Equity-Focused Teacher Leadership:

Using Equity Audits to Positively Influence Socioeconomic Disparities

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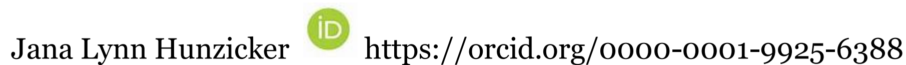
Jana Lynn Hunzicker  https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9925-6388

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Abstract

In today's schools, differences in family income and in school funding create stark discrepancies in the educational experiences, opportunities, and outcomes between student "haves" and "have nots." This chapter describes how equity-focused teacher leaders can use equity audits to positively influence educational policy and practices to reduce socioeconomic disparities in P-12 schools. Beginning with an overview of current research on teacher leadership, leadership for social justice, and equity-focused teacher leadership, the chapter documents the problem of socioeconomic disparities in today's P-12 schools before detailing the background, purpose, structure, and processes of contemporary equity audits. Four accounts of small-scale equity audits conducted by equity-focused teacher leaders are shared and analyzed in terms of teacher leadership, leadership for social justice, and equity-focused teacher leadership. The chapter closes with strategies for engaging stakeholders in constructive, meaningful discussion and action around equity audit findings on behalf of every student we serve.

Keywords: educational equity, equity audit, teacher leadership, social justice, socioeconomic status

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According to a recent poll, 70% of Americans believe that education provides the best opportunity for a lifetime of success; however, 80% believe that the quality of a public education in the United States depends on where a person lives (Jackson & Newall, 2020). Socioeconomic disparities are chronic in today's schools. Differences in family income and in school funding create stark discrepancies in the educational experiences, opportunities, and outcomes between student "haves" and "have nots." The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 pushed this reality to the forefront. Almost overnight, it became vividly clear that students from low-income homes face greater challenges in school due to lack of resources. Kwakye and Kibort-Crocker (2021) reported that 23% of low-income students received a failing grade during the pandemic, compared to 8% of average- and high-income students. An (2021) noted that even after all students were provided with a laptop computer, Internet access, and headphones, low-income students' attendance and engagement in virtual learning were consistently less frequent and involved than their higher-income peers. While the COVID pandemic made the significant discrepancies among students based on the resources available to them more obvious to more people, socioeconomic disparity in the American education system is nothing new. This chapter describes how equity-focused teacher leaders can use equity audits to positively influence educational policy and practices to reduce socioeconomic disparities in P–12 schools.

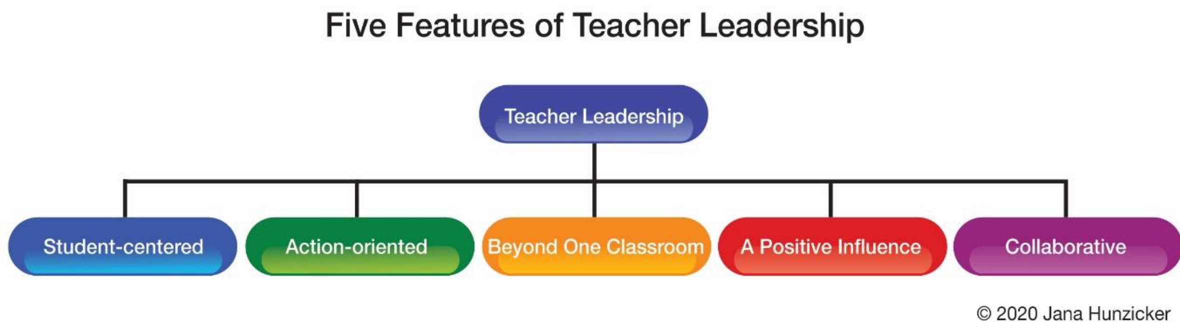
Five Features of Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership has been described as a process, a skill set, a worldview, and a professional responsibility. York-Barr and Duke (2004) defined teacher leadership as "the process by which teachers, individually or collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and

other members of the school community" (pp. 287-288). Danielson (2006) referred to it as a "set of skills" demonstrated by teachers who influence student learning beyond their own classrooms (p. 12). Smulyan (2016) asserted that teacher leaders share a common stance, or worldview, that recognizes teaching as a profession, a political act, and a collaborative process. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) described teacher leadership as identifying with, contributing to, influencing, and accepting responsibility for effective teaching practices and student learning outcomes. I add that, when addressing issues of inequity among students, teacher leadership is more than just a responsibility; it is an ethical commitment.

