens equipped with the skills to question an unjust world.

Conclusion

Our students of color deserve better. They deserve to thrive in this world empowered to fight against the social injustices that permeate American society. Paulo Freire lived his life with hope for the future and celebrated the capacity to begin anew through lifelong learning (Darder, 2011). As educators, we can give hope to our students of color through critical antiracist pedagogy where they “work to recognize racial privilege, address internalized biases, decenter white norms, cultivate white racial justice ally identities and encourage antiracist praxis”

(Bohonos, 2019, p. 326). Critical pedagogues are committed to working in solidarity with their students of color by celebrating the strengths they bring to the classroom as well as their histories. Because the teaching force is predominately white, educators need to acknowledge the multicultural world within which they teach (hooks, 1994). As Emdin (2021) concludes, teachers need to unapologetically love themselves without falling victim to the lack of value society places on teachers and to fully love their students in every way they show up to the classroom. Furthermore, teachers must empower their students as change agents with a critical pedagogy they can use both in and out of the classroom (McLaren, 1994). Muhammad (2020) proposes pedagogy as both an art and a science where teachers must tap into their imagination and creativity as well as develop their methods of instruction and create strategic learning experiences. Let us get out our easels and put on our lab coats for the time is now to give all students a critical antiracist education with which they are engaging in a pursuit of criticality that allows them to better understand the world in which they live.

CHAPTER III: DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS

Introduction

Creating a professional learning program focused on antiracist education, embedded with critical whiteness studies, and guided by transformative leadership theory is multi-faceted. Because of the complexity of the topic of my dissertation, I have decided to create a series of 6 six-week long learning modules. Although the program is created with white classroom teachers in mind due to my lived experience as an aspiring white antiracist, choice will allow for all educators to determine their own entry point along the series based on their background in antiracist work. Furthermore, any district employee will be able to take part regardless of title.

The program will be delivered over two years as after-school opportunities for professional learning. Because professional learning is an ongoing process, over time, teachers will be able to constantly reflect on their practice, make changes where necessary, and continue to explore opportunities for improvement (Guskey, 2000). The after-school option is a very common professional development structure within my district and teachers receive continuing education credit towards renewal of their certificates. As both a participant and a facilitator of professional development within my district, I am familiar with how worthwhile these opportunities can be and understand the role I play in moving the needle towards transformation and change.

Setting

My experiences as a student, a parent, and an educator in a large public school system on the east coast of the United States have given me many different perspectives of the place I call home, both personally and professionally. Situated just south of a major city, the county is the

fourth largest in the state and the school district is one of the 50 largest in the country (Abraham, 2023). However, a history of redlining has created a very segregated school system. As a school student, I attended predominantly white schools and very rarely interacted with any students of color.

According to propublica.org, the school district has a high segregation index indicating racial distribution is very uneven and has also found Black students are 2.3 grade level behind white students. The district's median household income is \$108,048 while 11% of our families qualify for food stamps (nces.ed.gov). Over the last 10 years, three of our high schools have moved from being majority white to majority students of color (Abe FS, 2023). This includes the high school where I spent my first 20 years teaching. However, three additional schools remain 70–80% white (Abe FS, 2023) including where I grew up and where I am raising my family. Overall, the district comprises of just over 50% students of color while 77.9% of its workforce is white according to the district's website.

Real estate agents are known for steering families towards the feeder systems that are predominantly white and of a higher tax bracket (Abraham, 2020). There have been numerous redistricting plans that have involved Black communities being pushed out of predominantly white schools and white communities fighting against plans to diversify schools (Abraham, 2020). Black residents from the capital city, in the heart of the county, “describe a community in which Black and white people share public spaces but remain physically and psychologically separated” (Hylton, 2024, p. 33).

Currently, there is a redistricting plan in the works due to the construction of our 14th high school that will open in the fall of 2024. However, an anonymous journalist insists the

district is not addressing the plan's disparities which include continued segregation by race and class which will continue to affect our most vulnerable students (Abe FS, 2023). Exacerbating the problem is our geographical location which does cause certain constraints when trying to minimize segregation (Abe FS, 2023). Regardless, this segregation is causing a disparity among out students of color resulting in lower test scores and college matriculation rates (Abe FS, 2023). Unfortunately, it may only get worse with this new redistricting plan (Abe FS 2023). Therefore, as our segregation issues persist, it is essential to train our predominantly white teaching force to address their implicit biases, improve student engagement and achievement and to become better equipped to work with school-based leadership towards educational equity.

Purpose

The purpose of the professional learning program is for classroom teachers to come to terms with their racial identity along with gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of their students of color in order to effectively deliver and advocate for a critical antiracist pedagogy within a system permeated by whiteness ideologies. Through my scholarly work in transformative leadership theory, it is my hope to put theory into practice by connecting it to the work of the classroom teacher to offer a more equitable education (Shields, 2010). The title of the program is: EmpowerED: Refine, Reshape and Reform. As a result of my research, I have created the following goals for the participants of the professional learning:

- Identify their own cultural biases;
- Recognize how racist policies and whiteness in the educational system causes harm to their students of color;
- Understand the lived experiences of their students of color;

- Apply a culturally responsive, antiracist education;
- Develop transformative leadership skills; and
- Advocate for meaningful change.

The above goals can be classified as cognitive, psychomotor, and affective, each equally important in the learning process as they provide learners with an experience much more likely to lead to success in understanding and application by tapping into their knowledge base, skill set and belief systems (Guskey, 2000). For instance, the cognitive goals will lead educators towards the pedagogic knowledge necessary to provide a respectful and inclusive education for their students. In addition, the psychomotor goals will be addressed throughout the modules' action plans and formative assessment tools in order for them to put what they learned into practice. Furthermore, the affective goals lead towards a change in belief system in order for them to gain the confidence necessary to work with their students of color (Guskey, 2020). Throughout the professional learning program, current teachers are presented with the knowledge necessary to speak out against the status quo as well as provided with the tools necessary to take action.

Program Assessment & Evaluation

In order to assess the learning of the participants during the professional development series, I used Guskey's (2000) planning guidelines towards ensuring a meaningful, useful, and effective experience. I found these guidelines provide me with steps to ensure the professional learning program is clear with its goals and ensures the value in the program to its participants. As I enter the design phase, each module is created with these guidelines in mind which include clear and worthwhile goals, the circumstances in which meaningful change is needed, the research behind the program, and formative assessment (Guskey, 2000).

Due to the uniqueness of this professional innovation dissertation, in that I have not delivered the program yet, it was through backward design I addressed Guskey's (2000) guidelines while writing the program. I created six summative assessment questions, using Guskey's (2000) guidelines to ensure a meaningful, useful, and effective experience. These six summative evaluation questions were designed to gauge the overall impact of each learning module and offer insight into each participant's perceived benefit of the experience measuring whether the program has influenced their knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Furthermore, because of the cyclical nature of design thinking, which involves continuous improvement throughout the process, I use formative assessments (Guskey, 2000; Killion, 2008) such as survey questions, learning logs, or reflective journals that give feedback into whether the program is working as intended and to collect data to inform any adjustments that may need to be made (Killion, 2008). Guskey (2000) suggests several levels in evaluating professional development participation which include participant learning, organizational support, and change as well as student learning outcomes. Since I am working mainly with classroom teachers outside of their educational settings, I focused on the first two: participants' reactions and their learning. At the first level, participants are asked if they felt their time during the professional development was well spent and worthwhile (Guskey, 2000). For the second level, they are asked about the relevance of the content as well as instructional delivery. It is at this level where Guskey (2000) stresses the importance of finding out if there has been actual change in knowledge, skill level, and/or attitudes and beliefs. To gauge impact and ensure validity, I created reflection questions and an action plan that are useful, valuable, and of integrity. The questions and plan are based on the goals and learning experiences of the teacher

participants and include how participants will refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and contribute to reform in policy.

In addition, throughout the design process, I adhered to Guskey's (2000) principles of effective professional development in order to evaluate the merit and worth of the program. The principles include a clear focus on learning and learners, an emphasis on individual and organizational change, small changes guided by a grand vision, and ongoing professional development that is procedurally embedded. Finally, at the conclusion of the developmental process I measured the effectiveness of the professional development series by using Learning Forward's (2024) Standards for Professional Learning. The standards consist of three categories: Rigorous Content for Each Learner; Transformational Processes; and Conditions for Success (Learning Forward, 2024). These standards ensure a professional learning experience that results in improved performance by both educators and their students (Learning Forward, 2024). I present my findings pertaining to the effectiveness of the program in Chapter V.

Approach to Design

Since the design of the professional learning series is aimed at solving some of the inequities in classrooms today, I used a design thinking approach as it "allows high-impact solutions to bubble up from below rather than being imposed from the top" (Brown & Wyatt, 2010, p. 3). According to Clarke (2020), design is the "process of creation with the intent to solving problems" (p. 10). Teachers are forever problem solving, whether a quick change in their daily instruction or a despondent student they are trying to reach. Design thinking's focus is on problem solving and is often used to solve the wicked problems of education where other research methods have failed (Clarke, 2020). Due to the complexity and interdisciplinary nature

of the field of education, we must be intentional in our problem solving through collaboration and holistic development of educators. Often, educators may view inequities as a wicked problem characterized as just a symptom of another problem or having no known solution (Rittel & Webber, 1973) and cause frustration to those trying to find answers. A design thinking approach allows for an iterative approach that encourages continuous improvement, creativity, and innovation.

