

How to Bring an Equity Lens to the Work

Definition:

- **What:** “Bringing an equity lens” means making sure that students of every socio-economic background, race, ethnicity, gender, etc., are provided equitable opportunities and supports to discover their talents and interests and develop the skills needed to pursue the post-secondary pathways of their choice. It also means being attentive to the default tendency to sort students of a particular gender or background into specific stereotypical pathways.
- **Why:** Students’ understanding of their postsecondary options tend to be defined and in many cases limited by the experience and assumptions of their families and communities. Students whose adult acquaintances have not attended college are less likely to realize they have that option, and even if they express an interest in college, may not receive the guidance they need on practical measures to attain that goal. Conversely, students of parents who are professionals may feel pressure to pursue a similar pathway even if their aptitudes and interests lie elsewhere. In addition, disparities in financial and other resources often limit students’ access to potentially useful opportunities.
- **How:**
 - Objectively evaluate the current situation in your school or district. If student enrollment in “academic” or college prep courses vs. technical ones shows *de facto* sorting based on race or socioeconomic class, there is work to be done. An evaluation of current outcomes will provide concrete data, but a walk through your building will probably give you a pretty good idea to start.
 - At middle school and early high school level, provide challenging content to all students in heterogeneous groups, eliminating academic tracking.
 - Offer extra-help support classes to enable less well-prepared students succeed in accelerated courses. See How to provide academic supports for postsecondary readiness.
 - Improve communication with parents as well as students about academic options available and their potential benefits for their children’s future. Use accessible language and vocabulary and consider use of appropriate technology (e.g., voice or text messages sent to cell phones rather than email or take-home paper information).
 - Consider using multiple measures of academic performance and preparedness to improve educational equity, rather than relying solely or primarily on standardized tests and class grades. At state or district level, offer simple, transparent mechanisms to provide financial assistance for all students to access programs that boost academic preparedness, such as summer enrichment camps or courses and AP or dual enrollment opportunities.

Exemplars in Practice:

- **Schools to Learn From: How Six High Schools Graduate English Language Learners College and Career Ready**, Carnegie Corp. of NY, Dec 2015.
Detailed study of academic and SEL supports that six successful high schools provide ELL students for postsecondary success.
<http://ell.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Schools%20to%20Learn%20From%20.pdf>
- **Idaho gives education money directly to teenagers to manage themselves**, Hechinger Report, April 2017.
State provided educational expense account for every secondary students to use for academic enrichment costs, with heavy benefits for high-achieving disadvantaged students.
<http://hechingerreport.org/idaho-gives-education-money-directly-teenagers-manage/>
- **Clemson Emerging Scholars Program**
Clemson University's intensive program to provide college access and readiness to students from seven neighboring high schools serving disadvantaged communities. Includes summer on-campus residency weeks and academic year activities as well as visits to numerous regional colleges. <http://www.clemsonemergingscholars.org/>
- **Aligning competencies to rigorous standards for off-track youth**. Jobs for the Future, December 2012.
In-depth report on Boston Day & Evening Academy's successful program to enable off-track youth achieve Common Core required competencies.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED539877.pdf>
For a brief article on the same program, see: Reimagining failure: 'Last-chance' schools are the future of American high schools, Hechinger Report, July 2017.
<http://hechingerreport.org/reimagining-failure-last-chance-schools-future-american-high-schools/>
- **Colleges Discover the Rural Student**, Center on Rural Education. January 2017.
This article explores the complexities and challenges of encouraging students in rural communities to consider academic educational and career pathways.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/education/edlife/colleges-discover-rural-student.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Feducation&action=click&contentCollection=education®ion=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=1&pgtype=sectionfront>
- **What happens when a regular high school decides no student is a lost cause?**, Hechinger Report, August 2017. Challenges and achievements of trauma-informed education program in a Washington state high school.
<http://hechingerreport.org/what-happens-when-a-regular-high-school-decides-no-student-is-a-lost-cause/>

Resources:

- **National Technical Assistance Center on Transition.**
Multiple resources for helping students with IEPs plan for postsecondary success.
<https://www.transitionta.org/resources>
- **Multiple measures: A definition and examples from the U.S. and other nations.** National Center for Fair and Open Testing, July 2010.
Numerous examples and options for multiple measures of student performance and preparedness.
<http://www.fairtest.org/sites/default/files/MultipleMeasures.pdf>

Research Foundations:

- **New Pathways to Careers and College: Examples, Evidence, and Prospects**, MDRC, April 2015.
Thorough review of current status and trends in postsecondary pathways.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED558505.pdf>
- **The impact of dual enrollment on college degree attainment: Do low-SES students benefit?** Brian P. An. AERA, March 2013.
Reports modest but significant positive effects of dual enrollment on subsequent college outcomes for disadvantaged students.
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0162373712461933>
- **Accelerating mathematics achievement using heterogeneous grouping.** Carol Corbett Burris, Jay P. Heubert, and Henry M. Levin. American Educational Research Journal, March 2006.
Longitudinal study showing middle grade heterogeneous grouping and extra-help workshops improved high school math achievement for lower-performing students, without detriment to high achievers.
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.3102/00028312043001105>
- **The underutilized potential of teacher-to-parent communication: Evidence from a field experiment.** Matthew A Kraft and Todd Rogers. Economics of Education Review, August 2015.
Study found brief weekly teacher-parent messages on students' academic activities led to 41% decrease in course failure for low achieving, primarily disadvantaged and minority students.
https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/mkraft/files/kraft_rogers_teacher-parent_communication_hks_working_paper.pdf
- **Hidden in Plain Sight**, June 2016. Civic Enterprises & Hart Research Associates for America's Promise Alliance.
Extensive treatment of student homelessness and its impacts.
<http://www.americaspromise.org/report/hidden-plain-sight>