Building on these and other conceptions, I recognize all acts of teacher leadership as having five features in common: teacher leadership is student-centered, action-oriented, beyond one classroom, a positive influence, and collaborative (Hunzicker, 2018). Teacher leadership is *student-centered* because its ultimate objective is student learning and well-being. Teacher leadership is *action-oriented* because it involves hands-on effort and engagement toward a specific purpose. Teacher leadership extends *beyond one classroom* because it involves, affects, and/or benefits students across classrooms, grade levels, teams, schools, and/or districts. Teacher leadership is *a positive influence* because it benefits students, builds relationships with colleagues, and encourages authentic participation, improving educational effectiveness and experiences for everyone involved. Teacher leadership is *collaborative* because teacher leaders must work together with others in their educational systems to accomplish tasks, address challenges, and resolve problems. Addressing and remediating socioeconomic disparities—the focus of this chapter—is just one example. With these five features in mind, teacher leadership can be defined as an action-oriented, collaborative process through which effective teachers positively influence student learning and well-being beyond one classroom (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Five Features of Teacher Leadership (Hunzicker, 2018, 2020)



Social Justice and Equity-Focused Teacher Leadership

In recent years—even before the COVID pandemic—educators and scholars alike have become more attuned to the need for understanding and addressing issues of inequity in P–12 schools, an effort commonly referred to as social justice. Poekert and colleagues (2020) defined *educational equity* as "a state in which dimensions of privilege and oppression…are not predictive of or correlated with educational outcomes, broadly defined, in any significant way, and where all learners are able to participate fully in quality learning experiences" (pp. 541–542). *Social justice*, then, can be described as a worldview that closely observes the educational experiences, opportunities, and outcomes of marginalized groups for the express purpose of identifying and remediating inequities (Brown, 2010; Furman, 2012; Mundorf et al., 2019; Skrla et al., 2009). Furman (2012) elaborated that *leadership for social justice* "involves identifying and undoing…oppressive and unjust practices and replacing them with more equitable, culturally appropriate ones" (p. 194). In P–12 schools, this work is often initiated and accomplished by teachers themselves. Jacobs and colleagues (2020) refer to such teachers as "equity-based teacher leaders" (p. 105). I prefer the term *equity-focused teacher leaders*. Regardless of what we call them, these teacher leaders are deeply committed to addressing and remediating inequities

among students. As we will see, their leadership efforts, large and small, are student-centered, action-oriented, a positive influence, beyond one classroom, and collaborative.

Teacher Leadership and Equity

Sometimes, equity-focused teacher leaders are difficult to detect at first. Shea and colleagues (2020) conducted a year-long social network analysis to describe the qualities of influential teachers in three different elementary schools. They found that the most influential teachers demonstrated transformational leadership qualities, such as recognizing others' needs and offering support, even when they did not hold a formal leadership position. This finding suggests that teachers step up as leaders when their colleagues view them as valuable resources and approach them for assistance, but their leadership may or may not be obvious. Shea and colleagues (2020) also point out that how teachers are situated within a school (e.g., grade level or subject area, classroom location, daily schedule, before and after school duties, etc.) affects their ability to access resources, as well as to exert influence. In other words, teachers' opportunities to lead and to be led may be subject to inequity.

Nadelson and colleagues (2019) surveyed 452 teachers to determine the level to which K–12 teachers expressed an education equity mindset, defined as "the knowledge, beliefs, and dispositions supportive of advocating and working toward equitable education for all learners" (p. 27). Teachers responded with a stronger education equity mindset when asked why they teach and a weaker education equity mindset when asked about the challenges of working with a diverse student population. The research team summarized that although teachers in the study were motivated to make a difference, their actual work was "more technical and procedural" (p. 37). This finding leads to the conclusion that even when teachers desire or possess an education equity mindset, they may not have the necessary knowledge, skills, or tools to take actions

toward equity. In addition to equitable opportunities to lead and be led, today's teacher leaders need professional development and resources to support and extend their equity-focused efforts.