I used the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework to plan the content of the professional learning program. UbD is a three-stage process that consists of desired results, evidence, and a learning plan that are applied through a backwards design approach (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Wiggins & McTighe (2005) argue that “the most successful teaching begins, therefore, with clarity about desired learning outcomes and about the evidence that will show that learning has occurred” (p. 7). Using the three stages as a means to an end, I have identified long-term transfer goals, created an evaluation plan (as aforementioned) that aligns to the goals and designed learning experiences that will give teachers the knowledge and confidence they need to create and affect meaningful change within their school buildings.

Understanding by Design’s key tenets include thinking purposefully, authentic performance, regular reflection, and continuous improvement. My role as a transformative leader is as a “provocateur, one who challenges, stimulates and provokes critical thinking” (Cranton, 2016, p. 83). To create true change, we must create opportunities for our educators and leaders to make meaning through dialogue, community, and action. If I am to expect the participants to be respectful of one another, authentic in their responses and open to personal growth, I must provide a brave space for deep learning. This is a space in which they can thrive

through dialogue and reflection that may lead to a change of perspective for educators to identify implicit biases, understand the lived experiences of their students of color, determine any unintentional harm they may be causing on their students and build capacity to lead for meaningful change within their spheres of influence. True change starts with coming to terms with the roles one plays in the inequities that surround them. Furthermore, I must be careful to ensure an understanding that although we may grow personally, we should also understand how to leverage that growth towards change in inequitable structures.

Learning Experiences

As a former Department Chair and teacher of graduate-level pedagogy courses, I have always enjoyed teaching adults and have spent the better part of my career facilitating professional development for my district, the state, and the nation as well as teaching graduate-level pedagogy courses. In addition, I have always taken advantage of the learning opportunities offered throughout the year through my district as well as furthering my knowledge by taking 60 credits beyond my master's degree. I realize not all adults have the same desire to be a lifelong learner as I do therefore, I found myself very interested in the adult learning theories I studied during my coursework at Antioch University in order to determine how I can engage reluctant adult learners. As a result of my findings and through my role as a transformative leader, I will design a learning experience that ensure the necessary support and critical thinking opportunities one needs when their beliefs and values may be challenged. Furthermore, I must be cognizant of those educators that may be unwilling or resistant to engaging in uncomfortable topics.

Through the creation of a professional learning program, I am hoping to find a way to ensure our teaching force is getting the knowledge and skills they need and deserve to become antiracist educators. If we are to truly transform our education system, it is essential to create opportunities for our educators to make meaning through dialogue, community, and action. Collaboration and community are two very important components of the learning process I wish to apply to the program. Through collaborative learning structures, I will encourage the development of learning groups as a social system in which participants will be supportive of one another (Cranton, 2016). As Cranton (2016) states, “when learners realize how much support is available through networking, they have a lifelong resource” (p. 129).

As aforementioned, the professional learning program will consist of six learning modules over two school years. Each module will last six weeks and participants will meet weekly after school for two hours, a common model in my district. We cannot create change in six short weeks. However, it is my hope that each participant will cause a ripple effect within their sphere of influence through the creation of an action plan after each six-week module. As an aspiring antiracist, I understand change takes time. As Brookfield and Hess (2021) argue, for learning to be truly transformative, it occurs incrementally and sometimes only after an initial phase of rejection. Regardless of where a participant may be on their journey towards becoming antiracist, a transformative leader must learn as much as they can about their participants, find out what knowledge they bring to the table and how willing they are to participate in their own learning process (Brookfield & Hess, 2021). This way, participants can be moved towards understanding the roles they may unknowingly play in an inequitable school system. With this in mind, as well as relying heavily on my research as illustrated in Chapter II’s Literature

Review, I have designed the six learning modules aligned with the goals above. They are as follows:

- Module 1: Addressing deficit thinking and implicit bias.
- Module 2: Building capacity in racial literacy.
- Module 3: Challenging inequity in the classroom.
- Module 4: Providing a respectful and inclusive education for our students.
- Module 5: Engaging in dialogue with school leadership toward meaningful change.
- Module 6: Leading for transformation.

For each module, I determined desired results through understandings and evidence (the first two stages of Understanding by Design) and created a learning plan (stage 3) to equip each participant with the knowledge, skills and strategies needed to achieve the intended program goals as well as to effectively address the essential question. The learning plan includes scholarly work and theory on antiracist education and critical whiteness studies as well as opportunities to engage in deep and meaningful learning through my facilitation guided by transformative leadership. The research and work I have done over the past three years in this doctoral program as well as my own personal and professional antiracist journey informed the development of the learning plan. Through my studies of secondary research as well as my own lived experience as a classroom teacher, I have gained insight into the experiences and perspectives of my students of color as well as into what it means to be an antiracist educator in a large public school system.

Conclusion

As I work towards creating real change within my district, I hope to work closely with both district and school leadership in order to work towards fulfilling the promises made within the district's Equity Policy: "The Board is committed to ensuring that [the school system] will have the procedures and practices in place to provide for educational equity and ensure that there are no obstacles to accessing educational opportunities and academic success for any [district] student." However, even though my district has made a commitment, we are not alone in joining other school systems' failures in achieving their equity goals (Wong, 2019). Therefore, upon completion of my doctorate I would like to begin offering this professional development series with module 1 in the fall of 2024 through my district's professional development hub. I would advertise it via my many connections throughout the school system with hopes to get a small group started in the learning and to continue their journey together over the span of two years. I understand I may lose and gain participants along the way however it will be the ripple effects of classroom teachers putting their plans into action that will have the most impact on the district.

As a white antiracist, I must use my privilege to push for change and racial justice while understanding I may face mistrust by my colleagues of color (Brookfield & Hess, 2021). In addition, as I speak to the pervasiveness of white supremacist ideologies within the school system, I am sure to contend with immediate backlash and emotional reactions of denial and shame (Brookfield & Hess, 2021). As a white woman working in a predominantly white profession, I often find myself in spaces with all white educators, therefore it is my responsibility as a white antiracist to assure the participants we should be just as much part of race

conversations as our BIPOC colleagues, and all will surely benefit from an opportunity to further develop their critical consciousness through a re-examination of their own truths.

As a facilitator, I will also be a participant where I will continue to reflect on my journey, work towards growth, and share my process with others to establish trust and support with the participants of the professional learning program. In the same lens, I should understand we are all in a different stage of personal and professional development. It is my goal educators critically analyze the relationship between race and school achievement (Allen & Liou, 2019). However, to teach all students effectively, it is essential to examine how our professional and personal beliefs relate to our teaching practices (Howard, 2021). As Bogotch (2014) states, “educators will not just speak about or for education, but, as educators, speak directly to, engage with, and challenge the dominant discourses in the world” (p. 51).

CHAPTER IV: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM

Introduction

In order to offer a space for a transformative experience that empowers educators, I have created a professional learning series, EmpowerED: Refine, Reshape and Reform with a continued vision to foster inclusive and equitable learning environments. In addition to this vision, I have created a purpose statement to clarify the intent and shared understanding of the learning series. Furthermore, there are six learning goals to provide a clear direction and focus within the professional learning series as well as to measure progress and foster accountability. Finally, there are six summative evaluation questions that assess the overall impact of each learning module and provide insight into how participants benefitted from the experience.

Following the vision and purpose, I created a framework that includes six separate learning modules. Within each module is the title, purpose statement, learning goals addressed, desired results and acceptable evidence, formative assessments, scholarship and theory, and essential question. The desired results are the first stage of backward design when implementing Understanding by Design (UbD; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). It is here I identify the long-term transfer goals (understandings) as well as when I designed the essential questions. In addition, Stage 2 of UbD is included as evidence where dialogue, collaboration and reflection reveal evidence of transfer.

Finally, each learning plan (Stage 3 of UbD) is designed sequentially with the content necessary to achieve the desired results, address the essential question and complete the action plan. The content was chosen to support current scholarship and theory as well as to engage participants with videos, texts, collaboration, and dialogue that refines their teaching practices,

reshapes their pedagogy, and leads to contributions in reforming our educational settings. Each learning module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning experiences that may take place over a six-week period. Notwithstanding, there is room for flexibility depending on the audience due to the nature of backward design where the learning plan is not developed into lesson plans but as a bigger picture of the learning experiences (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

The Program Framework

The framework below includes all six learning modules with clearly stated understandings and evidence as well as a logical learning plan designed with the essential question in mind. Each learning module is equipped to stand alone as a professional learning experience. Furthermore, content, materials and activities were balanced within each module to ensure that it can be delivered within a six-week time period during two-hour sessions delivered weekly. Designed to be offered over a two-year period, there are six to seven weeks between each session for participants to continue to implement new learning, develop their skills, and advocate for change.

