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Black Teacher
Leadership &
Sustainability Institute

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MIDWEST DISTRICT NETWORK

We excited to announce our new **Midwest District Network**, launching in Fall 2019. This Network will provide an opportunity for school district teams to connect and learn with other districts from across the Midwest region who are actively engaged in efforts to increase educational equity for their students and particularly those students whom we have served least well in our schools and communities. The Network will run for 2 years (school year 2019-2020 and 2020-2021).

Participating districts and national partners will work collaboratively to apply current research and *contribute to emerging research* in the Science of Learning and Development (SOLD) in service of equity. Our core purpose will be to learn about, study, and test approaches to teaching and learning in which every student engages in meaningful and rigorous work, experiences a sense of belonging, and contributes to the design of their own learning.

Despite strong efforts toward equity, educators throughout the Midwest region are facing pervasive challenges as they work to significantly shift outcomes and opportunities for our students of color and students living in poverty. We think a more fundamental exploration of how we “do school” and how to create engaging, culturally responsive, and rigorous learning environments is required. The design of the Network will reflect our understanding that rather than being complicated problems that can be solved through prescribed solutions, equity challenges are more than complicated – *they are complex* – and require emergent solutions that can only be found through dynamic interactions of diverse people and networks working together. With this in mind, the Network will be designed to facilitate equity leadership development in complex systems, application of new knowledge, and testing of approaches to increase student engagement and learning with a focus on the students who are not yet being well served.

Network Design and Goals

Through a combination of in-person convenings and virtual learning sessions, consultancies and shared inquiry, teams will engage in facilitated cross-district learning and will:

- Learn and engage with NEP's Leading for Equity (LFE) framework as a way to expand equity consciousness and shift from traditional leadership paradigms

LFE Fellowship: Current Cohort

LFE Fellowship: Previous Cohorts (2015-18)

Reduced-fee Application

Webinars

to a more dynamic approach to equity-focused problem-solving and decision-making required for leading for equity in complex systems

- Articulate a definition of success that is liberatory and inclusive of the values and aspirations of students of color and students living in poverty in their communities
- Work together to identify or refine a priority “equity challenge” and design, apply, and reflect on approaches to advance progress toward equity
- Learn and apply a Learning Partnership approach to change, working collaboratively with colleagues and students to implement rapid cycles of inquiry, running small tests of change to learn what works, how it works, for whom, under what conditions, and why
- Review, discuss, apply, and contribute to the latest research in the neuroscience of change and the science of learning and development in service of equity.

Learning Partnership Approach

Our Learning Partnership Approach is a collaborative, inquiry-based approach in which educators learn *with and from* students and families in order to transform instructional approaches, adjust systemic responses, and design new structures to respond to a diverse range of student needs, with a particular focus on students we currently serve least well in our schools and communities. In addition, the Learning Partnership approach involves working in vertical teams in order to leverage wisdom from various vantage points in the system to understand what is happening and co-design innovative approaches to increasing student engagement and equity.

- **District Leaders** will learn how to work in partnership with site administrators, to create and support the conditions needed to increase student engagement and learning and maintain and expand successful Learning Partnerships throughout their system.
- **School administrators** will gain valuable insight into how to work in partnership with teachers and other site-level leaders to learn about and test equity-focused approaches.
- **Instructional Leaders and Coaches** will gain knowledge, skill and capacity to coach for equity, with a focus on addressing opportunity gaps in classrooms and schools through a learning partnership approach.
- **Teachers and their students** will build shared understanding of the essential connection between culture and learning and apply what they learn to gain greater synchrony and increase engagement in the learning process.
- **Teachers** will gain valuable insight from their students into how to design their lessons and create classroom learning environments that are inclusive and responsive to their students’ identities and learning processes.
- **Students** will boost their sense of belonging within an academic setting, and experience the acceleration of success that comes with full agency as learners, in control of their learning successes and developing an integrated identity as full participants in their community and in the learning process.

Partners

The Network will be supported by an innovative partnership between the National Equity Project and the following partners:

- UChicago Consortium for School Research
- Project for Education Research that Scales (PERTS)
- Shift Results
- Collaborative for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning (CASEL)

Who Should Apply

- Teams from districts with current or prior experience with the National Equity Project are encouraged to apply.
- Teams of 4-8 leaders from a school district, that are diverse by gender, race and vertically articulated roles; to include central office and site-based administrators, resource specialists, and classroom teachers. Secondary students are also welcome.*
- Teams should be comprised of people with a high interest in learning about taking leadership for equity in complex systems and implementing the Learning Partnership Approach in service of increasing equitable student engagement, learning, and outcomes.
- All team members must be willing and able to attend a total of:
 - Four full-day in person convenings per year
 - Three 2-hour virtual convenings
 - Two 1-hour virtual Role-Alike Sessions

**If students are not part of the participating team it will be important to identify a source for regular student input either through a student leadership body, student surveys, or through a partner organization that supports student leadership and agency.*

During the 2019-20 School Year, the Network will consist of:

September 2019	Team Consultations and Pre-Work
October 2019	2-Day In Person Network Kick-off
November 2019	Virtual Role-Alike Teams Launch
December 2019	Webinar – Partnerships for Learning
January 2019	1-day In Person Convening
February 2020	Virtual Role-Alike Teams Meet
March 2020	Webinar – Transformational Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
April 2020	Network Virtual Convening
May 2020	1-day in-person Year in Review Convening

Work for the 2020-2021 school year will be similar to Year 1, with input and direction from Network participants.

Fees

\$20,000/per district team, per year. *Note: Several funders have expressed interest in supporting the work of this network so we are able to offer this subsidized rate for participation.*

Application

- Applications are due June 1. [Click here to apply.](#)
- Acceptance decisions will be communicated the week of June 10.
- Contact Erin Bruner at ebruner@nationalequityproject.org with questions.


Contact Us

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Our Vision

Every child in America has the right to a quality education. We support people to make good on that promise.