Equity-focused Knowledge, Skills, and Tools

A decade ago, Furman (2012) advocated for "concrete suggestions" and focused skill development for aspiring social justice leaders that include both reflection and action (p. 213). One way this call has been answered is through professional development for teachers. Poekert and colleagues (2020) developed a professional learning model for educational equity based on five leadership principles. Teacher leaders for educational equity 1) frame issues of teaching and learning toward social justice, 2) engage with others in dialogue and inquiry, 3) apply new insights with critical reflection, identity development, and relationship-building, 4) devote significant time and resources to context-driven professional development around issues of educational equity, and 5) consistently encourage shared leadership, collaboration, and inclusion.

Jacobs and colleagues (2020) implemented a two-year teacher leader academy to develop equity-based teacher leaders who could in turn positively influence practicing teachers and teacher candidates "in developing an equity lens as well as…foster equity for students and families" (p. 106). The academy's culminating project engaged participants in collaborative design and implementation of one-hour professional development sessions related to equity and culturally responsive teaching. Upon completion of the teacher leader academy, the research team concluded, "By having knowledge of equity, teachers can now serve as mentors who can model equity-based practices and explicitly support teacher candidate learning around equity" (p. 118).

Engaging in action research is another professional development option. Jeffries and Nelson (2020) analyzed how teacher leaders in various school-university partnerships used

classroom-based, collaborative, and schoolwide action research projects to increase opportunities for enacting equity in P–12 schools. Twelve action research projects that revealed effective teacher leadership practices and led to positive student learning outcomes used teacher-generated research to “establish policies and procedures that drive education decisions” (p. 154) and build “socially just understandings of our world” (p. 157).

One advantage of action research is that equity audits can be easily incorporated into the research process. The equity audit, often used as a tool for inquiry in equity-focused action research, is another viable option. View and colleagues (2016) described the equity audit as “a teacher leadership tool for nurturing teacher research” (p. 380). While equity audits can be used to investigate a multitude of factors, this chapter focuses on equity audits aimed at monitoring and correcting socioeconomic disparities.

Socioeconomic Disparities in P–12 Schools

View and colleagues (2016) reported that teachers in one school became concerned when they noticed that students with fewer financial resources had lower test scores and participated less often in extracurricular activities. One teacher leader recalled, “My colleagues were quick to share their theories about the causes of the problem. While they meant well, their ideas were mostly speculation based on anecdotes and personal beliefs” (p. 387). Educators have known for years that socioeconomic status (SES) is the strongest predictor of educational success (George & Alexander, 2003). We also know that there is a direct relationship between low SES and race. In a study comparing the cognitive and social-emotional skills of low-SES and high-SES early childhood students, Garcia and Weiss (2017) reported that low-SES students are more likely to be immigrants and/or to be Hispanic and less likely to live with two parents, speak English at home, and engage in literacy practices prior to beginning kindergarten. They explained,

"Children's social class is one of the most significant predictors—if not the single most significant predictor—of their educational success. Moreover…performance gaps by social class take root in the earliest years of children's lives and fail to narrow in the years that follow" (p. 2). Eligibility for free or reduced lunch according to federal guidelines (U. S. Department of Agriculture, n.d.) is one way to classify P–12 students from low-income homes for purposes of an equity audit.

Sometimes, educational inequities occur in schools where we least expect them. One teacher leader who discovered that the graduation rate of English language learners (ELLs) in her school was only 58.82% (compared to 94.57% overall) described her school as "an affluent suburban high school" (View et al., 2016, p. 384). Similarly, during an equity audit of 24 elementary schools designated as "honor schools of excellence" within one large school district, Brown (2010) discovered that even when no significant demographic disparities emerged, at-risk student achievement was consistently and significantly higher in some schools than in others across all at-risk student subgroups (e.g., minority students, economically disadvantaged students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students whose parents had no college education). Both studies should remind us all that even in affluent, award-winning schools, it is possible that not all students are receiving the educational services to which they are entitled. Making a case for equity-focused teacher leadership, Brown (2010) stated, "Excellence and equity must be pursued concurrently to assure that all students are served well and that all are encouraged to perform at their highest level" (p. 86).