Throughout each learning module, participants are provided with reflection prompts to determine if what is learned aligns with the intended learning goals (Guskey, 2000). This formative assessment allows participants and the facilitator to gauge the effectiveness of the learning module (Guskey, 2000) and will be visited during each of the six sessions. Because professional learning is often met with resentment due to time constraints, negative past experiences, or perceived lack of relevance it is important to gauge the group dynamic and engage the participants through ownership over their learning journey (Safir, 2017). In order to

involve ourselves in transformation, it is important to allow educators to make meaning together through reflective inquiry and integration of learning (Safir, 2017).

As a facilitator of this professional learning series, I will create a visual presentation of each learning module in order to guide the participants through the experience. Each visual presentation will include session agreements in order to establish a safe learning environment where participants feel free to engage in authentic dialogue which is necessary in order to develop as expert teachers (Chardin & Novak, 2021). Following session agreements, it is essential to discuss the essential question and desired results of the learning module during each session. Goal clarity is imperative for effective professional learning experiences (Guskey, 2000).

A sample agenda for the first two sessions as well as the final session of Learning Module 1 follows:

Sample Agenda - Module 1: Addressing Deficit Thinking and Implicit Bias

Session 1

- A. Learning Module Agreements
- B. Essential Question
- C. Understandings and Evidence
- D. Learning Module Road Map
- E. Identity
 1. Introduce the dimensions of identity and the concept of intersectionality in order to explore individual identities which then provide insight into diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.
 2. Complete a dimensions of identity activity.
 3. Engage in dialogue regarding the uniqueness in humanity and the concept of intersectionality.
- F. Reflection – Revisit the essential question and discuss how Session 1’s content will lead towards countering deficit thinking and implicit bias.

Session 2

- A. Implicit Bias
 1. Explore and discuss the meanings of implicit bias and antidarkness in order to understand how one may unintentionally cause harm to their students of color.
 2. Read “Unconscious Bias in Schools” (Anderson, 2019) to understand where one may unintentionally use harmful teaching practices. In collaboration, determine strategies to counter unconscious biases.
 3. Examine and discuss the impact of cognitive dissonance on one’s teaching practices in order to challenge assumptions and promote a growth mindset.
- B. Reflection – Refer participants to the Reflection & Action Plan for Module 1 in order to reflect on refining their practice by answering the question: How might your current teaching practices inadvertently reflect certain biases or assumptions?

Session 6

- A. Integration of key concepts and strategies
 1. Give participants time to integrate key concepts and strategies learning during the first 5 sessions.
 2. Refer participants to previous reflections, essential questions, understandings and evidence.
- B. Creation of Final Action Plan
 1. How will you enhance your ability to counter deficit thinking and implicit bias?
 2. Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in addressing deficit thinking and implicit bias. One may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact of student engagement and possible advocacy of policy change.
- C. Learning Module Evaluation through Impact Assessment Question
 1. How has the recognition of your implicit biases influenced your teaching decisions?
 2. Allow participants to anonymously evaluate the learning module.

Each learning plan within the six modules provides a purpose statement, an action plan, materials, and discussion prompts. This allows for participants to engage in and reflect upon program materials in different group structures whether independently, in pairs, or in larger groups which allows for diverse perspectives, critical thinking opportunities, and peer support (Cranton, 2016). Although designed sequentially, the materials and discussion prompts may be

divided among the six sessions as needed in order to provide flexibility to both facilitator and participants. Impact can then be measured during the final session using the provided summative evaluation question at the end of each learning module. Finally, this document is not intended for participant use but as a guide for the facilitator to design their own presentation and lesson agendas using the content provided within each module's learning plan.

In the first row of the following table document are the program vision, purpose for professional learning, learning goals, and program impact summative evaluation questions. The vision statement is essential when working with adult learners to work towards meaningful change (Guskey, 2000). In addition, it provides a common, long-term outcome for the future that gives the participants a shared purpose that guides incremental change (Guskey, 2000). Followed by the vision statement is the overall purpose of the professional learning series. This purpose statement articulates the core objective of what this professional learning series aims to achieve therefore can be used to later evaluate the program's merit and worth (Killion, 2008). Furthermore, the six learning goals, created using Bloom's Taxonomy verbs, offer measurable action-oriented goals that promote higher-order thinking skills that scaffold learning experiences and support differentiation (Anderson et al., 2001).

Following the vision, purpose, and goals is the framework designed to transform educators and drive change within their educational settings towards inclusive and equitable learning environments. Each learning module is presented in a different color to give the reader not only the overall program as a professional learning series but also to illustrate it as six separate modules. Participants are invited to provide feedback both through formative and

summative assessments built into each learning module as opposed to only assessing the program as a series.

I included two methods of formative assessment that align with Guskey's (2000) first two levels in his evaluation model which measure participants' reactions to the goals of the learning module as well as whether they believed the information learned will be useful. The summative evaluation impact question for each learning module is unpacked during time together face-to-face to gain insight into whether the learning module met the intended goals, capture long-term impact, and whether it has led us to the next level of professional development impact, organization support, and change (Guskey, 2000). Both formative and summative assessment is integral to inform future program design and impact.

The intended use of the following table document is to offer guidance and structure to promote continuous learning among educators with the vision of refining their practice, reshaping their pedagogy, and contributing to school reform towards equitable and inclusive learning environments. Through critical self-reflection on identify and cultural biases, recognizing how racist policies and systems of whiteness harm students of color, as well as through understanding the lived experiences of these students, educators are empowered to create learning spaces where their students feel valued and respected (Emdin, 2020; Hammond, 2016; Love, 2019; Muhammad, 2020). Moreover, educators who develop their leadership skills are better equipped to advocate for meaningful change and to mobilize others towards more just learning spaces (Dugan, 2017; Shields, 2010; Singleton, 2014). Through this professional learning program, educators can start, or continue, the small steps necessary on their journey towards becoming antiracist educators.

Vision, Purpose, and Goals

EmpowerED: Refine, Reshape, and Reform: This professional learning series envisions a transformative experience that empowers educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of educational systems in order to foster inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Purpose: To come to terms with their racial identity along with gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of their students of color in order to effectively deliver and advocate for a critical antiracist pedagogy within a system that is permeated by whiteness ideologies.

Learning Goals - Participants will:

1. Identify their own cultural biases;
2. Recognize how racist policies and whiteness in the educational system causes harm to their students of color;
3. Understand the lived experiences of their students of color;
4. Apply a culturally responsive, antiracist education;
5. Develop transformative leadership skills and;
6. Advocate for meaningful change.

Program Impact Summative Evaluation Questions:

1. How has the recognition of your implicit biases influenced your teaching decisions?
2. What have you noticed about how our policies and ideologies harm our students of color?
3. How did learning about the current educational inequities impact your teaching decisions?
4. How do your culturally responsive and antiracist teaching practices contribute to student achievement?
5. How does your leadership contribute to growth within your educational setting?
6. To what extent do you feel prepared to lead for meaningful change within your sphere of influence?

Program Learning Modules

The purpose of Module 1: Addressing Deficit Thinking and Implicit Bias is to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and strategies to effectively counter deficit thinking and implicit bias. Educators need to foster equitable and inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and respected. In order to achieve this, it's important to understand the complex issues surrounding deficit thinking and implicit bias. This session includes foundational concepts, theory, and research in the field.

Through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how deficit thinking and implicit bias manifest in educational settings. Furthermore, they will identify actionable steps to foster more equitable learning environments for their students. This module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning sessions that may take place over a six-week period.

| | Goals | Desired Results – Understandings & Evidence | Scholarship & Theory |
|--|---|---|--|
| Module 1: Addressing Deficit Thinking and Implicit Bias | 1, 3 | <p>Understandings</p> <p>Participants will develop an increased awareness of their own biases and realize the impact their implicit biases have in diverse learning environments.</p> <p>Evidence</p> <p>Participants will engage in dialogue and collaborative activities throughout the course in order to enhance their ability to counter deficit thinking and implicit bias.</p> <p>They will complete a cumulative assignment that includes a reflection piece as well as an action plan.</p> | <p>Intersectionality: Crenshaw, K. (1989)</p> <p>Antidarkness: Love, B. (2019)</p> <p>Habitual Patterns: King, R. (2018)</p> <p>Taking Action: Ricketts, R. (2022) & Morris, M.W. (2016)</p> |
| Formative Assessment | Participants are provided with prompts (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) to encourage reflection throughout the session in order to empower educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system. | | |

