

Prologue

This is a book about equity in education. Equity is not about equal treatment of all students. Rather, it is about equal outcomes achieved by individualizing the instruction and support for each and every child. Equity is about *all* students succeeding, especially when measured according to differences such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, language, family background—the list of diversities within our students goes on and on. This effort has been traditionally referenced as “closing the achievement gaps” between students from the dominant White middle-class norm and students from traditionally underserved or oppressed populations. Building equity in education shifts the focus of responsibility for academic achievement from the students to the professional administrators and teachers who are the educators in the school. Students have to do their part, but the adults in the building need to teach in a way so that all students can succeed.

Throughout this book, when I use the term *diverse* to describe students, I am referencing directly the racial and other characteristics that set apart a student from the dominant White and middle-class norms that have so defined the practices and culture of our schools. Serving one “norm” rather than the vast diversities now so apparent in today’s students only guarantees the continuation of educational inequities. As educators work to directly address their school’s racial and other inequities, they will accomplish equity, which is eliminating student achievement disparities and lifting all students to high levels of success.

For schools to achieve this, educators need to address equity at three levels: personal, institutional, and professional. In the first three chapters, I follow this format:

- Personally, I share my own path toward understanding equity and how it has impacted my life and work.
- Institutionally, I define what equity means for an educational institution and describe a school that achieved equity for all students.
- Professionally, I present the Equity Framework, shown as follows, which is an organizational tool that schools and school systems can use to guide their equity efforts.



Real stories of change are critically important in achieving equity. Throughout this book, I share the stories of schools, school systems, and educators who went through a change process personally, institutionally, and professionally to achieve equity for their students. These stories illustrate the process of equitizing education so that it works for all students, no matter their personal diversities.

The next three chapters go into greater depth in describing personal equity, institutional equity, and professional equity:

- *Personal equity* guides the process of centering one’s self in equity and uncovering one’s own biases, stereotypes, and privileges.
- *Institutional equity* explores how a school and school system can overcome institutionalized factors that limit student achievement, especially for students of Color and those from diverse backgrounds.
- *Professional equity* focuses on how efforts to successfully implement equitable practices can assure individualized support for all students.

The book ends with *moral equity*: a plea from me to you to engage honestly and sincerely in this work of educating students equitably, since their futures depend upon our own successful efforts as educators.

Throughout the book, I also prompt you to use the *equity lens* as your tool in deciphering the equity efforts of the educators in these stories—and ultimately in understanding your own efforts to equitize your work as an educator. At the end of each chapter, engage in the Equity in Action implementation exercises, which include discussion questions, reflection prompts, and links to the School Improvement Network’s on-demand professional development resource, PD 360, where you will find interactive forums and videos of the schools in this book.

This is the first book in a four-part series presenting the Equity Framework in depth. This first book describes what *equity* is and what it looks like in schools. The remaining three books present the strategy sets of the Equity Framework: culture, practice, and leadership. The first two are coauthored with classroom equity expert Bonnie Davis. Rather than jumping straight to the strategies as presented in the other books in this series, I encourage you to begin by exploring now what *equity* is and what it looks like for you as an educator in your classroom, school, and system. Engaging this way is like understanding the weather—you can have coping strategies to deal with rain, snow, and heat, but without understanding how the weather works, you might end up trying to use a snow shovel to deal with a heat wave. By only focusing on strategies that address student needs, you will struggle to understand fully why the strategies even matter, and how they fit in the overall effort to build equity for all students.

In our collective hundred-plus year effort to succeed at educating all students, equity is now what matters. Equity is about each and every individual student achieving in our schools and learning what they need to succeed in society. Equity is a journey both for you as an educator and for the institution of which you are a part. *Equity 101* aims to engage you the reader in a journey—a journey toward eliminating racial disparity and other injustices at the personal, institutional, and professional levels. In sharing my story, I hope that you will better understand your own story and embark on a journey toward a greater understanding of equity and what it takes for all students to succeed.

Sincerely,
Curtis Linton