In their longitudinal study comparing the cognitive and social-emotional skills of low-SES and high-SES early childhood students, Garcia and Weiss (2017) reported that low-SES students consistently performed more than one standard deviation lower than high-SES students

in both reading and math, and one-half standard deviation lower in areas such as self-control and approaches to learning. These researchers concluded, “Rising inequality might not be such a major concern if our education, economic, and social protection systems acted as compensatory mechanisms, helping individuals, and especially children, rise above their birth circumstances and improve their mobility” (p. 6). Fortunately, equity audits can be used to gather the data that equity-focused teacher leaders need to address socioeconomic disparities in today’s schools.

Equity Audits

The “Coleman Report,” published in 1966, was one of the first scholarly publications to document how race and poverty negatively impact students’ educational attainment (Garcia & Weiss, 2017). In response, various equity audit processes were enacted in American schools and school districts over the next three decades, many of them quite complex (Skrla et al., 2004, 2009). Since the early 2000s, simpler, scaled-down versions have been developed and refined (see Skrla et al., 2004). In recent years, the equity audit has gained traction as a valuable tool for objectively analyzing discrepancies among students in both P–12 education (Sparks, 2015) and higher education (Bombardieri, 2019).

Equity audits offer “a way to surface some of the less-transparent causes of educational inequity” (Soria & Ginsberg, 2016, p. 29) using readily available data sources (Brown, 2010; Harris & Hopson, 2008; Skrla et al, 2004; Sparks, 2015), such as federal and state databases, school- and district-wide report cards, student records, and school websites. Skrla and colleagues (2004) explain that equity audits are conducted to make any discrepancies “clearly visible and easily understandable so that it is possible to move forward to solutions that yield more equity” (pp. 153–154). Ideally, the findings can be used as impetus for collaborative remediation of inequitable policies and practices.

The long-term goal of equity audits is *systemic equity*, an established process of regularly monitoring and modifying school- and district-wide policies and practices to ensure that all students have access to the same educational experiences, opportunities, and outcomes (Scott, 2001, as cited in Brown et al., 2011; Skrla et al., 2004, 2009). Such policies and practices include—but are not limited to—comparable academic achievement and other outcomes across student subgroups, unbiased opportunities to learn and to participate, equitable distribution of resources, and equitable interpersonal exchanges and decision-making processes across all individuals and groups.

Equity Audit Structure

Although opinions vary on the best way to conduct an equity audit (Soria & Ginsberg, 2016), the structure developed by Skrla and colleagues (2004) is frequently cited in the literature due to its uncomplicated, well-defined approach. Asserting that equitable teacher quality paired with equitable programming leads to equitable student achievement, Skrla and colleagues (2004) identified 12 equity indicators. Within the category of teacher quality equity, indicators include level of teacher education (e.g., bachelor's degree, master's degree, etc.), years of teaching experience, annual teacher mobility, and teacher certification/teaching assignments. Within the category of programmatic equity, indicators include special education, gifted and talented education, bilingual education, and student discipline. Within the category of achievement equity, indicators include high school curricular tracks, standardized assessment scores, graduation rates, and dropout rates.

Educators may choose to audit all three categories at once or one category at a time. They may use the indicators suggested by Skrla and colleagues (2004) or customize the indicators to align more closely with their specific purpose and educational environment. In most cases,

simplicity helps to maintain focus on a specific equity issue. For example, within Skrla and colleagues' (2004) teacher quality equity category, an equity-focused teacher leader might choose to compare the percentage of teachers with master's degrees teaching at a middle school in a low-income neighborhood to the percentage of teachers with master's degrees teaching at a middle school in a high-income neighborhood. Even a relatively straightforward, easy-to-conduct comparison such as this one is likely to render an eye-opening data set worth discussing with stakeholders. In my opinion, routinely conducting small-scale equity audits is more manageable for teacher leaders, ensures habitual monitoring for disparities (as opposed to one big event that may soon be forgotten), and assists in building a school culture of reflective practice and cultural responsiveness.