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|---------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refine our practice - How might your current teaching practices inadvertently reflect certain biases or assumptions? ● Reshape our pedagogy - In what ways can you reshape your current lesson plans to better cater to the varied learning styles and backgrounds of your students? ● Reform our policies - How might the existing policies in your educational setting contribute to or mitigate biases in the learning environment? <p>In order to collect formative assessment data, participants may be asked to log their learning, answer survey questions, or utilize a reflective journal.</p> |
| Learning Plan | <p>Essential Question: How will you enhance your ability to counter deficit thinking and implicit bias?</p> <p>The following concepts, materials, and discussion prompts offer participants the knowledge and skill set necessary for personal and professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce the dimensions of identity and the concept of intersectionality in order to explore individual identities which then provide insight into diverse backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. ● Explore the meanings of implicit bias and antidarkness in order to understand how one may unintentionally cause harm to their students of color. ● Read “Unconscious Bias in Schools” (Anderson, 2019) to understand where one may unintentionally use harmful teaching practices. Determine strategies to counter unconscious biases. ● Examine the impact of cognitive dissonance on one’s teaching practices in order to challenge assumptions and promote a growth mindset. ● Read “What is internalized racism?” (Bivens, 2005) in order to examine racism’s impact on individuals and within the school system. ● Examine the concept of habitual patterns and how one can become more aware of and disrupt their patterns related to race and racism which may have been shaped by societal conditioning and socialization. ● Read excerpts of “Do Better” (Ricketts, 2022) in order to explore strategies for combating racism and bias. ● Discuss language bias and code-switching in educational settings and introduce the concept of dialectical diverse classrooms in order to discuss strategies for creating inclusive language environments. |

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|--|--|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Explore the factors that affect male youth of color including invisibilization, marginalization, and pre-criminalization (Jackson, 2019). Learn about experiences of Black girls throughout their education with excerpts from “Pushout” (Morris, 2016). Discuss how these conditions show up in our classrooms today. ● Listen to an excerpt from the podcast, “Cult of Pedagogy - Street Data” (Gonzalez, 2021). Discuss how current efforts to address equity gaps have failed and how we can use a Street Data approach in order to create more equitable learning spaces for students of color. ● How will you enhance your ability to counter deficit thinking and implicit bias? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in one’s ability to counter deficit thinking and implicit bias. (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) | | | |
| Summative Evaluation | Evaluate the learning module through the Impact Assessment Question: How has the recognition of your implicit biases influenced your teaching decisions? | | | |
| <p>The purpose of Module 2: Building Capacity in Racial Literacy is to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and strategies to cope with or to counter racism among students and colleagues. In order to achieve this, educators need to understand how historical inequities and white supremacy culture manifest in the education system today. In addition, it’s important to recognize and celebrate the positive aspects of the Black experience. This session includes foundational concepts, theory and research in the field.</p> <p>Through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, participants will identify actionable steps towards growth in racial literacy. This module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning sessions that may take place over a six-week period.</p> | | | | |
| Module 2: Building Capacity in Racial Literacy | Goals | Desired Results – Understandings & Evidence | | Scholarship & Theory |
| | 2, 3 | Understandings | | Racial Literacy: Martinez, L. (2020) Critical Race Theory in Education: Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W.F. (1995) Educational Inequities: |
| | | Participants will understand the key concepts of racial literacy and express a commitment to increased awareness regarding racial issues. | | |
| | Evidence | | | |

| | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|---|
| | | <p>Participants will engage in dialogue and collaborative activities throughout the course in order to enhance their skills and strategies in countering racism.</p> <p>They will complete a cumulative assignment that includes a reflection piece as well as an action plan.</p> | <p>Ladson-Billings, G. (2006, 2013) Black Joy: Love, B. (2019) Racial Identify: Tatum, B. (2017). White Supremacy Culture: Okun, T. (2021)</p> |
| Formative Assessment | <p>Participants are provided with prompts (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) to encourage reflection throughout the session in order to empower educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine our practice - How might your current teaching practice contribute to or challenge historical or current racial biases in the classroom? • Reshape our pedagogy - What changes can you make to create a more racially literate learning environment? • Reform our policies - How might policy reform within your educational setting increase alignment with the principles of racial literacy? <p>In order to collect formative assessment data, participants may be asked to log their learning, answer survey questions, or utilize a reflective journal.</p> | | |
| Learning Plan | <p>Essential Question: How will you enhance your skills and strategies in countering or coping with racism?</p> <p>The following concepts, materials, and discussion prompts offer participants the knowledge and skill set necessary for personal and professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the concept of racial literacy and discuss its significance in fostering equity and inclusion in education. • In order to contextualize inequities in schools today, watch “Civil Rights Learning Journey: Understanding Educational Inequality Through History” (American Institutes for Research, 2019). • Analyze the landmark case of Brown vs. Board of Education and its implications for educational equity and its | | |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>ongoing influence on contemporary schooling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read “White Supremacy Culture - Still Here” (Okun, 2021) in order to analyze how the educational system reflects the beliefs, values, and norms of white culture. ● Explore strategies for dismantling white supremacy culture in educational settings that may cause harm to our students of color. ● Watch “Critical Race Theory: Breaking it Down” (Fitzgerald, 2022) and discuss how it applies to one’s educational setting. ● Read “From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006) to understand the impact inequalities in schooling have on education today. ● Read an excerpt from “Embracing the Fullness of Black Humanity” (Duncan et al., 2023). Discuss the importance of centering Black experiences and perspectives in education in order to create a learning environment where our Black students feel valued and respected thus empowered to succeed. ● Examine the concept of racial identity development and its relevance in educational contexts in order to enhance one’s cultural competence towards developing a culturally responsive teaching practice. ● Discover strategies to cope with or counter hindrances to racial harmony in order to provide support and guidance to students who may be experiencing discrimination, microaggressions or other forms of racial harm. ● How will you enhance your skills and strategies in countering or coping with racism? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in racial literacy. (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) |
| Summative Evaluation | Evaluate the learning module through the Impact Assessment Question: How has your understanding of racial literacy and its significance in the education system impacted your teaching decisions? |
| <p>The purpose of Module 3: Challenging Inequity in the Classroom is to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and strategies to address inequities in order to ensure all students have equal opportunities to succeed. In order to achieve this, one needs to understand what constitutes an inequitable learning space and commit to using a curriculum that gives all students the opportunity to thrive. This session includes foundational concepts, theory, and research in the field.</p> <p>Through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, participants will identify actionable steps to modify teaching practices and curriculum design. This module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning sessions that may take place over a six-week period.</p> | |

| | Goals | Desired Results – Understandings & Evidence | Scholarship & Theory |
|--|---|--|--|
| Module 3: Challenging Inequity in the Classroom | 2, 4 | <p>Understandings</p> <p>Participants will recognize and challenge inequities in classroom practices and pedagogies as well as cultivating a heightened awareness of how they may contribute to inequity.</p> | <p>Curriculum Design: Fritzgerald, A. (2020); Venet, A. (2021) Classroom Practices: Emdin, C. (2020) Inequitable Grading: Feldman, J. (2019)</p> |
| | | <p>Evidence</p> <p>Participants will engage in dialogue and collaborative activities throughout the course in order to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate all learners.</p> <p>They will complete a cumulative assignment that includes a reflection piece as well as an action plan.</p> | |
| Formative Assessment | <p>Participants are provided with prompts (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) to encourage reflection throughout the session in order to empower educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine our practice - In what ways have you become aware of inequities within your own or others' teaching practices? • Reshape our pedagogy - How might your current pedagogical approach inadvertently reinforce or challenge existing inequities among students? • Reform our policies - How will fostering your own awareness of inequities contribute to systemic change within your educational setting? <p>In order to collect formative assessment data, participants may be asked to log their learning, answer survey questions, or utilize a reflective journal.</p> | | |

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| <p>Learning Plan</p> | <p>Essential Question: How will you cultivate an environment of equity and inclusion for all students?</p> <p>The following concepts, materials, and discussion prompts offer participants the knowledge and skill set necessary for personal and professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brainstorm the wicked problems in education using the 10 characteristics (Rittel & Webber, 1973) in order to understand the complex challenges that contribute to an inequitable classroom setting. ● Introduce Alex Shevrin Venet’s definition of equity in education in order to level set the expectations of an equitable classroom. ● Examine the 10 Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators (Gorski, 2017) in order for participants to determine their strengths and weaknesses within the commitments. ● Discuss the implications that having a deficit mindset has on the academic and social emotional growth of students of color. ● Examine the discipline disparities that exist within our educational settings in order to explore strategies for positive behavior interventions. ● Discuss the implications of attaching intelligence to student behaviors in order to challenge traditional notions of intelligence and learn to understand and value diverse forms of expression. ● Introduce the concept of expert learners (CAST, 2019) in order to create a classroom culture that fosters student agency, metacognition and self-directed learning. ● Discover curriculum as a tool for building critical consciousness and promoting equity through Dr. Rudine Sims-Bishop’s concept of an Equitable Curriculum design that gives students a chance to see themselves and others in their educational setting. ● Read an excerpt from “Grading for Equity” by Joe Feldman in order to recognize the impact that inequitable grading practices have on our students of color and to discuss strategies for implementing a fair and equitable grading system. ● Explore examples of equity audits to understand how to use data to inform equitable decision-making. ● How will you cultivate an environment of equity and inclusion for all students? Create an action plan that includes modifications for teaching practices, pedagogy and curriculum design. (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) |
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| Summative Evaluation | Evaluate the learning module through the Impact Assessment Question: How did learning about current educational inequities and possible solutions promote equity and inclusion in your classroom? | | | |
| <p>The purpose of Module 4: Providing a Respectful and Inclusive Education for our Students is to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and strategies to cultivate a respectful and inclusive education environment. In order to achieve this, educators need to understand the principles of Universal Design for Learning and culturally responsive teaching practices. This session includes foundational concepts, theory, and research in the field.</p> <p>Through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, participants will identify actionable steps to meet diverse student needs and improve student outcomes. This module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning sessions that may take place over a six-week period.</p> | | | | |
| Module 4: Providing a Respectful and Inclusive Education for our Students | Goals | Desired Results – Understandings & Evidence | | Scholarship & Theory |
| | 3, 4 | <p>Understandings</p> <p>Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the principles and practices associated with providing a respectful and inclusive education. They will commit to fostering an environment that respects individual differences and celebrates the diverse knowledge their students bring to the learning environment.</p> | <p>Warm Demander: Safir, S. (2017); Delpit, L. (1988, 2006)</p> <p>Universal Design for Learning: Fitzgerald, A. (2020); Chardin, M. & Novak, K. (2021)</p> <p>Equity Frameworks: Muhammad, G. (2020); Hammond, Z. (2015); Safir, S. & Dugan, J. (2021); Simmons, D. (2019b)</p> <p>Understanding by Design: Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005)</p> | |
| <p>Evidence</p> <p>Participants will engage in dialogue and collaborative activities throughout the course in order to adapt instructional practices and materials to meet the needs of all learners.</p> <p>They will complete a cumulative assignment that includes a reflection piece as well as an action plan.</p> | | | | |

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| | | | Student Voice: Safir, S. (2023) |
| Formative Assessment | <p>Participants are provided with prompts (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) to encourage reflection throughout the session in order to empower educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refine our practice - In what ways can you create respectful and inclusive teaching practices? ● Reshape our pedagogy - How can you redesign your current pedagogical approach to ensure recognition and appreciation of individual differences? ● Reform our policies - How can you incorporate the principles of a respectful and inclusive education into current school policy? <p>In order to collect formative assessment data, participants may be asked to log their learning, answer survey questions or utilize a reflective journal.</p> | | |
| Learning Plan | <p>Essential Question: How will you adapt instructional practices and materials to meet the needs of all learners?</p> <p>The following concepts, materials, and discussion prompts offer participants the knowledge and skill set necessary for personal and professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce the Conage Continuum of Education Equity (Conage, 2016) in order for teachers to self-assess where they are in regards to providing a respectful and inclusive educational experience. ● Read “Becoming a Warm Demander” (Safir, 2019b) in order to understand its role in student engagement and success. ● Examine Universal Design for Learning through Andratesha Fritzgerad’s (2020) on-ramps for expert learning in order to understand how it meets the diverse needs of all learners. ● Explore the concept of understanding as it relates to achieving deep learning in order to discuss how one can apply it to teaching practices and pedagogy. ● Watch “Zaretta Hammond: Culturally Responsive Teaching 101” (Geller, 2021) in order to understand the changes in instruction needed to reach all of our learners. | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss Gholdy Muhammad’s (2020) equity framework, Historically Responsive Literacy, and how it applies to one’s current teaching practices. ● Examine cooperative learning as a strategy to strengthen tolerance, active listening, and cooperation among students. ● Read “Cultivating a Pedagogy of Student Voice” (Safir, 2023). Discuss the importance of student voice in order to create a culture of interdependence among learners. ● Discuss and plan how you will integrate the key concepts and strategies in order to implement a respectful and inclusive educational setting. ● How will you adapt instructional practices and materials to meet the needs of all learners? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in a respectful and inclusive education. (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) | | | |
| Summative Evaluation | Evaluate the learning module through the Impact Assessment Question: How does integration and application of culturally responsive and antiracist teaching practices contribute to student achievement? | | | |
| <p>The purpose of Module 5: Engaging in Dialogue with School Leadership Toward Meaningful Change is to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and strategies to engage in dialogue with school leadership. In order to achieve this, educators need to understand the existing inequalities and challenges within the educational system as well as the shared responsibility of creating a common vision of educational equity. This session includes foundational concepts, theory, and research in the field.</p> <p>Through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, participants will identify actionable steps towards positive and sustainable school improvement. This module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning sessions that may take place over a six-week period.</p> | | | | |
| Module 5: Engaging in Dialogue with School Leadership Toward Meaningful | Goals | Desired Results – Understandings & Evidence | | Scholarship & Theory |
| | 2, 5 | <p>Understandings</p> <p>Participants will identify key areas of improvement related to educational equity and develop an understanding of strategies for meaningful change. They will develop effective communication skills in advocating for change</p> | | <p>Critical Whiteness Studies: Matías, C. (2013); Matías, C. & Mackey J. (2015); Matías, C., Montoya, R. & Nishi, N. (2016); Matías, C.</p> |

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| <p>Change</p> | <p>and commit to collaborative problem-solving.</p> <hr/> <p>Evidence</p> <p>Participants will engage in dialogue and collaborative activities throughout the course in order to persuasively and effectively articulate ideas for change through collaborative problem-solving.</p> <p>They will complete a cumulative assignment that includes a reflection piece as well as an action plan.</p> | <p>& Zembylas, M. (2014) Racial Dynamics: King, R. (2018) Teacher Wellness: Venet, A. (2021) Expert Teacher: Chardin, M. & Novak, K. (2021) Leadership: Safir, S. (2017)</p> |
| <p>Formative Assessment</p> | <p>Participants are provided with prompts (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) to encourage reflection throughout the session in order to empower educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refine our practice - Based on the educational inequities identified, what strategies have you found to be instrumental in bringing about meaningful change? • Reshape our pedagogy - What steps are needed to effectively convey the importance of positive outcomes and to influence meaningful change? • Reform our policies - How will effective communication skills and strategies for meaningful change lead towards positive outcomes for educational inequities? <p>In order to collect formative assessment data, participants may be asked to log their learning, answer survey questions, or utilize a reflective journal.</p> | |
| <p>Learning Plan</p> | <p>Essential Question: How will you persuasively and effectively articulate ideas for change through collaborative problem-solving?</p> <p>The following concepts, materials, and discussion prompts offer participants the knowledge and skill set necessary for personal and professional development:</p> | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Read an excerpt from Matías, C., & Zembylas, M. (2014). ‘When saying you care is not really caring’: Emotions of disgust, whiteness ideology, and teacher education. <i>Critical Studies in Education</i>. 55(3), 319-337. ● Analyze and discuss how whiteness permeates the educational setting in order to recognize power dynamics and to challenge dominant narratives that may be harming students of color. ● Explore the characteristics of racial group dominance and subordination according to Ruth King’s (2018) “Mindful of Race” in order to identify and discuss its implications in educational settings. ● Read an excerpt from “It’s Not That Easy! Foundations of Niceness in Enacting Multicultural and Social Justice Education” (Wong) in Angelina E. Castagno’s (2019) “The Price of Nice”. Examine the difference between a culture of care and a culture of compliance in order to understand the importance of building a culture that values trust and collaboration towards a common goal. ● Identify areas of improvement through “Street Data: A New Grammar for Educational Equity” (Safir, 2019a) order to inform the decision-making process.. ● Introduce Chardin and Novak’s (2021) concept of an expert teacher in order to discuss how it contributes towards effective teacher leadership. ● Read Liou, D. & Bornstein, J. (2019). Holding school leaders to higher expectations: Embodying the “transformative” in educational leadership. <i>The Sojo Journal: Educational Foundations and Social Justice Education</i>, 4(2), 107-110. Discuss the importance of holding leaders to high expectations and how that contributes to student success. ● Introduce concepts from Shane Safir’s (2017) “The Listening Leader” in order to recognize the communication skills necessary to effectively dialogue with leadership towards creating equitable learning spaces for all students. ● How will you persuasively and effectively articulate ideas for change through collaborative problem-solving? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in leadership towards meaningful change. (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) |
| Summative Evaluation | Evaluate the learning module through the Impact Assessment Question: How does your understanding of educational inequities and leadership contribute to growth within your educational setting? |
| The purpose of Module 6: Leading for Transformation is to equip participants with knowledge, skills, and strategies to lead for school | |

transformation towards equitable learning spaces. In order to achieve this, educators need to understand the foundations and concepts of leadership as well as how to put these principles into practice. This session includes foundational concepts, theory, and research in the field.

Through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, participants will identify actionable steps towards innovative and positive change within educational organizations. This module is designed to fit six two-hour professional learning sessions that may take place over a six-week period.