In addition to the benefits of simplicity and frequency, equity audits are less daunting and more meaningful when individuals work together. Harris and Hopson (2008) encouraged collaboration in the design, data collection, and presentation of equity audits. Once the data are gathered, educators should visually display a summary of the equity audit findings in the form of a graph, map, table, or other schematic (Skrla et al., 2004; Soria & Ginsberg, 2016). A visual display of the findings will serve as a discussion prompt for the two guiding questions of most equity audits: 1) Are all student groups represented in reasonably proportionate percentages? 2) If the answer is no, what is causing the discrepancy? (Bleyaert, 2011; Brown, 2010; Skrla et al., 2009). It stands to reason that once a discrepancy has been identified and analyzed, stakeholders are more likely to feel morally obligated to correct it.

Four Equity Audit Accounts

Skrla and colleagues' (2004) equity audit structure offers a solid model for educators interested in exploring issues of equity in their classrooms, schools, and districts. With this

structure in mind, educators are prepared to conduct objective, data-driven equity audits when potential socioeconomic disparities come to their attention. The following four accounts—drawn from my firsthand experiences as a teacher, dean of students, and principal—offer examples of small-scale equity audits conducted by equity-focused teacher leaders.

Extra Instructional Time

At an elementary school, a kindergarten teacher was concerned about three students in her class who were performing significantly below grade level in letter and number recognition, phonemic awareness, counting, and fine motor skills. In looking at parent checklists completed during kindergarten registration, she noticed that all three students had limited academic resources and support at home. She checked with her fellow kindergarten teachers and learned of eight more kindergarten students in the school who were performing below grade level. Again, most of the students' registration checklists indicated limited resources and support.

The district's kindergarten program used a three-quarter day attendance model, meaning that kindergarten students attended most, but not all, of each school day. In the mornings, kindergarten students rode the same buses to school as the older elementary-level students; in the afternoons, kindergarteners ended their school day one hour before the older students, riding home from school in the afternoons on a kindergarten-only bus. Based on this model, the teacher approached her principal with a proposal. She would seek parent/guardian permission from each of the 11 identified kindergarten students to keep them at school for the extra hour three days per week. During that time, in consultation with the other kindergarten teachers, she would work with the students on individualized literacy, mathematics, and motor skills. The teacher would require no extra compensation because she was already on the clock for that last hour. The

students would not require special transportation because they would simply ride the afternoon bus home with the older students.

The program was quickly approved by both the principal and the district superintendent, and all parents/guardians granted permission for their children to participate. Between the time the program began in February through the end of the school year in May, all 11 students showed improvement in their individualized skill areas.

A Yearbook for Every Family

During an evening meeting of Parent Club officers at an elementary school, it was noted that yearbook sales were down. One of the club's two teacher representatives thought she knew why. Due to a recent downturn in the local economy, families could not afford the extra expense of a yearbook. When the two teacher representatives compared the names of the families who had ordered yearbooks to the school's list of students eligible for free or reduced lunch according to federal guidelines, they confirmed that not one student eligible for free or reduced lunch was on the list.

They called the Parent Club president with an idea. Each yearbook cost $6.00, and the Parent Club was charging $10.00 per yearbook to raise funds for special projects. What if providing a complimentary yearbook for every student eligible for free or reduced lunch became that year's special project? At the next meeting of the Parent Club officers, the idea was discussed in detail. The treasurer confirmed that they had enough funds in reserve to do it, but some parent officers felt that providing free yearbooks to some students and not others would be unfair. The group reached an impasse.

"What if we provided a complimentary yearbook for every family this year?" a previously quiet parent volunteer suggested. Ultimately the Parent Club officers agreed to do just

that. The next school newsletter announced that each family would receive one yearbook free of charge that year. Additional yearbooks could be ordered for $10.00 each, if desired. Later that spring, when the complimentary yearbooks were distributed, one of the teacher representatives reflected, “I’m so glad we did this! No one was left out this year!”