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| Module 6: Leading for Transformation | Goals | Desired Results – Understandings & Evidence | Scholarship & Theory |
| | 5, 6 | <p>Understandings</p> <p>Participants will analyze and articulate key issues related to equity in education, identify areas for improvement and develop an understanding of strategies for change. They will express a sense of confidence in advocating for change.</p> | <p>Leadership: Dugan, J. P. (2017); Rivera-McCutchen, R. (2014 & 2019); Feldman, S. & Tyson, K. (2014); Safir, S. (2017); Harris, D. (2023); Gallagher, A. & Thordarson, K. (2018)</p> |
| | | <p>Evidence</p> <p>Participants will engage in dialogue and collaborative activities throughout the course in order to contribute to the initiation of meaningful and positive change within their sphere of influence.</p> <p>They will complete a cumulative assignment that includes a reflection piece as well as an action plan.</p> | |
| Formative Assessment | Participants are provided with prompts (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) to encourage reflection throughout the session in order to empower educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of the educational system. | | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Refine our practice - How will your role as a transformative leader contribute to a greater sense of advocacy for identified areas for improvement? ● Reshape our pedagogy - What specific areas or practices are in need of improvement to foster equitable learning environments? ● Reform our policies - How can engaging with stakeholders contribute to the development of inclusive solutions to educational inequities? <p>In order to collect formative assessment data, participants may be asked to log their learning, answer survey questions, or utilize a reflective journal.</p> |
| Learning Plan | <p>Essential Question: How will you contribute to the initiation of meaningful and positive change within your sphere of influence?</p> <p>The following concepts, materials, and discussion prompts offer participants the knowledge and skill set necessary for personal and professional development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduce excerpts from John P. Dugan’s “Leadership Theory” in order to gain insight into effective leadership traits, practices and approaches. ● Explore Gallagher, A. and Thordarson, K.’s concept of design-inspired leadership in order to identify complex problems as well as to embrace innovation and adaptability. ● Watch “Transformational Leadership Theory” (Lyon, 2020). Discover the five key characteristics and discuss the importance of transformative leadership in driving positive change and challenging inequities. ● Discover Shane Safir’s principles of listening leadership in order to understand the importance of building trust and rapport to promote collaboration and aid in conflict resolution. ● Listen to an excerpt from The Antiracist school Leader, with Dr. Daman Harris (Pluiose, 2023). Discuss the principles of antiracist leadership in order to equip oneself with strategies for identifying and addressing instances of racism, discrimination and microaggressions in their educational settings. ● Discuss the challenges and opportunities of leading for transformation in order to hone one’s leadership skills and decision-making abilities. ● Explore the impact of supporting teacher wellness with time, money, support, and autonomy in order to foster |

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| | <p>a positive school culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss and plan how you will integrate the key concepts and strategies in order to become a leader for transformation. ● How will you contribute to the initiation of meaningful and positive change within your sphere of influence? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in leading for transformation. (Appendix: Reflection & Action Plan) |
| Summative Evaluation | Evaluate the learning module through the Impact Assessment Question: To what extent do you feel prepared to lead for meaningful change within your sphere of influence? |

Conclusion

The above framework is a culmination of research in critical whiteness studies, critical antiracist pedagogy, and transformative leadership as well as studies in effective design and impact of professional learning for educators. Our students of color continue to be “punished with low expectations, physical violence, surveillance, standardized testing and frequent suspensions” (Love, 2023, p. 7). By placing equity at the center of professional learning, educators can chip away at the barriers by implementing change within the teaching practices and pedagogy as well as contributing towards educational reform.

The professional learning series included content about and was designed around the following learning goals:

Participants will:

1. Identify their own cultural biases;
2. Recognize how racist policies and whiteness in the educational system causes harm to their students of color;
3. Understand the lived experiences of their students of color;
4. Apply a culturally responsive, antiracist education;
5. Develop transformative leadership skills and;
6. Advocate for meaningful change.

Not only will the professional learning series allow for participants to come to terms with their racial identities but it will also contribute to a deeper understanding of what it means to be Black in the United States (Emdin, 2021; Kendi, 2019; Love, 2019). This crucial self-awareness and cultural understanding is necessary when preparing educators to teach students of color (Delpit,

2006; Emdin, 2012; Hammond, 2015; Matías, 2013). Furthermore, the professional learning series offers the tools necessary for educators to deliver a critical antiracist pedagogy and advocate for change within a system permeated by racist policies and white supremacist ideologies (Allen, 2004, Allen & Liou, 2019; Brookfield & Hess, 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Matías, 2013).

The following chapter provides an overall assessment as to the merit and worth of the professional learning series as well as its significance within the field of antiracist education. In addition, further implications and recommendations are provided as well as a reflection of my personal and professional growth.

CHAPTER V: ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Creating professional learning experiences for my colleagues has long been an integral part of my career as a teacher leader. Over the span of just over 20 years I have dedicated myself to creating learning spaces that educate the whole child; an environment that cares for their academic excellence, emotional well-being, and character development. I have reflected on my mistakes, learned from my blunders, and honed my craft to continue my growth as a lifelong learner. In my role as Department Chair, I have attempted to instill the same spirit of reflection and lifelong learning in my team to ensure my teachers would give their students the education they deserve. Whether through formal professional learning opportunities or an informal discussion during lunch, the dialogue and collaboration among colleagues was what led towards growth and change. It is now through my role as a lifelong scholar practitioner that I work in community, united toward shared responsibility, to expose inequalities and fight for social justice by engaging in critical thought processes (Schultz, 2010).

In the year 2000, just two years before I started my teaching career, the district's student body was 82% white; while in 2020 less than half identify as white (Abraham, 2023). It was through my tenure at a large public school that I became who I am today; a fierce advocate for our students and for the education they deserve. I have worked tirelessly with school-based leadership and colleagues to create change which has often been met with superficial conversations and very little follow through. However, I am a professional troublemaker who "critiques the world, the shoddy systems, and the people who refuse to do better" (Ajayi Jones, 2021, p. xi).

I am proud of the department I have cultivated, the leaders that have followed in my path, while creating their own footsteps, and the ripple effects I have created throughout the district. I fancy myself a warm demander instructional leader who has high expectations for her teachers, builds on their capacity to improve, and supports them through the thousands of decisions a teacher makes on a daily basis (Safir, 2019). It is now with this professional learning program I hope to create waves of success in antiracist education among the predominantly white teaching force within a region rich with a history of both psychological and physical segregation (Hylton, 2024).

It is my vision this professional learning program will be a transformative experience that empowers educators to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and actively contribute to the reform of our district to foster inclusive and equitable learning environments. The purpose of the six learning modules as a collective is to come to terms with one's racial identity along with gaining an understanding of the lived experiences of one's students of color to effectively deliver and advocate for a critical antiracist pedagogy within a system that is permeated by whiteness ideologies. My target audience includes all classrooms educators as well as school-based leadership. While 77.9% of my district workforce is white, over 50% of our students identify as Black or people of color according to the district's website. I hope to attract all my colleagues, regardless of race, to join me as I continue my own transformative journey towards antiracist leadership in my district.

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I evaluate the merit and worth of my professional learning series in addition to offering the implications of my findings and recommendations for further research and actionable strategies. Furthermore, I reflect on my personal and

professional growth throughout this study and its significance within the field of antiracist education.

Recap of Research

Recognizing Whiteness & Dismantling Racism in Schools: Developing a Professional Learning Series to Prepare a Predominantly White Teaching Force to Teach and Reach Students of Color took me on a journey through scholarship and theory that focused on equity and social justice, curriculum design, and pedagogical approaches for the classroom as well as leadership theory and growth mindset. This multi-faceted approach gave me the knowledge and skills necessary to create a professional learning series program transforms its participants by providing a valuable experience through self-discovery within a supportive community working towards a common vision of change.

Through the backward design approach of Understanding by Design, I implemented the three-stage process that consists of desired results, evidence, and a learning plan (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) for each of the six modules as illustrated in Chapter IV. My research in antiracism and critical whiteness studies as they pertain to the educational system informed the desired results and learning plan. Moreover, my studies in transformative leadership influenced how the participants will show evidence of their learning as well as the design of my program impact summative evaluation questions. Providing opportunities for collaboration, dialogue, and reflection are integral for transformation in order to ensure the participants of the program engage in powerful and positive professional change within their own educational setting.

Understanding by Design (UbD) gives a framework for curriculum-planning that focuses on deepening understanding in order to transfer one's learning to new situations (Wiggins &

McTighe, 2005). When working towards challenging inequities in education, we need to become equipped with the skills, strategies, and knowledge that can be applied within our teaching contexts. In order to ensure a clear focus, I created my desired results as understandings and evidence as cognitive, affective, and psychomotor goals. Guskey (2000) finds strong evidence of enhanced transfer of learning when a professional learning experience involves these three categories of goals.

Working with adults is difficult. They come to the educational setting with a deeply ingrained belief system, cognitive bias, and often resistance to feedback. Transformative Leadership Theory highlights the importance of capacity-building leaders through inspiring others to work towards a common vision. Transformation takes time but can result in helping teachers understand how their current assumptive knowledge frameworks may be causing harm to all their students (Shields, 2010). Through a professional learning program that emphasizes change, focuses on equity, cultivates critical consciousness, and promotes self-reflection through visionary leadership, true transformation is possible (Dugan, 2017).

Understanding what it means to be antiracist as well as how white supremacy perpetuates the educational system provide much needed insight into how teachers can recognize and challenge inequities. Whiteness is the standard (Wilson, 2021). Teachers who understand how white supremacy influences power differentials, contributes to discipline disparities, is reflected within curriculum choices, and determines implicit biases are equipped to become antiracist educators who advocate for an inclusive and equitable education for their students.

Teachers who become antiracist educators share a commitment to critique the current educational system, are empowered to create change, and work in community towards a critical

antiracist pedagogy (Emdin, 2021; Hammond, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Love, 2019). Furthermore, antiracist educators understand the discomfort that comes from many white colleagues when talking about race and challenging power differentials (Wong, 2019).

My research in antiracism and critical whiteness studies led me to several scholars whose scholarship and theory I have included in the learning plans of the professional learning series. Sprinkled throughout the learning modules are videos, texts, excerpts of texts, and materials created by equity-minded individuals and organizations. During each session of each learning module there are opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and reflection in order to round out the six learning plans to ensure reaching the intended goals and evaluation questions of the professional learning series. It is during our time together face-to-face the real change starts to take place through transformative leadership. It is during this time learner networks are formed and relied upon for support and guidance through structured small-group activities and the facilitation of positive group dynamics (Cranton, 2016).

Program Implementation

This professional learning series is designed to take part over two years as six separately but connected learning modules. Each module will consist of six two-hour sessions after school. Participants will self-select to participate in earning continuing education credits through our district's certificate renewal plan.

During each two-hour session there will be opportunities for open dialogue, collaboration, and reflection that contribute to participant growth. I designed two methods of formative assessment in order to monitor participants' progress as well as inform any change in design to the program. I created reflection questions that measure achievement of the cognitive,

affective, and psychomotor goals of each learning module. Furthermore, I asked participants to log their learning, answer survey questions, or utilize a reflective journal shared with me, anonymously if they wish, to better meet the needs of the current group or those of future participants. Via formative assessment, there is also the added layer of being able to deliver timely and constructive feedback to participants with hopes to guide them towards a deeper learning experience. This formative assessment measures participants' reactions to the goals of the learning module as well as whether they believed the information learned will be useful (Guskey, 2000).

Each learning module is organized within an identical framework that includes the learning module's title, the goals addressed, the desired results through understandings and evidence as well as scholarship and theory included in the learning plan. The formative assessments are provided as an appendix that includes both the reflection questions leading to refining our practice, reshaping our pedagogy, and reforming our policies as well as the action plan prompt that leads to actionable steps.

In addition to the formative assessment, I designed a summative evaluation impact question for each learning module to further measure the participants' learning by documenting changes in participant knowledge, skills and mindset. During the final session of each module, participants unpack this question during our time together to gain insight into whether the learning module met the intended goals, captured long-term impact, and whether it has led us to the next level of professional development impact, organization support and change (Guskey, 2000). This feedback leads to informing future change initiatives as the participants start to flex their leadership muscles within their spheres of influence.

As aforementioned, the professional learning program will be open to all district employees regardless of race or level on the pay scale. As a transformative leader, I ensure each participant is part of the vision towards empowerment in refining their practice, reshaping their pedagogy, and contributing to reform. Through impactful antiracist education content, personal growth and reflection regarding one's implicit biases, as well as understandings of how white supremacy is harming our current educational system, participants are stretched beyond their comfort zones and begin to see equity as the central component to all decision-making. Singleton (2014) argues "Passion is the key. ... Passion—specifically, tightly holding on to a deep-seated, unyielding belief in the educability of the very children we fail—is what drives racial equity classroom leaders towards success" (p. 24). With EmpowerED, I ignite the passion inside to improve teacher performance through growth and development.

Evaluation Framework

I have sat through, participated in, and even created professional development sessions or workshops where afterwards I was unsure of their impact on the participants. I have taken and given evaluation forms with check boxes and rating scales without ever receiving any worthwhile feedback. Therefore, how can I ensure the merit and worth of my program and find out how my participants' teaching has been positively affected by the professional learning series? It must be done during the design process to ensure its value. For that reason, when designing professional development, one must take into account Guskey's (2000) principles of effective professional development.

Guskey has determined four principles that demonstrate evidence of learning during professional learning experiences (2000). First, a clear focus on learning and learners is

emphasized as the principal goal (Guskey, 2000). Second, there is an emphasis placed on individual change that will lead to organization improvement (Guskey, 2000). Third, professional learning experiences should consist of small changes guided by a grand vision (Guskey, 2000). Finally, professional development should be woven into our professional lives instead of being seen as an add-on (Guskey, 2000).

To further ensure the effectiveness of any professional learning, it is imperative to measure the program against Learning Forward's (2024) Standards for Professional Learning; rigorous content for each learner, transformational processes, and conditions for success. Not only do these standards describe the essential content connected to the learning outcomes but it also measures the transformational process necessary for significant change and the necessary conditions for the professional learning context (Learning Forward, 2024).

Discussion of Findings

Through Guskey's (2000) principles of effective professional development design and Learning Forward's (2024) Standards for Professional Learning, I have found my professional learning series, EmpowerED: Refine, Reshape and Reform, is a well-designed program with a coherent focus on learning and its learners, importance placed on meaningful change, and a clear vision that includes the understanding this is an ongoing practice on a journey towards becoming an antiracist educator.

Schools will not improve until the adults within them choose to do so. School reform is a giant effort that must begin with small, incremental steps and include ongoing support towards systemic change. After measuring this professional learning series against Learning Forward's (2024) Standards for Professional Learning, I have found that it offers a high-quality experience

centered on equity. The series offers up-to-date research, encourages educators to integrate culturally responsive teaching practices and provides them with the tools, knowledge, and support necessary to empower them to successfully implement change.

During this professional learning series, each of the three standards is met. First, participants will apply their new learning to embrace student assets through high-quality curriculum and instructional materials (Learning Forward, 2024). Second, participants will learn in ways that sustain significant changes in their knowledge, skills, practices, and mindsets (Learning Forward, 2024). Finally, this experience will support all participants by creating a culture of collaborative inquiry and capacity building (Learning Forward, 2024).

I understand that my positionality as a white, female, teacher leader in the field of antiracist education gives me the opportunity to drive meaningful change and promote equity within educational spaces. I will continue to approach this work with humility, empathy and a commitment to ongoing growth and reflection as I facilitate this professional learning series.

Impact on Participants

We are living during an era where information is at our fingertips, fake news runs rampant, and a loss of critical thinkers which has increased closed-mindedness (Wergin, 2019). This is especially troublesome in the educational system as our teaching force is integral in shaping the mindset of the next generation. Teachers should open their minds to new ideas, perspectives, and experiences in order to foster critical thinking skills among students. Wergin (2019) suggests Thomas L. Friedman's advice that "we hit the psychological equivalent of the pause button—that we stop and reflect, question our assumptions and entertain fresh questions that might lead to a change of perspective" (p. 4). This advice is at the heart of a professional

learning mindset that includes a commitment to engage in self-reflection about how their current belief and knowledge system and set of skills influences their teaching practices (Bradley et al., 2023). It is through learner networks we can gain a lifelong resource to continue our growth as educators (Cranton, 2016).

The goal is transformation. The result is change. This professional learning program was designed with the end in mind using a design-thinking approach as a tool to solve difficult problems with a focus on action (Gallagher & Thordarson, 2018). Teachers arrive to classrooms with implicit biases, often incompetent in racial literacy, and unable to recognize the inequities within their educational settings. Through cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning goals, the learning modules are designed to affirm a well-rounded learning experience that caters to diverse learners, promote deep learning and prepare the participants for the complex challenges they may face on their journey towards becoming an antiracist educator. Consequently, this holistic approach involves more than acquiring knowledge or mastering skills. It offers a chance to develop participants' emotional intelligence by tapping into one's self-awareness and relational skills.

As teachers begin to see how they may need to refine their practice, reshape their pedagogy, and work towards reforming policies, their students are directly impacted with increased access to a quality education, an inclusive learning environment and reduced opportunity gaps. Martinez (2020) argues that providing identity safety, high expectations, effective emotional supports, and a sense of belonging we are creating conditions for learning where students feel affirmed and empowered. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure their students' successes; we cannot continue to put the onus on the child (Shields, 2019).

By transforming mindset and giving participants the understandings necessary to recognize whiteness and dismantle racism, they see the need and are equipped to advocate for meaningful change. Participants use their new knowledge and skill set in order to “make connections, explore alternative perspectives, and adapt prior learning to new situations” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 62). Through formative assessments such as learning logs, reflective journals, or survey questions tailored to the learning goals, as well as the discussion in session around the impact assessment summative evaluation question, I gain insight into the effectiveness and impact of the transformation. As Shields (2010) concludes, “transformative educational leadership not only works for the good of every individual in the school system; at its heart, it has the potential to work for the common good of society as well” (p. 583).

Further Implications

EmpowerED: Refine, Reshape and Reform fills a void within my school system currently delivering top-down, mandated professional development to a system working on equity exhaustion. Furthermore, we are losing the momentum gained during the last racial reckoning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Not only is there a need to prioritize ongoing learning and reflection within the teaching force, but it is also essential to do so with equity at its center.