Adding an Activity Bus

In a suburban middle school, the newly hired theater teacher was excited about the number and diversity of students who had tried out for roles and signed up to help with behind-the-scenes duties in the annual school play, but when rehearsals and set building began, he was surprised by the number of students who did not show up regularly. At first, he thought it was students’ lack of commitment, but when he started talking to them, he learned that the real problem was transportation. Several students wanted to stay after school to participate, but they did not have anyone to pick them up at 5:00 p.m. More often than not, students chose to take the bus home right after school.

A week later, when teachers were asked during a faculty meeting to brainstorm strategies for increasing student engagement, the theater teacher learned that the lack of after-school transportation was negatively affecting attendance at athletic practices and after-school clubs, too. After mapping the home addresses of students currently participating in after-school activities, it became clear that most students with poor attendance were those who lived farthest from the school. Many of their families had only one vehicle or did not have reliable transportation at all. As a result, students’ only choices were to take the bus home right after school or make the long walk home along a busy highway, often in cold weather.

The correlation between students’ home addresses and their tendency to participate—or not—in after school activities provided convincing evidence for the theater teacher and a few

others to write a proposal for an after-school activity bus. The bus would run Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, leaving the school at 5:00 p.m., and the route would be adjusted monthly as sports seasons and extracurricular activities changed. The addition of the activity bus was so successful in increasing student engagement in after-school sports, clubs, and other activities that word got around. Soon, another middle school in the district began providing an after-school activity bus as well.

An Internet Alternative

A high school math teacher was pleased when his school adopted a one-to-one laptop initiative so that every student in the school had 24/7 possession of an up-to-date computer. Over time, he adapted his instructional routine to make the most of students' increased access to technology. During class time, he recorded himself teaching and then uploaded the recording to his course website so students could view it later, if needed. Following each day's lesson, students would practice solving math problems on an interactive website. Whatever students did not finish during class time became homework.

This instructional routine worked well for most students, yet some were falling behind. When the math teacher conducted a confidential poll in each of his classes, he learned that about 12% of his students did not have internet access at home. To accommodate these students, the math teacher started giving each one a flash drive every Monday equipped with math problems based on the week's content. He also got into the habit of uploading his daily instructional video to the course website immediately following the lesson; and he instructed the students with flash drives to download the video onto their laptops before leaving class for the day. During class time, the students with flash drives used the interactive website to practice solving the day's math problems. If they did not finish the assignment before the end of the school day, they were

directed to work the remaining number of math problems using the ones provided on the flash drive. During the first year of the flash-drive system, each student had two flash drives. On Mondays, they would exchange the previous week's flash drive for a new one. This allowed the math teacher to stay one week ahead of the students in adding new math problems.

The math teacher was so pleased with the flash-drive system that he shared it during a department meeting and later for a group of 37 math teachers during a district-wide institute day. In the weeks that followed, several math teachers across the district made similar instructional accommodations for students with unreliable or no home internet access. The math teacher felt good that he was able to scale up his classroom system to provide instructional support for more students in his school and district.

Equity-Focused Teacher Leadership

In each of these examples, teachers' efforts to ensure socioeconomic equity were student-centered, action oriented, a positive influence, beyond one classroom, and collaborative. Whether the focus was kindergarten students' skill development, yearbooks, engagement in after-school activities, or internet access, these teachers confirmed socioeconomic disparities and acted on behalf of students (Hunzicker, 2020). Even when their efforts originated within their own classrooms, they promptly collaborated with others by asking questions, making suggestions, sharing ideas, and offering solutions that positively influenced students grade-, department-, school-, and even district-wide.

Additionally, whether they realized it or not, each of these teachers had conducted a small-scale equity audit as they worked to fully understand their situation. The kindergarten teacher revisited registration checklists to confirm underperforming students' need for additional academic support. The Parent Club teacher representatives compared the names of families who

had ordered yearbooks to the school's list of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. The theater teacher correlated students' home addresses with their tendency to participate—or not—in after school activities; and the math teacher simply polled the students in his classes. In each case, the equity audits provided information useful in fully understanding the situation and in convincing others of the need to take action to better serve all students.

Each of these teachers felt a responsibility—and perhaps a moral obligation—to address issues of inequity among their students. In the course of their routine teaching, supervision, and service duties, each teacher was attuned to the importance of understanding and addressing issues of inequity. They were committed to the ideal that all students should be able to fully participate in quality learning and extracurricular experiences (Poekert et al., 2020), and each teacher successfully initiated socially just action by working with others in their schools and districts to correct or improve the socioeconomic disparities they discovered (Brown, 2010; Furman, 2012; Mundorf et al., 2019; Skrla et al., 2009). Through their efforts, both large and small, academic and extracurricular, these equity-focused teacher leaders demonstrated that teacher leadership is more than just a responsibility—it is an ethical commitment.

After the Equity Audit

Each of the accounts shared in this chapter resulted in a happy ending, but happy endings to equity audits are not guaranteed. Often, viewing the results of an equity audit is uncomfortable, engendering feelings of resistance, hostility, and even blame among those reviewing the data (Skrla et al., 2004). Such feelings emerged in the equity audit account A Yearbook for Every Family, when the Parent Club temporarily reached an impasse. While stakeholders in schools normed with a culture of reflective practice and cultural responsiveness are more likely to set their discomfort aside and approach the results of an equity audit with

humble curiosity, educators in school cultures normed by routine and tradition may not be willing to openly discuss the results (Bleyaert, 2011). Even in such a worst-case scenario, Skrla and colleagues (2009) remind us:

> It is important…to understand that people start out in a variety of places with respect to their understanding of issues of inequity. Resistance is to be expected, but it is important to keep in mind that all views, even negative ones, should be treated with dignity, and every effort should be made to avoid defensiveness and to maintain open dialogue. (pp. 275-276)

Constructive, Meaningful Discussion

Adequate preparation, teamwork, and well-structured processes can help to ensure a constructive and meaningful discussion around equity audit findings. Bleyaert (2011) called for "a collaborative in-person process…facilitated by an external support provider" and "open-ended and specific prompts that provoke reflection among faculty members" (p. 9). Skrla and colleagues (2004) suggested that, as an alternative to simply presenting the findings, stakeholders should be provided with blank paper and markers or colored pencils so that each person can graph the equity audit data as it is presented to discover the implications for themselves. Brown (2010) concurred:

> Data are powerful; they separate personal agendas from organizational necessities. When data are collected, analyzed, and exhibited in a transparent way, it is difficult for teachers, parents, and even school board members to deny certain disparities in practices, deficiencies in systems, and gaps in outcomes. (pp. 10-11)

As one example, Soria and Ginsberg (2016) described how one administrator used questioning and interactive discussion to create "shared dissatisfaction" (George & Alexander, 2003, p. 565)

to motivate action toward improving the instructional outcomes of English learners. Brown and colleagues (2011) credit this type of success to the power of "academic optimism" (p. 86), made up of teamwork, a strong sense of purpose, and persistent advocacy and action. Even so, Mundorf and colleagues (2019) caution that "lasting and large-scale change for social justice within school systems does not happen instantly. Such change requires understanding the current realities of schools but not believing those realities are impervious" (p. 69).

Taking a necessary step back, Furman (2012) notes that leadership for social justice begins with critical and honest self-reflection, progresses to building trusting relationships across cultural groups, and finally "builds community across cultural groups through inclusive, democratic practices" (p. 209). Social justice leadership writ large goes a step further, "assessing, critiquing, and working to transform the system" (p. 210), with the understanding that "school-related social justice issues are situated within broader sociopolitical, economic, and environmental contexts and interdependent with broader issues of oppression and sustainability" (p. 211). With this progression in mind, providing stakeholders with meaningful data to ponder is an important first step in the right direction, especially in school and district cultures normed by routine and tradition.

Closing Thoughts

Nadelson and colleagues (2019) observe that if we are serious about remediating socioeconomic disparities, "education for all cannot mean one-size-fits-all" (p. 26). The same is true for equity audits themselves. Equity audits can be simple or complex, classroom-based or district-wide, initiated by individuals or done in collaboration with others. At the very least, equity audits can be used as tools for self-reflection and dialogue. When all goes well, they can

serve as springboards for social justice leadership, motivating sweeping, systemic improvements in educational policy and practice on behalf of every student we serve.

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