Formative assessment data will be collected on both the participants’ reactions to the program as well as if there were any changes in their knowledge, skill set or belief system. The information gathered at the first level, participants’ reactions, will inform follow-up activities, future topics to explore in the future, and overall learning experience changes that may be needed (Guskey, 2000). Furthermore, at level 2, participant learning data will be collected that may lead to improvement in regards to the success of future participants, whether new or tenured teachers

benefitted more or whether there may need to be revisions to ensure a more specific and better targeted learning experience (Guskey, 2000).

However, one cannot do the work alone. Working in collaboration, educators can identify the problems and barriers their students face to create a vision of how they will eliminate the inequity in their teaching practices and pedagogy (Chardin & Novak, 2021) and call attention to the schoolwide policies harming our students of color. Through a sense of community united toward shared responsibility, the teacher leader will expose inequalities and fight for social justice by engaging in critical thought processes (Schultz, 2010).

This professional learning program has the potential to drive positive change within my school district by empowering educators, fostering transformative experiences, creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments, and contributing to educational reform. The program goes beyond surface-level professional development and aims to create change-makers who are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead for meaningful change.

Recommendations for Future Action

Teacher leaders should be celebrated for what they bring to the table and encouraged to share their knowledge and skill set with their colleagues regardless of their title. There is a need for more time for professional learning through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection. Our current K-12 school schedules do not allow for much creativity within each school building to operate with improvement in mind. Professional learning should be woven into our professional lives, not created by someone at the district office that has never set foot in our school building.

Furthermore, school-based leadership in our most diverse schools should consist of school leaders who understand that equity should take center stage in all school decisions and

recognize the inequities with a focus on correcting them (Singleton, 2014). With this mindset, teachers, teacher leaders, and school-based leadership should develop the skills necessary for the educational success of their students (Singleton, 2014).

Reflection

This study is the culmination of my professional life I have dedicated to the education of my students, the students in my building, their teachers, and my colleagues. For the past 20 years I have committed to improving my craft, sat on school improvement committees, delivered professional development at the local, state, and national levels, and been both an official and unofficial mentor to hundreds of teachers within my district. It is within these spheres of influence I hope to continue my journey as an antiracist educator. The past three years have given me the knowledge and skill set necessary to help others committed to the cause.

As I reflect on this journey, I am reminded of the transformative power of professional learning in not only the lives of educators but in the system itself. I am committed to leveraging my expertise to advocate for an equitable and inclusive education for our students and to empower teachers to become leaders within their educational spaces. I have essentially lived through the professional learning program I designed so I know firsthand how it can transform an educator and create meaningful change one day at a time: one student at a time. We can make a difference with small actions that have significant impact even when faced with overwhelming challenges.

Conclusion

Effective professional learning has great impact on classroom practices, teacher belief systems, overall school improvement and most important, students' educational experiences. It

is my belief this professional learning series has the power to not only shape classroom practices but also teacher belief systems. With this meaningful change, school improvement efforts may also be affected as teachers become better equipped to address the ever-evolving needs of our diverse student population.

Educators hold tremendous power within their educational settings. A simple directive such as “Get in your seat!” can have negative impact on a student. However, if educators take the time to understand themselves better and learn about the lived experiences of their students, they are better equipped to comprehend social issues and to participate in relevant, transparent conversations in order to make meaning from and mediate their relationships with the world (Ahmed, 2018). Educators who understand progress takes time and that change is difficult but necessary are able to build the capacity needed to become change makers towards equitable and inclusive learning environments.

The educational system is tarnished by practices and policies that perpetuate racial disparities that prioritizes data over humanity (Dunn et al., 2021). In order to educate all students, it is necessary to understand how these practices and policies affect our students of color in order to dismantle these structures of oppression. Furthermore, once educators understand the inequities, they can develop the skills necessary to work towards reform with district leadership.

White educators that take part in EmpowerED: Refine, Reshape and Reform will recognize and leverage their white privilege to dismantle barriers that harm students of color. For all educators, regardless of race, this professional learning program moves beyond superficial practices and avoids equity traps and tropes by using the classroom as a starting point

for effecting meaningful change. It allows educators to engage in deeper introspection to identify and address the pervasive influence of whiteness and racism within our school communities. Given the escalating challenges in our current political climate, educational reform is more critical than ever. Together, through intentional reflection and action, we can empower ourselves to refine our practice, reshape our pedagogy and reform our policies towards a more equitable future for all students.

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APPENDIX: REFLECTION & ACTION PLAN

EmpowerED Reflection & Action Plan

Module 1: Addressing deficit thinking and implicit bias

Participants will develop an increased awareness of their own biases and realize the impact their implicit biases have in diverse learning environments.

Reflections

Refine our practice - How might your current teaching practices inadvertently reflect certain biases or assumptions?

Reshape our pedagogy - In what ways can you reshape your current lesson plans to better cater to the varied learning styles and backgrounds of your students?

Reform our policies - How might the existing policies in your educational setting contribute to or mitigate biases in the learning environment?

Action Plan:

How will you enhance your ability to counter deficit thinking and implicit bias? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in addressing deficit thinking and implicit bias. Using the above reflections as well as the session materials to respond to the question. You may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact on student engagement, and possible advocacy of policy change.

EmpowerED Reflection & Action Plan

Module 2: Building capacity in racial literacy

Participants will understand the key concepts of racial literacy and express a commitment to increased awareness regarding racial issues.

Reflections

Refine our practice - How might your current teaching practice contribute to or challenge historical or current racial biases in the classroom?

Reshape our pedagogy - What changes can you make to create a more racially literate learning environment?

Reform our policies - How might policy reform within your educational setting increase alignment with the principles of racial literacy?

Action Plan

How will you enhance your skills and strategies in countering or coping with racism?
Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in racial literacy. Using the above reflections as well as the session materials to respond to the question. You may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact on student engagement, and possible advocacy of policy change.

EmpowerED Reflection & Action Plan

Module 3: Challenging inequity in the classroom

Participants will recognize and challenge inequities in classroom practices and pedagogies as well as cultivating a heightened awareness of how they may contribute to inequity.

Reflections

Refine our practice - In what ways have you become aware of inequities within your own or others' teaching practices?

Reshape our pedagogy - How might your current pedagogical approach inadvertently reinforce or challenge existing inequities among students?

Reform our policies - How will fostering your own awareness of inequities contribute to systemic change within your educational setting?

Action Plan:

How will you cultivate an environment of equity and inclusion for all students?

Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in equitable teaching spaces. Using the above reflections as well as the session materials to respond to the question. You may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact on student engagement, and possible advocacy of policy change.

EmpowerED Reflection & Action Plan

Module 4: Providing a respectful and inclusive education for our students.

Participants will demonstrate an understanding of the principles and practices associated with providing a respectful and inclusive education. They will commit to fostering an environment that respects individual differences and celebrates the diverse knowledge their students bring to the learning environment.

Reflections

Refine our practice - In what ways can you create respectful and inclusive teaching practices?

Reshape our pedagogy - How can you redesign your current pedagogical approach to ensure recognition and appreciation of individual differences?

Reform our policies - How can you incorporate the principles of a respectful and inclusive education into current school policy?

Action Plan

How will you adapt instructional practices and materials to meet the needs of all learners? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in providing a respectful and inclusive education. Using the above reflections as well as the session materials to respond to the question. You may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact on student engagement, and possible advocacy of policy change.

EmpowerED Reflection & Action Plan

Module 5: Engaging in dialogue with school leadership toward meaningful change

Participants will identify key areas of improvement related to educational equity and develop an understanding of strategies for meaningful change. They will develop effective communication skills in advocating for change and commit to collaborative problem-solving.

Reflections

Refine our practice - Based on the educational inequities identified, what strategies have you found to be instrumental in bringing about meaningful change?

Reshape our pedagogy - What steps are needed to effectively convey the importance of positive outcomes and to influence meaningful change?

Reform our policies - How will effective communication skills and strategies for meaningful change lead towards positive outcomes for educational inequities?

Action Plan

How will you persuasively and effectively articulate ideas for change through collaborative problem-solving? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in effective dialogue towards meaningful change. Using the above reflections as well as the session materials to respond to the question. You may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact on student engagement, and advocacy of policy change.

EmpowerED Reflection & Action Plan

Module 6: Leading for transformation

Participants will analyze and articulate key issues related to equity in education, identify areas for improvement and develop an understanding of strategies for change. They will express a sense of confidence in advocating for change.

Reflections

Refine our practice - How will your role as a transformative leader contribute to a greater sense of advocacy for identified areas for improvement?

Reshape our pedagogy - What specific areas or practices are in need of improvement to foster equitable learning environments?

Reform our policies - How can engaging with stakeholders contribute to the development of inclusive solutions to educational inequities?

Action Plan

How will you contribute to the initiation of meaningful and positive change within your sphere of influence? Create an action plan that includes continued self-study and steps towards growth in effective dialogue towards meaningful change. Using the above reflections as well as the session materials to respond to the question. You may want to include a timeline, specific strategies or adjustments, impact on student engagement, and advocacy of policy change.